

**Sydney College of the Arts**  
The University of Sydney

MASTER OF VISUAL ARTS  
2004  
DISSERTATION

**Precious Little**  
Traces of Australian Place and Belonging

by  
**David Watson**

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This volume is presented as a record  
of the work undertaken for the degree of  
Master of Visual Arts  
at Sydney College of the Arts

## **Table of Contents**

Acknowledgments 4

List of Illustrations 5

Summary 8

**Introduction** 10

Chapter 1 **The Home and the World** 13

Chapter 2 **Unfocussing** 33

Chapter 3 **Only Ideas Won By Walking Have Any Value** 44

Chapter 4 **That Oceanic Feeling** 59

Chapter 5 **Wulumay Close** 69

**Conclusion** 80

Bibliography 83

Related Reference Material 88

Appendix 91

Resumé 92

List of Images on CD 94

Catalogue of Work Presented for Examination 96

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X

Denise Aladdin Luca

X

## List of Illustrations

- p 13 David Watson *Cockles and Mussels, Limehouse Canal* (1987)  
35mm colour transparency
- p 15 David Watson *Horizon (4)* from *TERROR AUSTRALIS* (2004)  
Digital photograph from 35mm colour transparency 70.5 x 47cm
- p 16 Patrick Keiller *LONDON* (1994)  
Frame still from 16mm film
- p 17 Paul Winkler *ELEVATED SHORES* (1993)  
Frame still from 16mm film
- p 18 Nancy Rexroth *Streaming Window* from *IOWA* series (1973)  
B/W photograph
- p 21 Australian 5d Blue 1963 150th Anniversary Blue Mountains Crossing  
stamp
- p 22 Ken Watson *Binya and David* (1967)
- p 23 Australian \$2 Fred McCubbin *On The Wallaby Track* (1896) stamp
- p 25 Clarice Beckett *Attic House, Beaumaris* (c 1920s) [aka *Spring Morning*]  
Oil on composition board 56.3 x 50cm  
Benalla Art Gallery
- p 26 John Kauffmann *Fairy Woods* (c 1920)  
Gelatin silver photograph 17.4 x 25cm  
National Gallery of Australia
- p 28 David Watson from *SYDNEY: SEVEN YEARS' STRANGER* (1992)  
Colour photograph 38 x 56cm
- p 29 David Watson *The Palm House, Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney* (2000)  
Colour photograph
- p 31 David Watson *Strata Title* from *NEW SOUTH WONDERLAND* (2000)  
Colour photograph 38 x 56cm
- p 35 Uta Barth *Field #24* (1998)  
Acrylic lacquer on canvas 228.6 x 335.3cm
- p 36 Uta Barth *Ground #30* (1994)  
Colour photograph on panel 55.9 x 45.7cm
- p 37 David Watson *Dove Rock* from *NEW SOUTH WONDERLAND* (2000)  
Colour photograph 38 x 56cm
- p 40 Dale Frank *The View of the running Swollen Gulley running between Jew Hill and One Tree Hill at about 6.30pm driving into the sun before Zieskies Grain* from the series *VIEWS FROM THE BRUCE HIGHWAY* (2003)  
Varnish on acrylic on canvas 180 x 180cm [Courtesy Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery]
- p 42 David Watson *All the Places in NSW I Can Remember 3/7/03*

- Pencil, biro and white-out on paper 42 x 29.7cm
- p 43 Sidney Nolan *Figure and Landscape* (1958)  
Crayon on paper 16" x 12"
- p 45 David Watson *Lichen Tree* (2002)  
Colour photograph 26 x 37cm
- p 47 Peter Hutchinson *Planet Landscape* (1997) *Andaman, albatross, amphibian, Antilles: where does a landscape begin. Where does a landscape end.*  
Photo-collage, gouache, ölkreide, tusche, text 152 x 102cm
- p 49 Map of Aboriginal Tribes of Australia overlaid with David Watson's journeys 2002-04
- p 51 David Watson *Volcanic* (2004)  
Colour photograph
- p 52 Mandy Martin *Omnus Inclusum* (2002)  
Oil, ochre and pigment 135 x 244cm
- p 53 Artist's impression of Ediacara Fauna in the sea about 550 million years ago (sketch courtesy Queensland Museum)
- p 54 'Mobile coverage going from strength to strength' - Telstra ad (2004)  
Contemporary hiking-woman on top of mountain on mobile
- p 55 Paul Winkler LONG SHADOWS (1991)  
Frame still from 16mm film
- p 56 Dennis Adams *The Blue Mountains*  
from *The Shell Guide to Australian Wildflowers* (c 1960)
- p 57 David Watson *Horizon (12)* from TERROR AUSTRALIS (2004)  
Digital photograph from 35mm colour transparency 70.5 x 47cm
- p 58 David Watson *Ellipse (9)* from TERROR AUSTRALIS (2004)  
Colour photograph 24.2 x 37.5cm
- David Watson *Horizon (7), (10), (11)* from TERROR AUSTRALIS (2004)  
Digital photographs from 35mm colour transparencies 70.5 x 47cm
- p 60 David Watson *That Oceanic Feeling - Luca at Lake Mungo* (2004)  
Colour photograph
- p 62 Eugène von Guérard *Weather Board Creek Falls, Jamiesons Valley, New South Wales* (1862)  
Oil on canvas 122.1 x 183.3cm  
National Gallery of Victoria
- p 64 David Watson from NEW SOUTH WONDERLAND (2000)  
Colour photograph 38 x 56cm
- David Watson *Wipeout* (2004)  
Colour photograph
- p 65 Bridget Riley *Untitled XXI* (1965)

Gouache and pencil on graph paper 71 x 40.6cm

- p 66 David Watson *Fairy Woods II* (2004)  
Colour photograph
- p 67 David Watson *Deep Sea Floors* (2004)  
Colour photograph
- p 69 Wulumay Close, a new cul de sac - gateway to beige Balmain
- p 70 NO! BOB THE BUILDER Luca (5) and Aladdin (8) - my boys (l to r) -  
protest NSW Premier Bob Carr's plan to sell off public harbourside land  
at Callan Park for private apartments, *Inner Western Suburbs Courier*  
19 August 2002
- p 71 Wanga Rozelle-Lilyfield Ward (Leichhardt Council Wards March 2004)  
Hand annotated
- p 72 David Watson *'Atelier' Rising* (2003)  
Colour photograph
- David Watson *Callan Point* (2003)  
Colour photograph
- p 73 David Watson *Iron Cove Monster: Chinese Hackberry vs Morning Glory*  
(2003)  
Colour photograph
- p 74 *Balmain Shores* plaque to the Elliott Brothers (2003)
- p 75 David Watson *Balmain Shores* (2003)  
Colour photograph
- David Watson *Terror On Our Shores* (2003)  
Colour photograph
- p 76 David Watson *'Atelier' Bay* (2003)  
Colour photograph
- David Watson *Swathe* (2003)  
Colour photograph
- p 77 David Watson *Desert* (2003)  
Colour photograph
- p 78 David Watson *Rigging the Future* (2003)  
Colour photograph
- p 79 The Callan Park Artist *Three Master on Mushroom Rock at Callan Point*  
(date uncertain, probably between 1850 - 1910).  
Rock drawing. Approx 1.5 x 2 metres.
- p 80 David Watson from NEW SOUTH WONDERLAND (2000)  
Colour photograph 38 x 56cm

## Summary

## **Studio Work**

I created and exhibited two bodies of work which explored essences of Australian place and memory via out-of-focus colour photography.

The work developed from a fascination with the distinctive form and colour of Sydney (to which I returned in 1989 after seven years in London), from research and experimentation at Sydney College of the Arts (Grad Dip 1993) and from the concerns of my first solo exhibition NEW SOUTH WONDERLAND (2000).

In an uncertain world my landscapes have, over the past few years, become invested with unease. They have sought to evoke both the absences and precious nuances of the wild and municipal settler experience.

David Watson

TERROR AUSTRALIS

Gallery Barry Keldoulis, Sydney

25 March - 25 April 2004

23 colour photographs exploring perceptions of Australia's emptiness and fullness, a 'great divide' evoked by two very different suites of landscape imagery - deeply hued accidental 'horizons' and delicate ellipses - a mythical 'dead heart' fringed by a muted periphery of easily-overlooked beauty.

4pp colour catalogue (see Appendix)

David Watson + The Callan Park Artist

WULUMAY CLOSE

Sydney College of the Arts

7 - 19 December 2004

Eight colour photographs and three tracings of rock drawings mistakenly believed to be Aboriginal. In the urban wilds of Sydney's Rozelle (a microcosm of Australia) environmental, indigenous and rationalist desires wrestle to define contemporary 'community'.



## **Abstract of Dissertation**

The Dissertation is a meditation on our relationship with this continent and its layered physical and psychological 'landscapes'. It explores ways in which artists and writers have depicted our 'thin' but evolving presence here in the South, and references my own photographic work.

The paper weaves together personal tales with fiction writing and cultural, settler and indigenous history. It identifies a uniquely Australian sense of 21st-century disquiet and argues for some modest aesthetic and social antidotes.

It discusses in some detail the suppression of focus in photography, and suggests that the technique evokes not only memory, but a recognition of absence, which invites active participation (as the viewer attempts to 'place' and complete the picture).

In seeking out special essences of place the paper considers the suburban poetics of painter Clarice Beckett, the rigorous focus-free *oeuvre* of photographer Uta Barth, and the hybrid vistas of artist/gardener Peter Hutchinson and painter Dale Frank. Interwoven are the insights of contemporary authors Gerald Murnane, W G Sebald and Paul Carter.

A speculative chapter about the fluidity of landscape, the interconnectedness of land and sea, and Australia's 'deep' geology fuses indigenous spirituality, oceanic imaginings of Australia, the sinuous bush-scapes of Patrick White, and the poetics of surfing.

Full immersion is recommended.

## Introduction

One wintry evening earlier this year my son and I survived a potentially fatal car accident in Sydney's Inner West - miraculously no-one was hurt. That night I dreamt the title for this paper...

**Precious little** means 'barely anything'. By taking it as my title I am signalling my interest in nuance and 'things' less perceptible. The 'precious' is often 'little'. On the periphery or in the background, it is easily overlooked. Sometimes precious little remains...

Precious little is what I have been trying to photograph since my return home to Sydney in 1989 - by paring back detail, denying focus, creating traces of places. Special resonances, essences of shared memory - emotional landscapes. Because of course 'the truly precious things aren't things at all'.

What began as a paeon to memory, a re-acquaintance with forgotten form and colour after a decade abroad, has become a deeper more ambiguous investigation into how we as newcomers might better engage with the spirits of this ancient new place Australia.

For we live in precipitous times and there is much at stake.

This Dissertation is a journey to the heart of my obsessions which weaves together personal tales with elements of Australia's aesthetic, social, and environmental history. It argues that although we 'the arriving ones'<sup>1</sup> still know precious little, we are beginning to powerfully imagine where we live - and that idiosyncratic individual experience and collective memory is precious.

Seeking re-enchantment through diverse tendrils of literature, painting, photography and cultural history the paper explores expanded notions of 'landscape'.

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Thomas, *The Artificial Horizon: Imagining the Blue Mountains*, Melbourne University Press, 2003, p 16.

Chapter 1 outlines my formative 'visually fortunate' exposure to 'country' since childhood. It tells of a pet wombat, a decade of travel, the detection of powerful Anglo-Celtic roots and the revelation of returning home. It charts a poetic course via the immersive paintings of Clarice Beckett, the fluid words of Patrick White and the mental landscapes of filmmaker Patrick Keiller and fiction writer Gerald Murnane. It concludes with mention of NEW SOUTH WONDERLAND (2000), my first solo exhibition of photography.

Chapter 2 examines artists' ongoing fascination with the suppression of focus to better evoke human experience and to challenge landscape orthodoxies. The contemporary relevance and rationale of such work is discussed with reference to the physiology of the eye, psycho-analytic theory, the out-of-focus photography of Uta Barth, the elusive truths of artist Gerhard Richter and the hybrid vistas of the painter Dale Frank.

Chapter 3 traces my re-discovery of Australia. Aboriginal and environmental issues are raised whilst journeying across the country by road and on foot. Quoting Nietzsche's 'Only Ideas Won by Walking Have Any Value', the chapter takes inspiration from author WG Sebald and looks at the work of artists 'who get their hands dirty', including artist/gardener Peter Hutchinson and painter/environmentalist Mandy Martin. Freud's 'Uncanny' as it relates to our troubled notions of 'home' in this unreconciled nation, Andrew McGahan's haunted settler tale *The White Earth* (2004) and my exhibition TERROR AUSTRALIS (2004) are discussed.

Chapter 4 is a speculative journey which charts 'oceanic' imaginings and readings of Australia - from indigenous spirituality to colonial cartography and Charles Darwin in the Blue Mountains. Mention is made of Rolland/Freud's conception of 'the oceanic' and Virginia Woolf's deployment of oceanic metaphor to evoke the flux of modern life. Jettisoning focus, Australia is aquatically re-imagined via its deep geology, the interconnectedness of land and sea, the fluidity of our brief lives and our evolving love of the the coast. Bridget Riley's oscillating paintings, the painterly words of Patrick White and the poetics of surfing suggest ways to approach, enter and image the land more immersively.

Chapter 5 returns the reader home to Sydney's Rozelle where some of the conundrums of contemporary Australia - old/new, indigenous/introduced, public/private - play out on my doorstep. Paul Carter's *Lie of the Land* backgrounds tales and a photographic essay [WULUMAY CLOSE (2004)] of bare feet, urban consolidation, bush regeneration, 'metaphor-tography' and some strange local rock carvings mistakenly believed to be aboriginal.

The paper argues for a photography which is more fluid, for which less is more - for yearning churning images which can fuse the primeval with the shifting landscapes of now on this remarkable multi-layered island.

**Longing, belonging and making 'home'...**

## Chapter 1 The Home and the World

### Albion - Space Travel - Roll Ends

During the 1980s I lived for seven years in London. A voracious traveller and keen cyclist, I combed its leafy boroughs, its laneways and cobbled Thames-side squalor until I came to know and love the city deeply. I felt that I had begun to fathom the layers of a huge, particularly complex and extraordinarily rich village.

Most tourists, and many Londoners, know the city only by the names of its Underground 'tubestops'. I delighted in the geography, architecture, accents and smells which lay between and became quite obsessed with the special pleasures of exploring every by-way.



David Watson *Cockles and Mussels, Limehouse Canal* (1987)

The First Fleet set sail for Australia with convicts  
taken from Thames-side prison hulks moored near here in London's East End

200 years earlier

Solo expeditions took me to ever-more-remote corners of the remarkable British Isles. A fascinated antipodean ant in a bright orange anorak, I cycled and photographed, photographed and cycled the myriad textures of Albion for what seemed like a lifetime... from New Cross to Polseath, Hastings and Tongue... Bethnal Green to Waterloo via Fort William, Limpley Stoke and Brixton.

Place and street names were particularly redolent, triggering recollections and phantoms from a predominantly Anglo past. School books, stamp collections, childhood games, postmarks and addresses on letters from distant relatives, record covers, songs and TV shows enriched the ride.

London was thick with partially remembered imaginings: Dick Turpin lay somewhere near an inn on a narrow bend up in Highgate, THE AVENGERS seemed somehow fused with Francis Bacon and mews window boxes in Kensington, and Brixton was barely separable from the first few bars of The Clash's 'London Calling'. My most profound joys, however, lay in the East End... from Spitalfields and Brick Lane to Bow and the Isle of Dogs - where Dickensian snatches mixed potently with nursery rhyme, a semi-convict heritage and the theme tune from MINDER.

I began to appreciate the complexities of my hybrid, deeply etched anglo-celtic roots, my 'background'.

Around Britain and on epic bicycle journeys across Europe I shot hundreds of rolls of Kodachrome slides. Every pre-paid roll which came back to me processed and mounted from Kodak's Hemel Hempstead laboratory contained one or two vibrantly coloured roll-ends (frames accidentally exposed to light when loading the camera). I hoarded these images because they brought to mind the intensity, heat and colour of a mythological Australia I often missed.

Twenty years later I exhibited these artificial horizons as part of my show **TERROR AUSTRALIS** (2004) in Sydney.



David Watson *Horizon (4)* from *TERROR AUSTRALIS* (2004)

In London I found a fellow traveller in British film-artist Patrick Keiller, whose 'narrated landscapes' hover between fiction and documentary in their evocation and excavation of place. Reminiscent of work by Chris Marker (eg *SANS SOLEIL* [1982]) and Peter Greenaway (eg *THE FALLS* [1980] in which fictional narratives are created from actuality footage via voiceover), Keiller's films ponder the layered conundrums of life in contemporary Britain, urging us 'to develop a nomad's perception of space'.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Rachel Moore, Patrick Keiller-Profile, *Space is the Place*, [luxonline.org.uk](http://luxonline.org.uk), 6/9/04.

Keiller's wry LONDON (1994) seeks to re-invest the city of his birth with all the values he considers to be missing. Full of diversions, observations, bias, grimness, irony and wonder, LONDON is a memorable portrait, a mosaic of often fleeting, sometimes slowly revealing fragments (shot with a fixed camera). 'The main point of reference is literary history, especially Walter Benjamin, the great German cultural critic, who invoked the notion of the flâneur, the well-off idler of 19th-century European metropoli, who, through wandering, searching through the usually unnoticed, the piquantly historical, the anecdotal, the detritus, could fashion an alternative history of urbanisation far different from that allowed by official, Imperial sources.'<sup>3</sup>



Patrick Keiller LONDON (1994)

The film confirmed my belief that simple and receptive living could yield a potent sense of place. Re-imagining 'home' in the frantic late-20th century suddenly appeared not only possible but necessary.

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<sup>3</sup> Margarita Nikolaevna, 'The Most Daring British Film of the 1990s?', [www.imdb.com.london](http://www.imdb.com.london), 26/4/2000.



## Getting Back to Nothing<sup>4</sup>

After a decade wandering the globe and sampling continental sophistication, in 1989 I returned home craving primal simplicity. Back in Sydney I became aware of a powerfully brewing sense of place as I saw my own land with new eyes. Accustomed to Europe's muted tones, I was overwhelmed by the colour, light and infinite detail of Australia. Struggling to depict what I was seeing and feeling I immersed myself in Australian cinema, television, literature, photography and painting.

Eschewing the mainstream I found inspiration in odd, forgotten corners. Passing quickly through the master-photographers hall of fame (the fine-grained black and white tradition of Max Dupain and David Moore), I unearthed poetry in Jeff Carter's rough-hewn grainy portraits of Australian life (particularly his images of the bush, and of surf culture), and abstract colour revelation in the short gem-like experimental films of Paul Winkler.

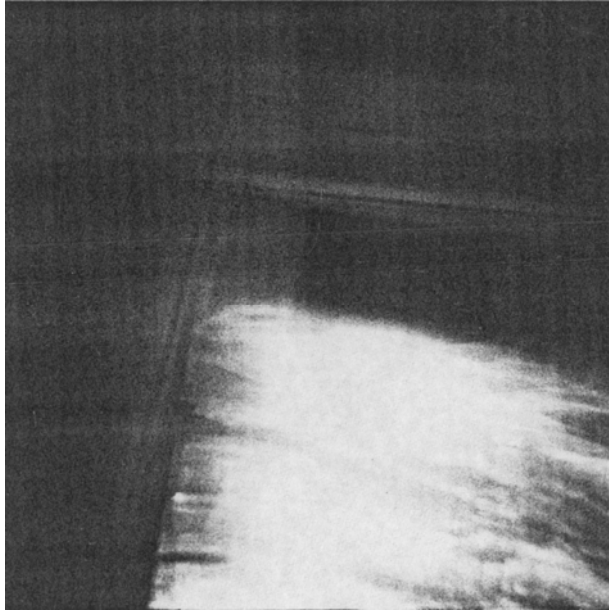


Paul Winkler ELEVATED SHORES (1993)

Celebrating the intricate natural and artificial shapes of the city's eastern harbour, the film was shot through mattes cut from the Sydney *Gregory's Street Directory*

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<sup>4</sup> Title of a 1971 Australian surf film by Tim Burstall.



Nancy Rexroth *Streaming Window* from IOWA series (1973)

At Sydney College of the Arts I discovered the black sheep of US photography - the disturbed grainy post-war urgency of Robert Frank's *Les Américains*, Nancy Rexroth's quicksilver series IOWA (shot with a throwaway Diana camera in Idaho) and Linda Connor's way-out-of-focus black and white landscapes, meticulously captured on the finest 10" x 8" negatives.

And I began to loath Ansell Adams (whom I had revered as a youth - his 'masterworks' of the sublime American wilderness adorning many a share-house wall). Photography seemed unhealthily obsessed with fine grain, pinpoint clarity, limitless depth-of-field... and the debilitating debate had a long history!<sup>5</sup>

So it was with some relief that I discovered the insane blur/flare of Ted Series, 'a self-defined alcoholic living out of a pickup truck with his canine companion somewhere in Colorado'<sup>6</sup>, who claimed to have the power to make photographs of his thoughts.

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<sup>5</sup> Controversy about focus raged for decades early in the 20th century. The Pictorialists argued for the truth of their impressionistic vision but were dismissed as 'fuzzy-wuzzies' by the 'f64-ite' Modernists, wedded to sharp 'reality' and the narrowest [f64] camera apertures.

<sup>6</sup> Review by Dena Shottenkirk, *Artforum*, 3/1991.

## And Gerald Murnane - Looking for Home

In Australia contemporary wonder seemed to emanate most powerfully from Melbourne. Gerald Murnane's evocations of place and memory and Bill Henson's gloriously soft but gritty floating colour photographs of the suburbs convinced me that 'Of all the forms of art, only film could show the remote horizons of dreams as a habitable country, and, at the same time, could turn familiar landscapes into a vague scenery fit only for dreams.'<sup>7</sup>

Murnane's highly individual and visual fiction remains strangely under-recognised in Australia. His seven exhilarating and resolutely eccentric novels (the author ceased writing in 2000 to master ancient Hungarian) are a sustained exploration of consciousness and the imagination. Influenced by Emily Brontë, Thomas Hardy, Marcel Proust and James Joyce, Murnane believes 'that there is a deeper truth about things, that is not accessible through science or rational vision, but that the writer is allowed glimpses of... in dreams, memories, reveries and reflections.'<sup>8</sup>

His 'meticulously honed novels describe interstitial landscapes that are, in themselves, inaccessible but about and give the possibility of entry to every other location'<sup>9</sup>. He writes, for example, of townships (of images) joined by feelings rather than roads. The patterns, maps and permutations of his stories ponder the extent to which the world is real, shaping psychic landscapes open to imaginings. His work avoids purely abstract philosophical territory by remaining 'securely anchored in the details of his own life, and of suburban Melbourne.'<sup>10</sup> Though the author abhors travel (he has never flown, and rarely leaves Victoria) his characters seem forever to be searching for home, for their 'native' land - eg 'I was always looking for some kind of ideal scenery which would correspond to obscure places in my thoughts'<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Gerald Murnane, *The Plains*, McPhee Gribble 1990, p 50.

<sup>8</sup> Imre Salusinszky, *Australian Writers: Gerald Murnane*, Oxford University Press, 1993, p1.

<sup>9</sup> Isobel Crombie, 'Out of Place: Photographing the Landscape' in *Darkness and Light: Looking at the Landscape*, McClelland Gallery, 2000, p 7.

<sup>10</sup> Salusinszky, *op cit*, p 2.

<sup>11</sup> Gerald Murnane, *Landscape With Landscape*, 1985, p 176 & p 231.

For Murnane the past and the present are one. In his first novel *Tamarisk Row*, via long and intricate sentences in the present tense he suggests the interconnectedness of all things - 'a state of flux - a continual wavering that I saw all around me'.<sup>12</sup> He creates 'a set of beckoning images that are never quite graspable'<sup>13</sup>

Murnane in book form became my constant companion as I explored my own land - as a foreigner with a camera, looking for home, for a decade. I shot short swirling Super 8 reveries of Sydney's Inner West - of its lorikeeted kerbside bottle-brush, disappearing urban industry and swiftly gentrifying suburbs. Inexplicably I also began to collect old television sets - unwieldy dinosaur-like vessels which despite (because of?) their awkwardness seemed to exhude some kind of special aura and magic for me - as a child of the television age raised on the imported wonderment of GET SMART, BONANZA, THE SAMURAI and THE SAINT.

### **The Dreamwork of Imperialism - Homer and Away - Artificial Horizons**

Sadly, little home-grown culture matched the iconic pulling power of its foreign competition during those years: Australia became instead 'a good place to watch TV'.<sup>14</sup> Our polyglot 'magpie culture' (fed on snatched morsels) and Australia's diverse population growth since WWII has created a particularly postmodern society - by turns alluringly multi-flavoured, fragmented, derivative, and frightfully new.

However, Australia is *anything but* a place without human history (as we have been sold for two centuries), and I fear that our ready embrace of visions from elsewhere risks stifling our own imaginings. What most delighted my 7-year-old

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<sup>12</sup> John Hanrahan (ed), *Footprint New Writers 2: Gerald Murnane* (Footscray Foundation for Australian Studies, Melbourne 1987, p 49.

<sup>13</sup> Salusinszky, op cit, p 15.

<sup>14</sup> Tom O'Regan, 'Inventing Australian TV' in *TV Times: 35 Years of Watching Television in Australia*, David Watson and Denise Corrigan (eds), Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 1991, p 12. O'Regan continues, 'Australia has always been a good place to watch American and British TV without the everyday problems of life in Los Angeles, Washington or Birmingham. Since the advent of SBS, it has also been a good place to watch a fair amount of world TV. We are lucky that our TV is not as parochial and inwardly-focused as British, American and Japanese TV.'

recently about our camping trip to the Flinders Ranges was that we would be driving close to the 'Simpson' Desert! As we cosy up ever closer to Uncle Sam we must guard against being culturally subsumed.

In *The Artificial Horizon: Imagining the Blue Mountains*<sup>15</sup> Sydney-based cultural historian Martin Thomas remembers an education somehow devoid of information about the real history of his own region: 'I knew few details about the conquest of Aboriginal society. On this matter the school histories of the 1970s were guarded.' Although he had learnt through family friends 'of the dreadful massacres that had decimated the Aboriginal population of Tasmania', around Sydney 'imagination was forced to compensate for a dearth of data. So the bush, for all its beauty and grandeur, often had a melancholy, an autumnal quality, the origin of which seemed sketchy though somehow associated with the lack of human presence. Despite - or perhaps because of these feelings, I found that forests and wild landscapes generally tended to arouse very strong emotions. The destruction of natural environments seemed an extension of some earlier corruption.'<sup>16</sup>



1963 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary stamp

Like Martin Thomas I grew up in Sydney's north-western suburbs on a spur overlooking the Blue Mountains, and was told virtually nothing about our area's deep cultural history. I knew of course of the trepidatious trio Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson, who 'following the ridges' had paved the way west to landed wealth and a bright future for our fledgling colony in 1813. Indeed Blaxland's imposing villa, with views to the city, sat delapidated across the road from where I lived in Marsden Road. But my knowledge of 'country' extended

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<sup>15</sup> Thomas, op cit. The book weaves together revisionist history, arcane anecdote, indigenous revelation and ruminations on art, photography and tourism to probe 'the dreamwork of imperialism' (p 155).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, pp10-11.

little further than Cook, Phillip and Elizabeth Farm. And I discovered only this year that our trio of ‘explorers’ probably conquered the labyrinth of the Blue Mountains ‘along a route parallel to that followed by aboriginal travellers’<sup>17</sup> for millennia.



Ken Watson *Binya and David* (1967)

My father found Binya as a baby freezing by the side of the road near Kiandra in the Snowy Mountains – her mother killed by a car. ‘binya’ is an aboriginal word meaning ‘big mountain’.

However, thanks to vigilant bush-walking parents, a pet wombat, and lots of camping, birdwatching and canoeing, I began to develop an eye and a love for my surrounds. The colours, shapes, textures and spirits of this ancient continent were imprinted early on my soul. Only recently have I realised that my experience was probably quite unusual and that I was, during those formative years, more ‘visually fortunate’<sup>18</sup> than most city-dwelling Australians.

By the age of nine I was able to spot and name all manner of native and introduced species. As my father fought a bitter weed war with Lantana and

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p 56.

<sup>18</sup> Tracing her visual acuity to a primal childhood roaming the wilds of Cornwall, English artist Bridget Riley employs this term in ‘The Pleasures of Sight’ in *The Eye’s Mind: Bridget Riley Collected Writings 1965-1999*, Thames and Hudson, 1999, p 30.

Paddy's Lucerne across our sloping Dundas paddocks, I supported him by hating noxious Privet (although it made excellent bows and arrows) and worshipping the beauty of the native Lilly Pilly, Pittosporum, Lemon-Scented Gum and Illawarra Flame Tree (which defied the invaders in remnant stands). I drew intricate maps of our territory - a seasonal creek in a hybrid bush valley boasting English Willow *and* Corroboree Frogs - and, eschewing the Scouts, formed The Outlaws (a benign neighbourhood gang) to roam, notch and dream its secrets. Little did I know that, decades later, these experiences would trigger my photographic interest in the municipal conundrums of Sydney's suburbs and their 'new nature'.<sup>19</sup>

Although my parents actually *knew* an artist (the landscape painter Alfred Cook) most of contented Sydney suburbia understood as much about Australian art as they did about the Aborigines. My appetite was whetted unwittingly via a love of philately and ornithology (particularly the exquisite avian illustrations of John Gould, Neville Cayley and William T Cooper). Aged 14 I bought my parents a framed print of Charles Conder's *Springtime* for Christmas. But for thirty years my interest in Australian landscape then lay dormant.



Fred McCubbin *On the Wallaby Track* (1896)

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<sup>19</sup> Tim Low paints a surprising picture of Australia's fast-evolving hybrid urban and suburban environments in *The New Nature: Winners and Losers in Wild Australia* (Penguin Books, 2002). Whilst the *diversity* of flora and fauna has suffered terribly since the arrival of white man, adaptation has seen some species flourish (eg currawongs), and many 'introduced' plants have become 'naturalised', thus enriching the mix.

## **Boning Up on White Australian Landscape History - The Revelation of Clarice Beckett**

My re-engagement with landscape via photography came at a fortuitously interesting time. Recent decades have seen the re-appraisal<sup>20</sup> of Australian landscape history and re-ignition of the genre in the light of this country's morphing political, social, technological and artistic landscapes. Growing recognition of the incalculable distress we have visited upon generations of indigenous people, and the spectre of environmental crisis have seen both black and white contemporary artists, writers, musicians and filmmakers forge fresh landscape terrain<sup>21</sup>.

To background my research I delved initially into the history of 19th-century (white) Australian landscape painting. Artists' responses to the colonies' nether regions evolved swiftly, albeit within largely bourgeois/male traditions. Early struggles to image the peculiar 'new' country gave way to depictions of an 'antipodean arcadia', a romantic sublime wilderness, the 'weird melancholy' of the bush, the optimism of the Heidelberg School and visions of Australia as a bountiful pastorate. These often-masterful works, however, assisted me little in my quest to re-imagine the country to which I had returned and begun to feel somewhat indigenous.<sup>22</sup>

It was thus a revelation to discover the paintings of Clarice Beckett (1887-1935) - an *oeuvre* all but forgotten until 1971, when much of it was re-discovered and lovingly resuscitated by curator Rosalind Hollinrake.

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<sup>20</sup> For example, the writing of Ian Burn, Ian North, Tim Bonyhady, Victoria Hammond and Gael Newton.

<sup>21</sup> For example: artists Ian Burn, Tracey Moffatt, Darren Siwes, Emily Kngwarreye, Mandy Martin, Dale Frank; writer Kim Scott, musician Archie Roach, filmmakers Ivan Sen and Cate Shortland.

<sup>22</sup> George Seddon sheds interesting light on the term: 'although... unique in preceding all... others (the Aborigines) too are immigrants to this land. Forty thousand years is a long time, but it still does not make them literally indigenous as a people, although the term is in common use. It is also a contested one: the Aboriginal view is that they are not immigrants but arose from the land. At the level of the individual, of course, anyone who was born in Australia, as I was, is indigenous' - in 'It's Only Words' in *Words for Country: Landscape and Language in Australia*, Tim Bonyhady & Tom Griffiths (eds), UNSW Press 2002, p 249.



Beckett drew inspiration from the tonal impressionism and influential thinking of artist/mentor Max Meldrum, who sought 'not to teach students to paint, but to observe'.<sup>23</sup> Her evocative urban and semi-rural scenes (roadsides, beaches, red-roofed residential cottages) 'proffer(ed) a view of Australia that celebrates modernity and the quiet beauty of its suburbs, in contrast to the heroic 'Australia Felix' landscapes which had been previously heralded as being representative of the true Australia'.<sup>24</sup>



Clarice Beckett *Attic House, Beaumaris* (c 1920s)  
[aka *Spring Morning*]

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<sup>23</sup> Ian Burn, *National Life & Landscapes: Australian Painting 1900 - 1940*, Bay Books, Sydney, 1990, p 58.

<sup>24</sup> Frances Lindsay, *Clarice Beckett: Politically Incorrect*, The Ian Potter Museum of Art, The University of Melbourne, 1999, p 3.



John Kauffmann *Fairy Woods* (c 1920)

Beckett's soft-focus realism, reminiscent of b/w work by the pictorialist photographers John Kauffmann<sup>25</sup> and Kiichiro Ishida<sup>26</sup>, possesses the added (to my mind essential when imaging Australia) element of colour. Her images are immersive, blending nature and culture rather than highlighting their dichotomy.

A contemporary spirituality emanates from her delicately smudged vignettes of the everyday. Whilst Beckett's glimpses of form and colour hint at the transience of beauty and perhaps, our own impermanence, her understated poetic (unique for her time) seems simultaneously to declare 'we are here, we are part of this place, and it is part of us'.

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<sup>25</sup> Kauffmann's (1864-1942) atmospheric work was well received at the turn of the century. In 1910 he mounted one of the first solo photographic exhibitions in Australia. However, after World War I the work of the Pictorialists 'was increasingly dismissed as well-meaning but misguided, and untrue to the Australian experience, light and landscape.' *John Kauffmann: Art Photographer*, National Gallery of Australia, 1996, p 11.

<sup>26</sup> Ishida (1886-1957) shot delicate, poetic Australian landscapes and Sydney urban scenes from 1919-1923. A Museum of Sydney exhibition, *Kiichiro Ishida and the Sydney Camera Circle 1920s - 1940s*, showcased his re-discovered oeuvre in 2004.

As a returned traveller I had wrestled to express a similar seemingly conflicting vision in suburban surrounds.

### **Sydney: Seven Years' Stranger - Victa Dreaming**

Back in Sydney I had witnessed the incredible form and colour of home as if for the first time. Once unexceptional places were invested with mystery and wonder: culverts, ovals and kikuyu were suddenly interesting as strange yet familiar municipal essences coalesced into some form of Victa (white-suburban-motor-mower) dreaming.

An obsessed contemporary flâneur with an Olympus OM-1, I researched the Situationists and the pleasures of the *dérive*<sup>27</sup>. My aimless strolls took me to all points of the Sydney UBD, and the obscure residential environs of places like Russell Lea, Five Dock, Belfield and Mortlake began to deliver undreamt of riches.

Prisms of travel and layers of contemporary sediment made home turf an odd, polyglot planet. There were snatches of elsewhere everywhere. I found the opulence and colour of LA's Beverly Hills in once down-at-heel Dundas Valley, Sicily in Haberfield, and Scotland in the formal gardens of Callan Park.

On the platform at Concord West I felt like the blinded protagonist from Visconti's film of Camus' *L'étranger* as the deep chocolate-brown railway seats, the dessicated white marble underfoot and blue blue sky red rooves green bright trees pulsed in the glare. Yet for years as a youth I had made that journey every week (to study recorder with Ingrid Walker) noticing precious little!

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<sup>27</sup> Literally 'drifting'... a Situationist method via which to experience the urban and its ambiances... 'a transient passage'. 'Cities have a psycho geographical relief, with constant currents, fixed points and vortexes which strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones.' *Internationale Situationiste #2*, December 1958.



David Watson from SYDNEY: SEVEN YEARS' STRANGER (1992)

Out-of-focus photographs perfectly captured this experience, delivering a fullness of place with room for the imagination, as the over-powering memory of 'then' resonated with the revelation of 'now'. The medium's indexical<sup>28</sup> link to the real world, abstracted via an idiosyncratic personal vision, seemed able also to trigger traces of shared memory.

Photography had for too long gloried in the primacy of its ability to engineer deep focus and to 'freeze' time. Rather than capture time I wanted to rupture and discard it. I agreed with Gerald Murnane: 'In all the world there has never been, there is not, and there will never be any such thing as *time*. There is only *place*. What people call time is only place after place.'<sup>29</sup>

With fluid, elusive images I found that I could re-enchant the everyday - the delights of which had been subtly obscured by the contempt of familiarity. I was perversely pleased that in a world obsessed with progress and 'more' the terms 'soft' and 'out-of-focus' (not to mention 'fuzzy') had become pejorative in the

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<sup>28</sup> Roland Barthes writes that a photograph is an 'emanation of the referent', a 'sort of umbilical cord [that] links the body of the photographed thing to my gaze: light, though impalpable, is here a carnal medium.' *Camera Lucida*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1981, p 81.

<sup>29</sup> Gerald Murnane, *Velvet Waters*, McPhee Gribble, 1990, p 152.

extreme. My C-Type prints denoted a philosophic preference for 'grey areas', for continuous-tone analog photography over a black/white on/off digital aesthetic.

I called my project 'Sydney: Seven Years' Stranger'.<sup>30</sup> It was my means of 'making home'.<sup>31</sup> The photographs became my first solo show, NEW SOUTH WONDERLAND (2000), at Sydney's Royal Botanic Gardens. Mounted 30mm behind glass the images hovered, flashed and swam before your eyes like coloured fish in an aquarium.

### **New South Wonderland**

An ancient, new place  
You may have been there  
Indistinct, crystal clear. Images which float in time  
Wild, municipal tracts - spirits of trees, glass,  
sea and bitumen



The Palm House – venue for NEW SOUTH WONDERLAND (2000)

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<sup>30</sup> David Watson, Sydney College of the Arts Graduate Diploma Paper, 1992.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas, op cit, p 181.

## **'In the end there are the trees'<sup>32</sup>**

Not far from the historic Palm House where my photographs glinted and sweated that December, another new arrival was causing a quiet commotion in its specially-constructed protective metal cylinder. A spindly seedling from the just-re-discovered-previously-believed-extinct Wollemi Pine<sup>33</sup> burst upwards to the sky - its protean defiance almost palpable. A glorious metaphor for all that still lies 'undiscovered' in a world made too rational by the combing and thumbing of western science and thought, the Wollemi Pine seemed also symbolic of the aeons which preceded mankind on this ancient continent - of all the unknown graces, cataclysms and silences of Gondwanaland.

Dusk in the Botanic Gardens - the twisted trunks of primal giants and fruit-bats wheeling in a striated sunset above a re-created aboriginal bark shelter, clumps of bush tucker and a settler vegetable garden (grown from original seeds) - always brought to mind our 'rather thin presence'<sup>34</sup> here in the pre-historic South. As I sat there in my little gallery<sup>35</sup> I became more aware than ever of the contemporary tension by which our lives are suspended - an uneasy sophistication spanning indigenous absence and primeval void.

Patrick White's remarkable *The Tree of Man*<sup>36</sup> fleshes out the seemingly thin lives of two New South Wales settler-farmers, Stan and Amy Parker. His sinuous writing builds remarkable intertwining interior and exterior worlds. White's paen to our wary relationship with this land carries a universal pulse - and as nature and culture rage, subside, collide, he locates the extraordinary in the everyday. Stan Parker's predicament before nature is a deep vein: 'He felt a kind of pleasure in the mounting storm. He held his face up flat to the racing

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<sup>32</sup> Patrick White, *The Tree of Man*, Penguin Books, 1973, p 480.

<sup>33</sup> In his *The Wollemi Pine: The Incredible Discovery of a Living Fossil from the Age of the Dinosaurs* (Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2000) James Woodford quotes eminent botanist Carrick Chambers on the significance of the discovery of the Pine 100kms north of Sydney: 'This is... the equivalent of finding a small dinosaur alive on earth.' (p 59).

<sup>34</sup> White, op cit, p 43.

<sup>35</sup> The Palm House is believed to be the oldest surviving public glasshouse in New South Wales. Built in 1876 and thought to have been designed by the Colonial Architect James Barnet, it once displayed a variety of tropical plants which could not survive outdoors.

<sup>36</sup> White, op cit.

clouds. His teeth were smiling in a taut, uncertain humour at the sky, the Adam's apple was isolated but insignificant in his throat. When suddenly he was altogether insignificant. A thing of gristle. The laughter thinned out in his throat. The pants hung from his hips and blew against the thin sticks of his legs. The whole earth was in motion, a motion of wind and streaming trees, and he was in danger of being carried away with it.<sup>37</sup>

As I deepened my appreciation of Australia's ancient, indigenous and settler past, and the inspirited landscapes we inhabit, out-of-focus imagery took on added potency. Beyond place, memory and 'pictorial effect', it seemed ideally nuanced to evoke something of our fluid yet unresolved relationship with this continent.



David Watson *Strata Title* from NEW SOUTH WONDERLAND (2000)

Over the past few years I have explored this intuition further by researching focus and human perception, and by seeking out focus-related work by contemporary artists. I have at the same time sought to immerse myself more deeply in Australia's physical and cultural landscapes to understand a little

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<sup>37</sup> White, op cit, p 47.

more of what has been lost (eg indigenous dispossession<sup>38</sup>) and how we might powerfully engage with what remains (eg the burgeoning literature of Australian belonging<sup>39</sup>).

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<sup>38</sup> For example Keith Willey *When the Sky Fell Down* (1979), Don Watson *Caledonia Australis* (1984), Henry Reynolds *The Other Side of the Frontier* (1982), Kim Scott *Benang: From the Heart* (1999), Phil Noyce *RABBIT-PROOF FENCE* (2002), Rolf de Heer *THE TRACKER* (2002) and Mark McKenna *Looking for Blackfellas' Point* (2002)

<sup>39</sup> For example Nonie Sharp *Saltwater People: The Waves of Memory* (2002), Tim Bonyhady and Tom Griffiths (eds) *Words for Country: Landscape and Language in Australia*, Peter Read *Belonging: Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership* (2000) and *Haunted Earth* (2002), Alex Miller *Journey to the Stone Country* (2002) and Andrew McGahan *The White Earth* (2004).



## Chapter 2 **Unfocussing**

### **Drift + Flicks - Shallow Focus - Blinking - Eyes of Jelly**

Much of what we see is not in focus. Nor is our field of vision - as most media frame it - rectangular (the closest geometrical equivalent to our binocular field of vision is the ellipse). As peripheral vision has become less important to our survival (ie we no longer need to look out for giant predators) and the industrial and information revolutions have shifted our primary focus to objects and events closer 'at hand' (eg the book, the computer), much of what we see has a shallow depth of field. This is especially true indoors, where light levels are lower.

Although we speak of 20/20 vision, the human eye is an imperfect instrument. While its capabilities *are* remarkable (and I will not broach here the vast, complex, still disputed terrain of human visual perception, memory and the eye-brain nexus) the eye itself possesses all manner of idiosyncracies. For example, it is an asymmetric, ovular shape, refracts alarmingly and - never absolutely still - is subject to 'drift', 'flicks' and 'pupillary unrest'<sup>40</sup>. Human vision is also often and irregularly interrupted by spontaneous and reflex blinking (although we rarely perceive it). Most of us blink about 15 times per minute - but women blink less than men, and each of us has our own rate, which is altered by our surroundings and our mental state.<sup>41</sup>

For a myriad interrelated reasons too complex to enunciate here, *Adler's Physiology of the Eye* concludes 'Retinal images are never truly sharp, the visual system is constantly processing somewhat blurred images, and tends to tolerate blur up to the point at which essential detail is obscured.'<sup>42</sup>

The conventional camera thus presents us with array of features (eg infinite focus and frozen motion) quite alien to human perception, and vice versa.

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<sup>40</sup> Robert A Moses (ed), *Adler's Physiology of the Eye*, The CV Mosby Company, Saint Louis, 1975, pp 151 & 331.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, pp 8-9.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, p 301.

As experimental filmmaker Stan Brakhage (whose work explores the visceral nature of vision) deftly observed ‘This eye is a jelly, and it’s quivering continually, with our heartbeat, with our walking, with our breathing, with anything that happens, any movement we make... what I did was to make an articulate dance with that possibility, with this lens.’<sup>43</sup>

### **Resisting Definition - Richter + Barth**

Although painting and sculpture dispensed with any quest for verisimilitude more than a century ago, photography was more reluctant to relinquish its defining mechanical qualities in the cause of art.

However, my research into the history of out-of-focus photography<sup>44</sup> revealed that a good deal of experimentation had preceded me (eg the technically challenged, imprecise and evocative 1850s portraits of Julia Margaret Cameron, the pictorial poetics of P H Emerson, the mysticism of Alvin Langdon Coburn and the disembodied blur of the futurist photographer Anton Bragaglia).

Of late the work and writings of contemporary artists Gerhard Richter and Uta Barth have most interestingly augmented my understanding and approach to focus.

Richter, whose long, uneasy and uncategorisable *oeuvre* excels in the use of painted and celluloid blur, has written: ‘I don’t create blurs. Blurring is not the important thing; nor is it an identity tag for my pictures. When I dissolve demarcations and create transitions, this is not in order to destroy the representation, or to make it more artistic or less precise... I blur things to make everything equally important and equally unimportant... I blur things to make all parts a closer fit. Perhaps I also blur out the the excess of unimportant information.’<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Stan Brakhage, *Brakhage Scrapbook: Collected Writings 1964-1980*, New Paltz: Documentex, p 193.

<sup>44</sup> David Watson, *Resisting Definition*, Sydney College of the Arts Graduate Diploma seminar paper, 1991.

<sup>45</sup> Gerhard Richter, *The Daily Practice of Painting: Writings 1962-1993*, The MIT Press, 1995, pp 35-37.

I too simply wished to pare back an overload of visual information without label or apology. But I was also aware that this would still challenge a subtly unstated Western orthodoxy which demands focus, or at least an admission of/explanation for its absence. Tellingly, our rationally-skewed language defines 'out-of-focus' only in opposition to qualities it cannot possess. [By contrast the Japanese have a word - 'bokeh' - specifically for 'desirable out-of-focusness'. Certain lenses are prized for the manner in which they render (usually background areas) with pleasing *bokeh*.]

Like Richter, Uta Barth speaks of making all parts of the image out-of-focus as a democratising impulse - and of empowering the periphery and the background. When all of the image becomes background, Barth suggests, it is the viewer (located in front of the image at its putative point of focus) who completes the experience as its subject. 'To stand in that zone is to be enveloped in the image in a particularly uncanny manner: to be part of it... yet to face it.'<sup>46</sup>



Uta Barth *Field #24* (1998)

Barth's two 1990s bodies of work FIELD and GROUND examine the conventions of photographic representation, and its limits - they consist of

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<sup>46</sup> Timothy Martin in Sheryl Conkleton, *Uta Barth: In Between Places*, Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, 2000, p 135.

blurred images generated by focussing the camera on an unoccupied foreground. Inviting 'confusion on several levels... "meaning" is generated in the process of "sorting things out."'47



Uta Barth *Ground #30* (1994)

Failing to recognise or 'place' the image, we may ponder whether something has just happened out of frame, or notice that the unframed image on the wall looks uncannily like a nearby corner of the room itself. With 'certain expectations unfulfilled' we experience a 'hyper-consciousness of visual perception', of our 'own activity of looking'.48

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<sup>47</sup> Sheryl Conkleton, op cit, pp 14-15.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, pp 15-16.

'Blur, or out-of-focusness due to shallow depth of field... is part of our everyday vision and perception, yet for the most part we are not very aware of it, as our eyes are constantly moving and shifting our point of scrutiny. We do not "see" it unless we make a conscious effort to observe the phenomenon. The camera can "lock-in" this condition and give us a picture which allows us to look at (and focus on) out-of-focusness'.<sup>49</sup>

In her series NOWHERE NEAR (1999) Barth presents us with disjointed suites of photographs of her own living room with a range of (radical to barely perceptible) alterations in their point-of-view/focus/lighting conditions. The images - drifting, shifting, moving near and away - 'looking without seeing, isolating objects then letting them go'<sup>50</sup>, suggest the disintegration and switching of attention, the manifold rhythms and sidelong flicks which so permeate our conscious and unconscious looking/being.

'Daydreaming, dissociation and forgetfulness are states of mind that have been excluded by twentieth-century theories of knowledge... Barth creates ambiguity and blurs the priority of place and thought, space and non-thought, reality and cognitive process.'<sup>51</sup> Barth's fascination remains the hovering, suspended between-ness of looking itself. Her interest lies in 'making pictures about other pictures' and not 'in making a photograph of what the world I live in looks like'. This is where we differ.

In 'generalising the image by dropping away specificity of time and place'<sup>52</sup> *my* work seeks to retain just enough colour and form to inescapably evoke Australia, and to trigger shared memory. My images are less formally constructed, more intuitive than hers. I do not regard making pictures about 'the world I live in' as entirely discrete from the pursuit of 'making pictures about other pictures'. After all, we see the world (and create images of it) through the prisms of our individual experience, much of which is derived from 'other pictures'. But I acknowledge Barth's strong intentionality and admire the rigour

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, p 18.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, p 73.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, p 19.

of her project. Like her, I want my photographs to seek out 'the places that might otherwise have succeeded in absconding from our consciousness'.<sup>53</sup>

Robert Smithson calls these places 'sites'... 'where your mind lose its boundaries and a sense of the oceanic pervades'.<sup>54</sup> Chapter 4 of this paper delves further into notions of 'the oceanic'.

### **Unconscious Scanning - Smiling Eyes**

Art historian Anton Ehrenzweig has written extensively about 'unconscious scanning', whereby the human eye and brain scan 'serial structures and gather more information than a conscious scrutiny lasting a hundred times longer. With impartial acuity subliminal vision registers details irrespective of whether they belong to the figure or to the ground. It tends to reverse the conscious preference for the figure and pays more attention to textural and background elements.'<sup>55</sup>



David Watson *Dove Rock* from NEW SOUTH WONDERLAND (2000)

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<sup>53</sup> Russell Ferguson in Sheryl Conkleton, op cit, p 111.

<sup>54</sup> Robert Smithson in 'Discussions with Heizer, Oppenheim, Smithson', *The Writings of Robert Smithson*, New York University Press, New York, 1979, p 176.

<sup>55</sup> Anton Ehrenzweig, *The Hidden Order of Art: A Study in the Psychology of Artistic Imagination*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967, p 33.

More broadly, he argues that unconscious scanning empowers our creative thought faculties: 'In contrast to conscious thought which needs closed gestalt patterns, unconscious scanning can handle 'open' structures with blurred frontiers which will be drawn with proper precision only in the unknowable future.'<sup>56</sup>

Out-of-focus photographs share something of this hovering potentiality. In their 'eternal present' lies an emanation of immanence.

The folk at *www.yogateacher.com* are also naturally interested in fathoming (there is that oceanic metaphor again) the unknowable. Their site tells us that 'soft vision' is not only 'a wonderful release for the eyes... but a spiritual practice used in divergent disciplines spanning the planet. The technique is used by Indian Yogis, certain tribes of American Indians, students of the Russian Gurdjieff Schools and European Gypsies. It gives a whole new perspective on the universe, turning the ordinary into the magical and giving insight into the mysterious... Smile with your eyes and allow that smile to soften your face and spread throughout your body. Focusing on nothing, you become aware of everything.'<sup>57</sup>

Gerhard Richter, who has neatly eluded pigeonholing for decades, is more concise: 'I just think we distort and cut ourselves from lots of things by having a name for everything: we have been too ready to define reality and then treat it as done with.'<sup>58</sup>

### **21st Century Landscapes Through the Windscreen of Dale Frank's Mind**

Reality is taken head-on, written off and resuscitated by Dale Frank, the contemporary Australian painter. His wild, disparate excursions in (often poured) paint and varnish defy labels (and often explanation). Frank's series *Views from the Bruce Highway* (2003) is totally abstract yet still evocative of 'real' place. 'He lets us view beautiful crystalline worlds... suggestive of places

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p 42.

<sup>57</sup> *Visual Meditations: On-Line Instructions with Charles MacImerney*, [www.yogateacher.com/text/meditations/on-line](http://www.yogateacher.com/text/meditations/on-line), 15/6/04.

<sup>58</sup> Richter, op cit, p 68.

that have been either macroscopically diminished or microscopically enlarged'<sup>59</sup> with great titles!... eg *Haigslea Warrego Highway looking west from the toilet block 3 kilometres west of Beau Bonjour Motel and French Restaurant (the last before Brisbane)*. Frank has a horror of flying, so he drives, and drives.



Dale Frank *The View of the running Swollen Gulley running between Jew Hill and One Tree Hill at about 6.30pm driving into the sun before Zieskies Grain (2003)*

These works are 'a tsunami of hysterical colouration' which, although 'ostensibly conceived on the drive to his home, make no reference to the vista at all'.<sup>60</sup> They are visions refracted through the windscreen of his mind. 'What's so strange about that?' Frank seems to be asking... so are most people's personal (intricate, monotonous, swirling, psychological, mythologised, recycled, torn, displaced, interrupted) 21st-century landscapes.

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<sup>59</sup> Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney, release for Frank's exhibition March 2003.

<sup>60</sup> Ashley Crawford, 'No wide brown land for me', *The Age*, Melbourne, 13 August 2003.



Observing the decay of industry and regional life in contemporary Britain, filmmaker Patrick Keiller writes of our changing, hybrid vistas: 'In a landscape from which so much visible economic and other activity has disappeared - exported or vanished into electronic networks - and in which political power and news media are centralised, our direct experience of everyday surroundings is peripheral... the world is seen mostly from the interiors of cars and buildings, or through television. Everyday landscapes are the service space for the hardware of invisible electronic communication, the space outside the virtual universe. It is easy to imagine large parts of visible urban and rural space, almost as if they were hidden from view, like the space on top of a wardrobe or behind the parapet of a flat roof.'<sup>61</sup>

My next mission was beginning to emerge. I would try to breath life into Australia's increasingly 'hidden' bushland and rural worlds. In re-discovering their richness through travel and regional art/indigenous/environmental history I had also discovered that, to Australia's detriment, 'country' had become all but non-existent for many Australians.

Via the veil-like wonder of out-of-focus photography I wanted to create yearning images which spoke both of knowing precious little *and* appreciating that which is precious, of absence and presence, denial and revelation.

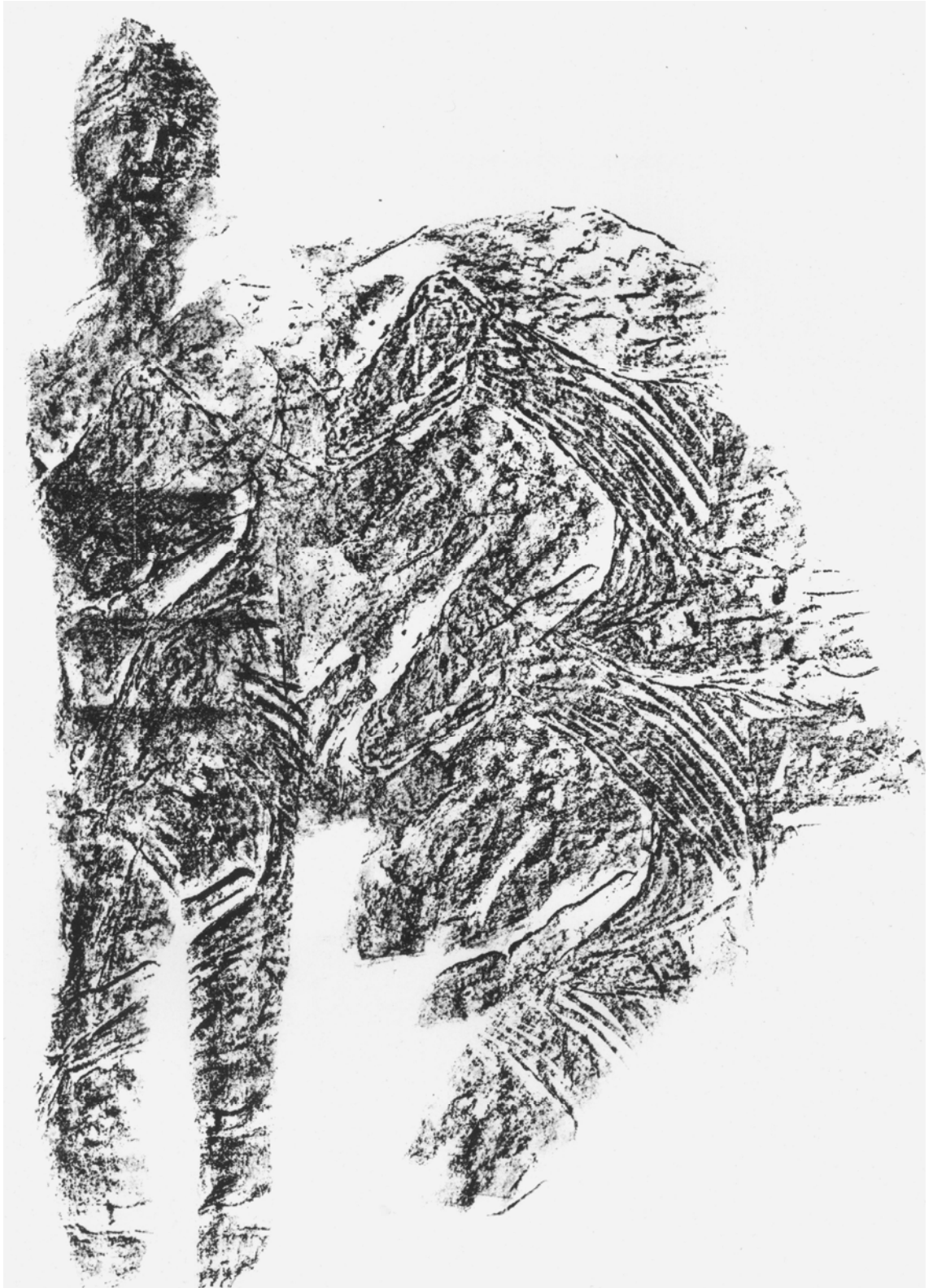
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<sup>61</sup> Patrick Keiller, *Sight and Sound*, BFI, London, November 1994, p 35.

All the places in NSW I can remember 3/7/03

West Wyalong Wilcannia Lithgow  
Louth Dumbogan Emu Plains Barren Grounds Putty Barradine  
Bourke Purfleet Nyngan Jamison Valley Cessnock Mungindi  
Cobar Wagga Wagga Walcha Wollondilly Toronto Louth  
Griffith Tweed Heads Lismore Quirindi Jerry's Plains Mendooran  
Broken Hill Yuragir Coffs Harbour Moree Cooperook Gilgandra  
Cobargo Evans Head Batemans Bay Umina  
Dungog Ulladulla Nadgee Burragarang  
Willow Tree Moss Vale Washpool Merriwa  
Minnie Water Ettalong Nimitabel Black Head  
Grafton Bowral Booral Gulgambone Hay  
Tomakin Stroud Tuncurry Tooraweenah Michelago  
Lake Carrigilligo Tiboburra Nevertire South West Rocks  
Bathurst Minnamurra Adamahby Wee Waa Mullumbimby  
Orange Huskisson Collector Copacabana Nimbin  
Blayney Wyong Greenbeyan Billinudgel Tunttable Falls  
Bathurst Newcastle Canberra Braidwood  
Sassafras Anna Bay Tocumwal Cowra  
Wingham Singleton Trangie Blackheath  
Taree Bendalong Araluen Lawson  
Gloverston Crowdy Head Maitland Warren  
Capertee Forbes Gosford Nambucca Heads  
Gundagai Green Patch Bateau Bay Womborn  
Jugiong Summercloud Bay Durras Lakes Wombarra  
Jass Austinmer Albury Port Macquarie  
Griffith Tathra Barrington Tops Woy Woy  
Brewarrina Bega Casino Byron Bay  
Armidale Eden Clarence Town Lake Cathy  
Hill End Junee Menangle Mungo Brush  
Sofala Cooma Dapto Hat Head  
Glen Innes Kiandra Berry Catherine Hill Bay  
Tamworth Tumut Peats Ridge Bermagui  
Nowra Mildura Werribee Hawkes Nest  
Tahmoor White Cliffs Terrigal Narooma  
Wollongong Delegate Avoca Tea Gardens  
Shoalhaven Heads Murwillumbah Foresters Beach Trangie  
Macleod Nelsons Bay Depot Beach Bredbo  
Crescent Head Forster Wingerarie Jindabyne  
Pt Plomer Kempsey Wolomai Thredbo  
Katoomba Coolah Wentworth Falls Breadalbone

David Watson *All the places in NSW I can remember* 3/7/03 (2003)



Sidney Nolan *Figure and Landscape* (1958)

### Chapter 3 **Only Ideas Won by Walking Have Any Value**<sup>62</sup>

'We Aboriginal people do not have a monopoly on spirituality in this country, we have just been practising it a bit longer.'<sup>63</sup> **David Mowaljarlai**

'This country will speak to you too, if you listen. The blacks say it flows into you through your feet, and they're right. But it's not an Aboriginal thing. It's not a white thing either. It's a human thing.'<sup>64</sup> **Andrew McGahan**

#### **Re-Discovering Australia - Communion of Soul and Scene**

Drawn beyond the suburbs to remote and bushland regions, I have travelled 25,000kms across Australia since 2002 in search of imagery which speaks more broadly of what it is to inhabit this young and ancient continent. My rural meanderings (often camping with my family) have been augmented by the trawling of local indigenous and settler histories, visits to regional galleries, caravan parks, motels and TABs, and by the enjoyment of surfing and opportunity shops of diverse denomination.

The seam is rich. So specific are the light, colour and form of this country, so visible its primeval origins (eg the Nullarbor and Jenolan Caves), so precious its (until recently largely invisible) indigenous heritage, so strange yet perfectly adapted its flora and fauna - and so diverse its contemporary Anglo/Asia-Pacific/US overlay that I find it now impossible to envisage making meaningful images anywhere else.

I have made pilgrimages to Western Australia (to visit my part-Croatian in-laws in Albany), to the Grampians in Victoria (my Anglo-Celtic father's 'country' and a

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<sup>62</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols or How to Philosophize with a Hammer*, trans R J Hollindale, Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1969 (1889).

<sup>63</sup> David Mowaljarlai, 'An Evening of Australian Spirituality', together with Michael Leunig, University of Melbourne, 22 March 1996. Quoted in Epigraphs in David Tacey, *Re-enchantment: The New Australian Spirituality*, Harper Collins, 2000.

<sup>64</sup> Andrew McGahan, *The White Earth*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2004, p 295.

well-spring of powerful tales), to the worn volcanic wilds of the Warrumbungles and to scorched Kosciuszko National Park. I have immersed myself in the convolutions of Australia's south-east coast - from Cape Otway, Wilson's Promontory and Mallacoota Inlet to Mimosa Rocks, Point Plomer and Yuragir, and hiked the Great North Walk - a remarkable 280km bush journey from Sydney to Newcastle through 'my' Hawkesbury sandstone country.



David Watson *Lichen Tree* (2002)

The first 50km of the Great North Walk had a profound impact upon my appreciation of Sydney - surely the most still-visibly-primeval modern metropolis in the world.

Like Stan Parker, I made these journeys 'slowly, with all the appearance of aimlessness, which is the impression which spiritual activity frequently gives, while all the time this communion of soul and scene was taking place, the landscape moving in on him with increased passion and intensity, trees surrounding him, clouds flocking above him with tenderness such as he had never experienced.'<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> White, op cit, p 397.

## Blending Time and Place - Sebald + Hutchinson

W G Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn*, a journey on foot through coastal East Anglia (where he lived for more than 20 years), is a rumination on England's pastoral and imperial past. A liner note claims that the contemporary German-born author 'borrowed his way of writing from the dreaming'.<sup>66</sup> It 'follows the trails of destruction human beings have wrought on themselves... its narratives created from the fragments of shattered worlds.'<sup>67</sup> Sebald blends fiction, autobiography and history to profound effect. His writings sing with delicate universal truths and, like Australian author Gerald Murnane, he seeks out and conjures 'special knowledge' with poetic élan.

Although his journey is infused with melancholy ('on every new thing there already lies the shadow of annihilation'<sup>68</sup>), he also delights in uncertainty and the discovery of delicious mystery. In Sebald's universe (as in our own) time and place are forever coalescing, their accretions becoming confused and often infinitely more interesting. 'Nor can one readily say which decade or century it is, for many ages are superimposed here and co-exist.'<sup>69</sup> 'Some of the lighter-coloured trees seemed to drift like clouds above the parkland. Others were deep, impenetrable green. Like terraces the crowns rose upon one another, and if one defocused one's eyes just slightly it was like looking upon mountains covered with vast forests.'<sup>70</sup> By his regular deployment of resonant but usually ambiguous uncaptioned photographs to complement his texts, Sebald sees photography as a medium uniquely placed to capture such conundrums.

British-born artist/gardener Peter Hutchinson has worked with landscape since the 1960s via physical interventions and conceptually framed 'actions' (his rope throws, for example, whereby the throw and random fall of a length of rope determine the position of flower plantings, and hence the commencement of a collaborative work between artist and 'nature').

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<sup>66</sup> W G Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn*, Harvill Press, London, 1998. The quote is attributed to *Neue Züricher Zeitung*.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, liner note.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, p 24.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, p 36.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, pp 37-38.

More recently he has worked again with nature, blending fantastic vistas via photographic collage. His at-first-realistic-looking hybrid landscapes speak both of the artificiality and the preciousness of the world's landforms, flora and fauna. 'In my garden reside places I shall never go. Not only do plants come from Chile, India, mountain ranges all over, Switzerland, England, in fact almost everywhere, but small environments symbolize large ones, analogs for whole ecosystems.'<sup>71</sup>



Peter Hutchinson *Planet Landscape*

*Andaman, albatross, amphibian, Antilles: where does a landscape begin. Where does a landscape end.*

(1997)

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<sup>71</sup> *Hamish Fulton und Peter Hutchinson*, Kunstverein für die Rheinland und Westfalen, Düsseldorf, 1998, p 4.

Hutchinson's work is deceptively simple, as is his powerful philosophy: 'A long time ago I realised that my work should be about what I knew and really cared about'<sup>72</sup>

Like Gerald Murnane, who details his conviction that in the patterns and colours of horse racing (a lifelong obsession) reside deep truths<sup>73</sup>, Sebald too derives wonderment from (so-called) ordinary experience... eg 'I have always kept ducks, he said, even as a child, and the colours of their plumage, in particular the dark green and snow white, seemed to me the only possible answer to the questions that are on my mind.'<sup>74</sup>

Sebald's characters wander, wax and wane as their paths intersect with his own peregrinations - from town to town, era to era. Forgotten minor players trigger extraordinary tales. By resuscitating (inventing?) arcane threads of the past his stories remind us of 'the richness and strangeness of life'<sup>75</sup>. For Sebald memory is a fluid amalgam... 'If I now look back at those times... it is as if I were seeing everything through flowing white veils'<sup>76</sup>

Like Sebald and Hutchinson I am interested in creating fluid traces of things I care about. From an uncertain remove my images vacillate and caress the wonders of our somewhat threatened world.

### **White Veils - Uncanny Australia - Postmodern Animism**

Ken Gelder and Jane Jacobs' *Uncanny Australia: Sacredness and Identity in a Postcolonial Nation* (1998) is a thought-provoking study which looks at how the Aboriginal sacred inhabits contemporary Australia. The authors deploy Freud's 1919 theory of the 'Uncanny' (that strangely doubled, disconcerting sense of being both 'in and out of place' as one's home is rendered unfamiliar) to

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p 57.

<sup>73</sup> Gerald Murnane, *Tamarisk Row*, William Heinemann, Melbourne, 1974. The universal truths of the racetrack are beautifully evoked by the author in Philip Tyndall's film WORDS AND SILK (1991).

<sup>74</sup> Sebald, op cit, p 248.

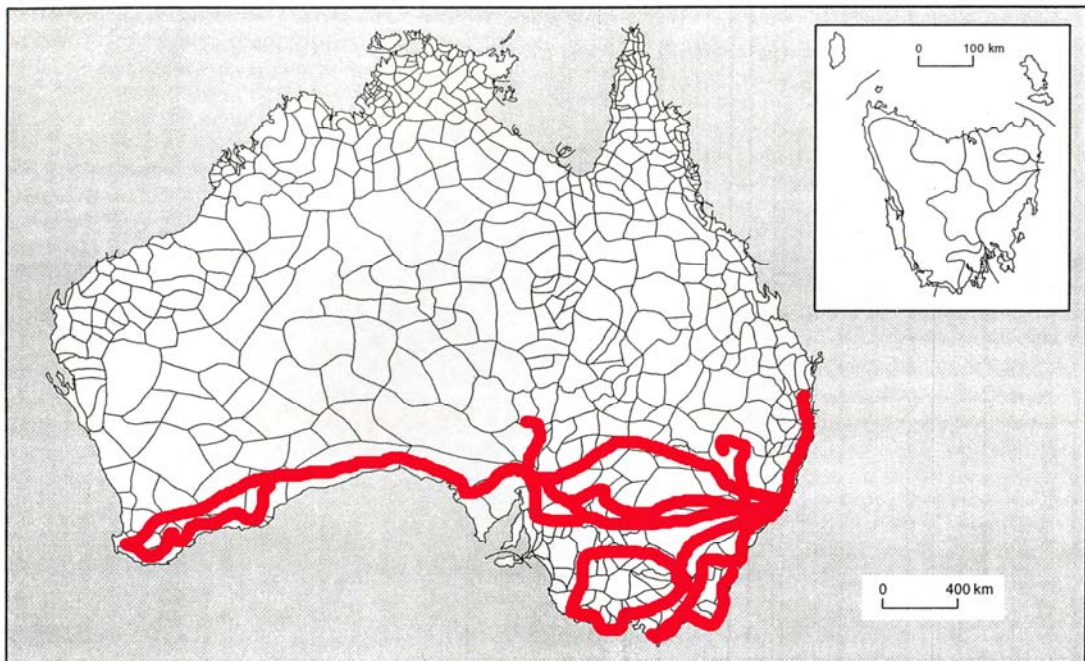
<sup>75</sup> Andrew Riemer, 'It's a wanderul world' in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 August 1998.

<sup>76</sup> Sebald, op cit, p 48.



propose an explanation for an unresolved unease particular to contemporary Australia.

Arguing that in postcolonial Australia after the *Mabo* decision in 1992 what was 'ours' (ie land occupied with a *terra nullius* mindset over two centuries) became also potentially 'theirs', they reference Julia Kristeva's writings re 'a certain anxiety which stems from the difficulty of disentangling what is one's home from what is not one's home' - what is 'foreign' or strange.<sup>77</sup> In discussing aboriginal sacred sites (and their defence against mining claims) Gelder and Jacobs draw attention to the particularly uncanny predicament of aboriginal people, obliged (by Western law) to reveal secrets of country which court (!) by their very mention their own destruction. Such troubled notions of 'home' will surely persist whilst our nation remains stridently unreconciled.



Map of Aboriginal Tribes of Australia<sup>78</sup> overlaid  
with David Watson's journeys 2002-04

<sup>77</sup> Ken Gelder & Jane M Jacobs, *Uncanny Australia: Sacredness and Identity in a Postcolonial Nation*, Melbourne University Press, 1998, pp 23-26. Kristeva's *Strangers to Ourselves* (1991) is referenced.

<sup>78</sup> Adapted (p 58, *Uncanny Australia [ibid]*) from Norman B Tindale, *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia: Their Terrain, Environmental Controls, Distribution, Limits and Proper Names*, Australian University Press, 1974.

Like many Australians over recent decades I have become a little better informed about and a lot more receptive to matters indigenous. In an unsympathetic political climate it has been particularly cheering to witness the emergence of powerful and empowering indigenous voices across the cultures of art, film, music and the environment.

We have much to learn. Firstly, perhaps, that we are not quite as different as we may think. In his recently published *Looking for Blackfellas' Point: An Australian History of Place*, Mark McKenna outlines the shocking history of aboriginal dispossession on the NSW south coast (an area I know quite well as a surfer/bushwalker, and to which I have always connected a lingering melancholy). He recounts a conversation with B J Cruse, an Aboriginal officer with the local land council in Eden... 'If you want to know where our sites are just look around you', he said, 'we like the same spots as you do'.<sup>79</sup> That said, McKenna makes it clear that he does not 'believe that non-Aboriginal Australians can or should seek to appropriate an Aboriginal way of belonging to the land. We should try to understand, but we should also accept that there are some things we do not understand.'<sup>80</sup>

Melbourne-based academic and spiritual commentator David Tacey, on the other hand, insists that we must adopt a new 'postmodern animism'<sup>81</sup> - or face environmental ruin. Our immediate task, he says, is to unlearn some of our late-capitalist 'sophistication' and develop a more indigenous relationship with land and sea - regarding *it as part of us, and we part of it*.

Tacey evokes the experience of Ngarinyin elder David Mowaljarlai to describe this spiritual relationship: '*One is both present and not present as one moves through the world... present with an attentive consciousness but not with the ordinary ego. This involves not so much looking at nature (the perennial gaze of the Westerner, the tourist), but allowing the objective life of the world to*

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<sup>79</sup> Mark McKenna, *Looking for Blackfellas' Point: An Australian History of Place*, UNSW Press, Sydney 2002, pp 4-5.

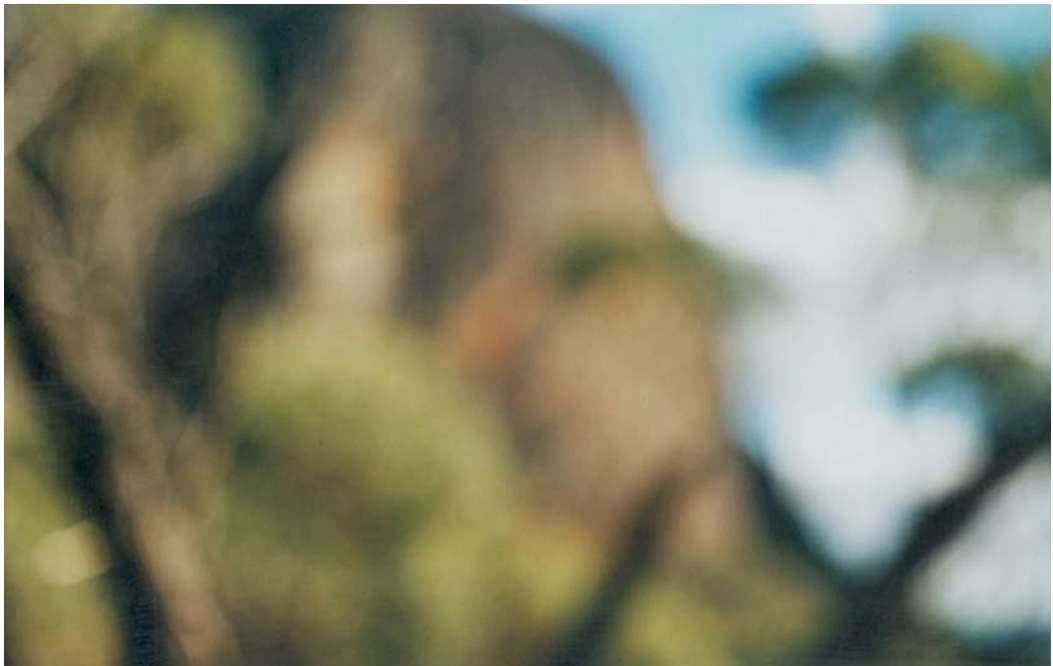
<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, p 8.

<sup>81</sup> David Tacey, *Re-enchantment: The New Australian Spirituality*, Harper Collins, 2000, p 167.

*penetrate our barriers.* This is diffuse, indirect awareness, akin to what Sufism calls 'walking through the world with soft eyes... not necessarily looking at everything, in the sense of examining things in camera-like detail, but... dissolving the hard forms of the world, the forms of separateness.'<sup>82</sup>

Gerald Murnane speaks of gleaning profound insight from looking at things through the 'sides of his eyes'. He has written 'A thing seen from the side, so to speak, tends to resemble something else and that something else is always FULL OF MEANING in a way that the thing looked at directly never is.'<sup>83</sup>

Whenever I photograph this country, sentiments such as these walk closely with me, my images seeking an 'immersive' relationship with what lies underfoot and all around.



David Watson *Volcanic* (2003)

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid, pp 116-17.

<sup>83</sup> Letter to David Watson upon receipt of an unsolicited gift of one of his photographs, 1995.

## Mandy Martin

The Australian painter Mandy Martin works directly with the land – her prolific politically engaged output addressing our uneasy relationship to ‘country’. Her work is powerfully, literally ‘grounded’ (often using local earth pigments) in the indigenous and settler histories of the areas she paints. Martin sees herself as an ‘artist-explorer’, her work often inscribed with regional art historical and literary allusions. Her 2002 SALVATOR ROSA SERIES, for example, re-traced the steps and sublime imaginings of Sir Thomas Mitchell whose 1848 exploration and naming of parts of Southern Queensland invoked not only the Italian artist Rosa (1615-73), but other Romantic references: Poussin, John Martin and Claude.



Mandy Martin *Omnus Inclusum* (2002) from THE SALVATOR ROSA series

Martin has recently produced substantial accompanying publications for each of her bodies of work. These not only reproduce her paintings and diaries from a number of remote-region field studies, but examine closely local issues of land and water management, geography and the environment. ‘She wants us to rejoice in this land. Ironically, one of the environmental values that is beginning to be shared between Aboriginal people and some pastoralists... is a strong

sense of belonging to the same land, particularly in opposition to the new invaders, the rapacious cotton farmers.<sup>84</sup>

Mandy Martin's full and unusual engagement with community and its layered 'landscapes' is an encouraging model for artists and concerned citizens, in that it shows how 'an injection of aesthetics'<sup>85</sup> might assist this country to find solutions to some of its most pressing problems.

### **Fossil Worms - Long Shadows - Terror Australis**

At Brachina Gorge in South Australia's Flinders Ranges you can walk 20 metres from your car to view fossil worm holes 600 million years old. Nearby one of the most significant events in the history of life on Earth is recorded in a thin band of sandstone 550 million years old. Soft-bodied sea organisms preserved in the Rawnsley Quartzite are the first evidence of multi-celled animals (metazoans) on this planet.



Artist's impression of Ediacara Fauna in the sea about 550 million years ago (sketch courtesy Queensland Museum)

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<sup>84</sup> Tom Griffiths in Mandy Martin and Tom Griffiths, *Mandy Martin: Watersheds: The Paroo to the Warrego*, 1999, p 53.

<sup>85</sup> Jane Carruthers and Mandy Martin in Mandy Martin, *Infows: The Channel Country*, 2001, p 14.

For millennia people have sought to connect with the incredible antiquity of this land. It is a strange irony that in this 21st-century world of streamlined digital super-connectivity we are perhaps less in touch with it than ever before.



'Mobile coverage that's going from strength to strength'  
Telstra advertisement *Sydney Morning Herald* (2004)

Introducing Paul Winkler's complex film-paen *LONG SHADOWS* (1991), which fuses cultural inscription, the 'real' and its celluloid memory (home movie footage shot at Govett's Leap in the Blue Mountains), Quentin Turnour writes: 'For all the theme parks and other artificial spectacles now on offer, this location is still, statistically, one of the nation's leading tourist attractions. Probably because it is the closest location to Sydney where a visitor can confront the

great hazy vista of the the great vast Bush 'scape, the most connivent and condensed place in which it is dramatised in a similar way to that of the immense hand-painted panoramas that were a popular attraction in the early-19th century. A visual experience encapsulated, glossed and summarised without getting the dirty hands of investigation - or in the case of the Australian bush, the sore feet, the parched throat, the clothing, the terror of strangeness, of alienation.

Mythically the Blue Mountains are a negotiating table between the coastal civilisation of Australia and its unpopulated inland. At Katoomba and at Govett's Leap one can come up to a precipice, rest upon a wire mesh barrier, have the distances of the Australian Bush presented to one with all the transparent might of a Streeton painting, meditate upon its wideness and beauty, and be home in time for tea and television.'<sup>86</sup>



Paul Winkler LONG SHADOWS (1991)

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<sup>86</sup> *Paul Winkler: Films 1964-94*, Brian Doherty and David Watson (eds), Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 1994, pp 66-67.



Dennis Adams *The Blue Mountains* from  
*The Shell Guide to Australian Wildflowers* (c1960)

Although Australians enjoy ready access to ancientness, their views and viewfinders seem too often constrained to vistas ordained by lookouts and air-conditioned-coach windows. I fear that much of our spiritual potential will lie untapped until we are more expansively connected - until we can feel at home in this country's folds and afford proper acknowledgment to its first custodians. The images and catalogue text for my exhibition *TERROR AUSTRALIS* (2004) sought to enunciate this:

There is a chill in the emotional heart of this country.

Many of us seem disconnected from what is precious, what lies beneath our feet. Exhausted by consumerism, too busy, or stifled by cynicism we refuse to immerse ourselves in, acknowledge or love what we have. Such a climate breeds suspicion of others and fear of ourselves.

My vision for Australia is that by the year 2010 no child shall be without a tent and a sleeping bag. By treading more lightly upon this earth and respecting indigenous and environmental wisdom our next generation will come to know how crucial (and wonderful) it is to say 'sorry'.



Until 1860 nearly two-thirds of Australia remained 'unexplored', its interior 'a ghastly blank'. In *The Dig Tree*, her perceptive re-tracing of Burke and Wills' fateful journey, Sarah Murgatroyd comments 'The catchcry "There's nothing out there" started in the nineteenth century, and it's a myth that permeates urban Australian culture to this day'.<sup>87</sup>



David Watson *Horizon (12)* from TERROR AUSTRALIS (2004)

My exhibition explored perceptions of Australia's emptiness and fullness - a 'great divide' evoked via two very different suites of landscape imagery. Twelve deeply hued abstract 'horizons' - digital prints from slide-roll ends accidentally exposed when loading my camera on bicycle journeys across Britain in the 1980s, which uncannily brought to mind the mythological terror/beauty of Australia's 'dead heart' - were juxtaposed with a set of delicate, often close-up

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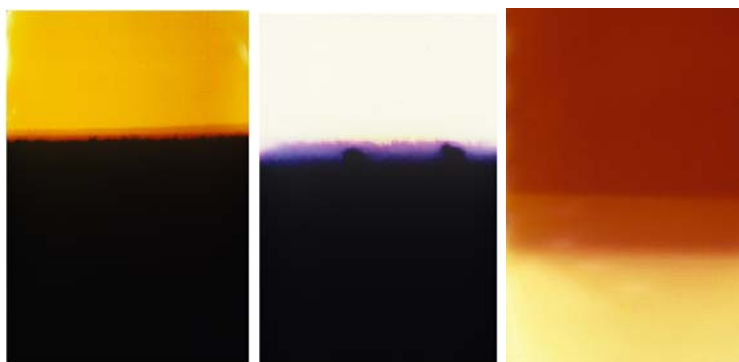
<sup>87</sup> Sarah Murgatroyd, *The Dig Tree: The Story of Burke & Wills*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2002, p 16.

out-of-focus 'ellipses' (smaller, C-type prints which sought to capture the muted colour and nuanced form of the Australian bush).



David Watson *Ellipse* (9) from TERROR AUSTRALIS (2004)

'The accidental landscapes... these "sunsets" and "sunrises" are as true or false, as any other photographic image' observed Richard Dunn in the exhibition catalogue.<sup>88</sup> As visitors to the show enjoyed 'memories' triggered by totally abstract celluloid - 'early morning in Woomera' (7) and 'a dust storm in Mildura' (11) variously declared - I understood more clearly the powerful emanation of (even the mistakenly perceived) photographic trace. A similar shimmering desire - of striving to place via one's own memory - fuels the potency of out-of-focus imagery.



David Watson *Horizon* (7), (10), (11) from TERROR AUSTRALIS (2004)

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<sup>88</sup> Richard Dunn, exhibition catalogue essay *David Watson's Terror Australis*, Gallery Barry Keldoulis, Sydney, 2004.

## Chapter 4 That Oceanic Feeling

'They'd been in the car only fifteen minutes, but already it felt like another country. The farms were poorer here, as if the black soil was growing *shallow* as the hills grew near, like the *ocean* nearing a *coastline*. The road curved gently around invisible *undulations*, and before them the broad tip of the spur *swelled* out of the fields, *cresting* in a low hill.'<sup>89</sup> **Andrew McGahan** [my emphasis]

'Go back a few hundred million years. Right here where we stand there was nothing back then but ocean. The continent that eventually became Australia was somewhere else entirely - it was wandering about between the equator and the south pole. It wasn't even the same shape as now. You wouldn't be able to find the station on it, you wouldn't even be able to find the hills or the plains... it's one thing to know where a piece of land is. It's another to know where it came from.'<sup>90</sup> **Andrew McGahan**

This speculative chapter explores my desire to understand and image Australia not only in a manner more indigenously attuned, but through eyes which refract the layered aquatic history and deep geology of this island's protean vistas.

### **The Planet Water - Waves of Memory - A Sea of Trees - Time's Isthmus**

'Lynn Margolis (one of the creators of the Gaia concept) was probably right, when, standing at a conference in front of a very large blue picture of the Earth, she proclaimed "This planet has the wrong name - it should have been called the planet Water."<sup>91</sup>

The Australian continent is living proof of the constant flux and indivisibility of earth and sea: freshwater dolphins once frolicked around Uluru; Coober Pedy's opals and the limestone caves of Nullarbor and Jenolan (remnants of vast coral reefs) were created hundreds of millions of years ago underwater; and until quite

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<sup>89</sup> McGahan, op cit, p 14.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, p 80.

<sup>91</sup> ABC Radio National's Robin Williams introducing *Ockham's Razor*, 2004.

recently (15,000 years ago) Sydney Harbour was a vast meadow valley, with a coastline twenty kilometres east of where its sandy beaches lie today.



David Watson *That Oceanic Feeling: Luca at Lake Mungo* (2004)

The fluidity and interconnectedness of all forms ('animate' and 'inanimate' as we in the West insist on differentiating them) is central to Aboriginal belief and spirituality. Gorges, mountain outcrops, skies, oceans, trees and rivers are simply, powerfully and beautifully part of us, and we of them. In coastal northern Australia aboriginal tradition and daily life remains powerfully bound to 'sea country'. The ocean's ebb and flow, its waves and weather patterns, the diversity of its life and underwater forms sustains aboriginal people in a panoply of interlinked ways. The sea is the source not only of food, but of spirituality, memory, identity and community.

In the early days of 'New' South Wales (ironically aeons older than the 'old country' from which its name derived) hybrid myths of white *and* aboriginal origin fuelled belief in the existence of a vast Inland Sea which took several decades of arduous exploration to dispel. There was of course an inland sea - but as travel writer Ernestine Hill wittily observed in 1951, Sturt was 'just 50 million years too late'<sup>92</sup>

By interesting contrast, Martin Thomas plumbs the (limiting) maritime mindset of Australia's European colonisers and cartographers, suggesting that 'because their regime was governed by the ocean rather than the land' they brought a

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<sup>92</sup> Mandy Martin and Tom Griffiths, *Mandy Martin: Watersheds: The Paroo to the Warrego*, 1999, p 48.

vast empty oceanic imagining to the great southern land. The First Fleet astronomer and cartographer Lieutenant William Dawes, for example, would 'steer by compass' as he charted the interior south and west of Sydney. On his 1791 survey 'The zig-zag manner of his journeying mirrors the movement of a ship tacking against the breeze'.<sup>93</sup>

'The implications of treating land as sea are worthy of scrutiny', continues Thomas. 'The ocean is the one element of the earthly sphere that consistently mimics the expansive neutrality of geometric space. To the Europeans this neutrality was embodied not only in the homogeneity and expansive qualities of the ocean but also in its legal status. Unlike the land, the ocean is devoid of human occupants. Consequently the transfer of a maritime imaginary to the Australian continent had social consequences of considerable gravity.'

The 19th-century colonial mind was awash with aquatic metaphor. Barron Field, a colonial judge and poet (with, remarks Thomas wryly, 'an unpromising name for a commentator on landscape'<sup>94</sup>), saw little more to the Australian bushscape than 'a mere sea of harsh trees'. The explorer Paul Strzelecki, lost in the Blue Mountains area in 1839, wrote that his progress through 'a forest of high and thick fern... resembled the act of swimming rather than walking'.<sup>95</sup>

The ancient labyrinthine contortions of the Blue Mountains also took on oceanic form for a young Charles Darwin, who in 1836 described the vista from Weatherboard Falls (today Wentworth Falls): 'By following down a little valley and its tiny rill of water, an immense gulf is unexpectedly seen through the trees, which border the pathway, at the depth of perhaps 1,500 feet. Walking on a few yards one stands on the brink of a vast precipice, and below is the grand bay or gulf (for I know not what other name to give it), thickly covered with forest. The point of view is situated as if at the head of a bay, the line of cliff diverging on either side, and showing headland behind headland, as on a bold sea-coast.'<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Thomas, op cit, p 116.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, p 40.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, p 109.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, pp 73-74. Darwin was doubtless aware of the region's antiquity: marine deposits over millions of years created the Blue Mountains' sedimentary strata;



Eugène von Guérard *Weatherboard Creek Falls, Jamiesons Valley, New South Wales*  
(1862)

Wrestling with notions of travel and memory (in another century and another hemisphere), anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss employed uncannily similar metaphor...

‘Forgetfulness, by rolling my memories along in its tide, has done more than merely wear them down or consign them to oblivion. The profound structure it has created out of the fragments allows me to achieve a more stable equilibrium, and to see a clearer pattern. One order has been replaced by another. Between these two cliffs, which preserve the distance between my gaze and its object, time, the destroyer, has begun to pile up rubble. Sharp edges have been blunted and whole sections have collapsed: periods and places collide, are juxtaposed or are inverted, like strata displaced by the tremors on the crust of an ageing planet. Some insignificant detail belonging to the distant past may now stand out like a peak, while whole layers of my past have disappeared without trace. Events without any apparent connection, and

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uplifted about 200 million years ago, the plateau’s plunging valleys are the result of aeons of weathering and erosion.

originating from incongruous periods and places, slide one over the other and suddenly crystallize into a sort of edifice which seems to have been conceived by an architect wiser than my personal history... Time has extended its isthmus between life and myself.<sup>97</sup>

### **'The Oceanic'**

The concept of 'the oceanic' and the use of aquatic imagery was widespread in the late-19th and early-20th century. 'The oceanic' was most clearly articulated in the field of psychoanalysis - most significantly in Freud's *Civilisation and Its Discontents*. Via exchanges with writer and mystic Romain Rolland, from 1927 Freud shaped the concept to describe a boundless feeling of 'oneness with the universe'. Oceanic metaphor was also the domain of 20th-century authors like Virginia Woolf who used it to depict the collective unconscious and flux of modern life.

### **Surfing the Landscape - Walking On Water**

Our watery origins and make-up (human beings are 95% water) as part of a universe infinitely woven with waveforms of energy, and a personal affinity with the ocean (where 'waves' of energy are at their most visible) make me receptive to the ancient Hawaiian belief in surfing (he'enalu) as 'a metaphor for understanding and experiencing the world... symbolic of a life force that connects all things.' In 19th-century Hawaiian chants the 'rising sun was said to be surf in the ocean, "rising high towards the sky", the horse and buggy a 'surf' upon the land'<sup>98</sup> - the realms of heaven, earth and sea inextricably bound.

The relationship of coastal first Australians and Polynesians to the sea was (and in some cases still is) thus nourishing and osmotic - the ocean integral to their physical and spiritual world. In stark contrast, for the white colonisers (despite remarkable sailing feats and fine oceanic imaginings of the land) the sea remained a fateful place, to be feared and quickly crossed. For they could not swim! Nor did they show interest in learning to, for over a hundred years.

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<sup>97</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, 1955, pp 47-48.

<sup>98</sup> Fiona Capp, *That Oceanic Feeling*, Allen & Unwin, 2003, p 197.



David Watson from *NEW SOUTH WONDERLAND* (2000)

Our contemporary oceanic mindset has taken some time to evolve. Sea bathing was illegal in Australia until 1908 and beachside dwelling not at all popular until the 1930s. I feel that it is of some significance that only in recent decades have Australians sought and enjoyed 'full immersion' in their own waters.



David Watson *Wipeout* (2004)



Anyone with an aquatic bone in their body knows that surfing is as much about the primal pulse of the planet, its ebb and flow, its soft then unpredictable churning power - as it is about any quest for 'the perfect tube'.

I like to think of life as surfing - its flash and tumble, arc and energy wondrous but ever-difficult to recall; every wave, every surface subtly different; the peaks, the troughs, the lulls - the slap and surge of expectation, disappointment and hope; knowing when (and when not to) 'take off'; the almost unexplainable exultation of the ride, of being for a moment 'in sync' with something essential. Then floating, gazing down upon riches beneath a deceptively dull surface - receding, darting, indistinct, morphing forms in the milky deep.

### **Bridget Riley - Glide and Drift - Dynamism of Visual Forces**

Fluid ruminations such as these bring to mind the English artist Bridget Riley, who writes of organising colours on her canvas 'so that the eye can travel over the surface in a way parallel to the way it moves over nature. It should feel caressed and soothed, experience frictions and ruptures, glide and drift. Vision can be arrested, tripped up or pulled back in order to float free again.'<sup>99</sup>



Bridget Riley *Untitled XXII* (1965)

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<sup>99</sup> Riley, op cit, p 33.

Riley's highly wrought optical work, abstracted, pared back, often oscillating, does not attempt to mirror nature - rather to deliver an equivalent sensation. 'For me nature is not landscape, but the dynamism of visual forces - an event rather than an appearance.'<sup>100</sup>

In the 1950s Patrick White captured the dynamism of the Australian bush in his painterly writing<sup>101</sup>... eg 'There was a ringing almost of bells of silence in the parrot coloured morning'<sup>102</sup>, and 'They were going. Through a trance of trees and all that had not happened.'<sup>103</sup> In White's 'heaving world'<sup>104</sup>, the bush, even when 'monotonous', is fluid and charged... 'All trees in this part seemed to have taken desperate shapes. Some definitely writhed.'<sup>105</sup> Time is also primal, oceanic: 'days swelled, and rose out of each other, and were folded under'<sup>106</sup>, 'All things were wreathing and dissolving at that hour, before stars.'<sup>107</sup>



David Watson *Fairy Woods II* (2004)

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid, p 88.

<sup>101</sup> 'I always see most of what I write and am, in fact a painter manqué' - quoted at [www.mup.umimelb.edu.au/catalogue](http://www.mup.umimelb.edu.au/catalogue) 19/8/04 re *Patrick White, Painter Manqué* (2002) by Helen Verity Hewitt.

<sup>102</sup> White, op cit, p 43.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, p 146.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, p 151.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, p 139.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, p 219.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, p 347.

Australian writer Inga Clendinnen (echoing Lévi-Strauss) employs aquatic metaphor to evoke the disintegration of her mind (from illness). She writes<sup>108</sup> of having ‘to surf the tumble of disordered memories as they dolphin away’.

I too am interested in the ‘dynamism of visual forces’ and the fluidity of life and memory. Such notions resonate profoundly, I believe, with Australia’s deep geological and more recent human histories.

In ‘surfing’ the Australian landscape my abstracted photographic images seek to immerse the viewer in essences of place, memory and experience. Denying focus, precise time and location they eschew the thousand details with which most photography speaks. Disinterested in grids, boundaries, the divisibility of landscape and the precise markings of surveying, mapmaking and Western land ownership, these are neither magisterial vistas nor views from the lookout.



David Watson *Deep Sea Floors* (2004)

Asymmetric, rhythmic, often close-up, they are, rather, quicksilver glances which invite the viewer to reflect and swim with them in a land made liquid.

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<sup>108</sup> Clendinnen, Inga, *Tiger’s Eye: A Memoir*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2000, p 1.

A hundred years ago pictorialist photographers sought to 'paint' the Australian bush via soft-focus imagery, often making use of the dreamlike liquidity of the b/w bromoil process. My colour landscape work - which arguably drinks from a creek nearby - seeks to extend this purely romantic aesthetic. Via coalescing tones and indistinct forms my images seek to elicit an ambiguous wonder/unease.

### **Canberra Complex - Re-enchantment**

I tend to agree with the author and social commentator David Tacey, who believes that our increasingly rationalist Australia is in dire need of re-enchantment: 'much of white Australia suffers from the Canberra complex: it lacks soul, interiority and depth.'<sup>109</sup>

Although we cannot expect to conjure immediately a subtle and complex indigenous relationship after inflicting two swift centuries of damage on this continent and its peoples, it is time for us to more deeply engage, to acknowledge the wonder via respectful stewardship - albeit for an eyeblink. As Tacey suggests, to do this we will need to imagine and evolve a deeply layered new 'dreaming', which incorporates both our own (in his, and my case Anglo-Celtic) spiritual heritage and a profound understanding of the beliefs of the first Australians.

In 1947 Mark Rothko wrote 'The familiar identity of things has to be pulverised in order to destroy the finite associations with which our society increasingly enshrouds every aspect of our environment.'<sup>110</sup>

Whilst my images and oceanic imaginings may not 'pulverise', they do seek to 'destroy finite associations'. Murmuring in a distant but somehow familiar dialect, they are imprints in search of shared Australian memory, a collective unconscious. Though 'painterly' they do not seek to be paintings, but rather revel in their trace-based origins, in the fact that despite their abstraction they retain an indexical link to our physical world, its joys and palpable distress.

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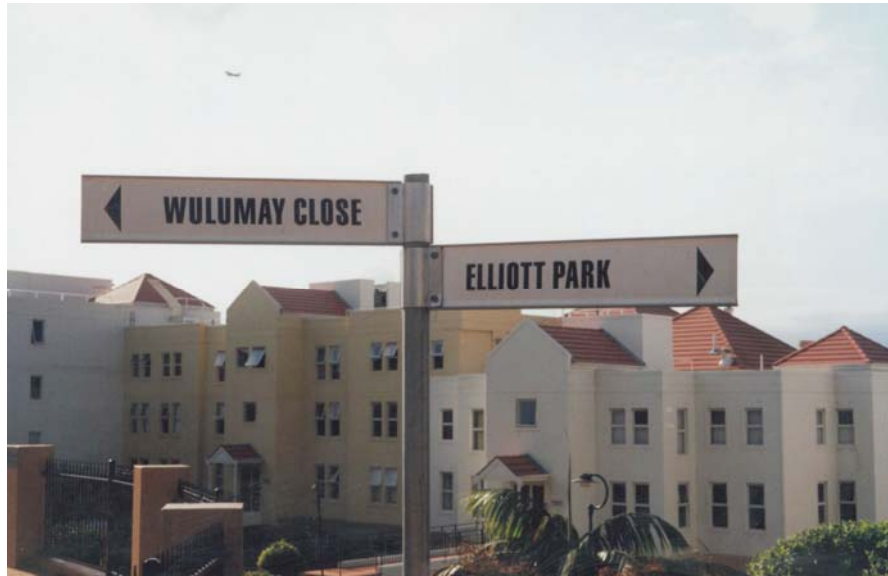
<sup>109</sup> David Tacey, *Re-Enchantment: The New Australian Spirituality*, Harper Collins, 2000, p 42.

<sup>110</sup> *Possibilities*, No.1, Winter 1947/8, p 84.

## Chapter 5 **Wulumay Close**

'Already more than 1.6 billion people have lived in Australia. 32 million since 1788. Each person's story has a place in the life of Australia.'<sup>111</sup>

**National Museum of Australia**



Wulumay Close, a new cul de sac - gateway to beige Balmain

'To consider issues as apparently mundane as what it means to live in a particular house, on a street, on this hill or that, within a particular ecology, can, in their minutiae, provide nuanced responses to historical questions that for all of us are common ground.'<sup>112</sup> **Martin Thomas**

'I am fascinated by the human, temporal, real, logical side of an occurrence which is simultaneously so unreal, so incomprehensible and so atemporal. And I would like to represent it in such away that this contradiction is preserved.'<sup>113</sup> **Gerhard Richter**

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<sup>111</sup> Introduction to the (hopefully) permanent exhibition *Eternity: Stories from the Emotional Heart of Australia* at Canberra's newly-opened National Museum of Australia, 2003. Prime Minister John Howard is unhappy with the Museum's 'balance', and there are plans to increase its white/settler content.

<sup>112</sup> Thomas, op cit, p 181.

<sup>113</sup> Richter, op cit, p 58.

## Think Globally, Act Locally - Resuscitating Community

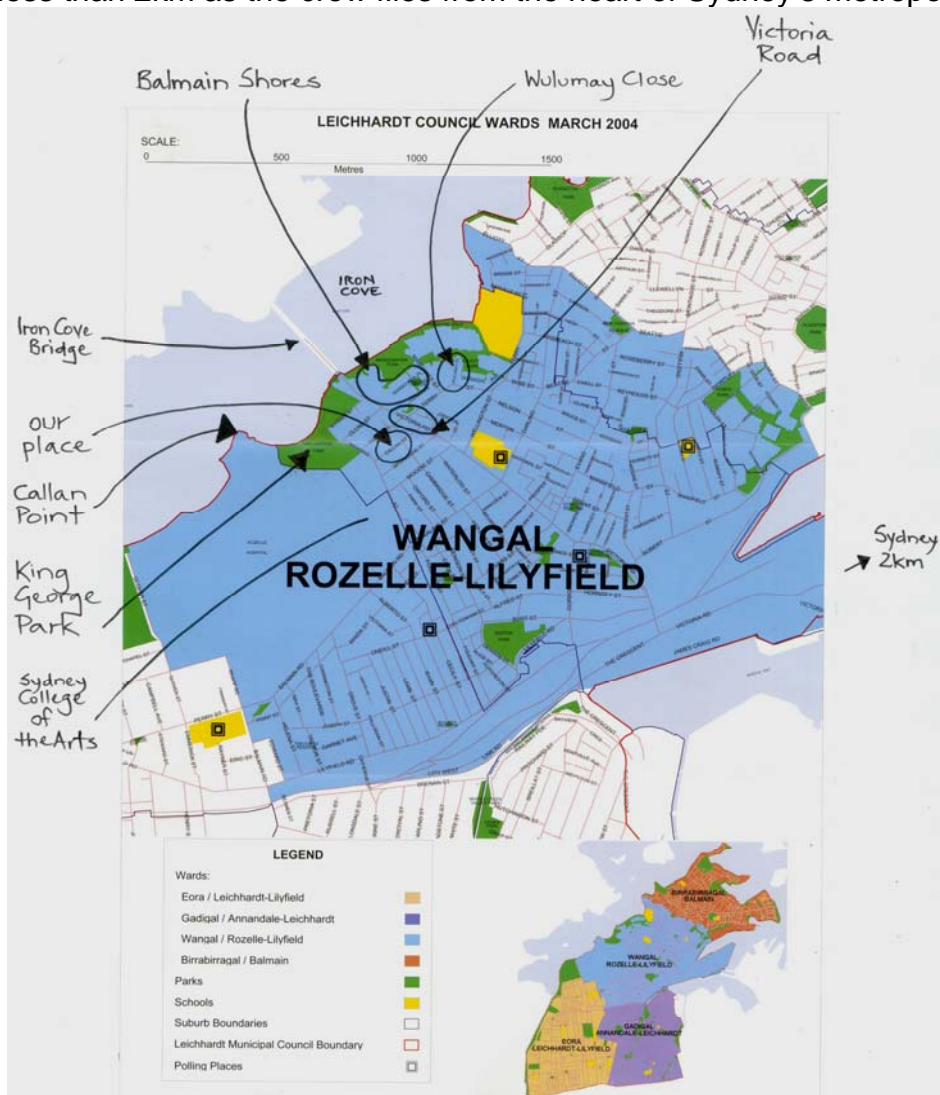
Could the prescient Richter (though he has never visited Australia) have been speaking about Rozelle, where I have lived now for 15 years? Barely 100 metres from the six-lane snarl of Sydney's major western artery Victoria Road - lies our secret nook - down from Sydney College of the Arts on a north-facing slope above Iron Cove. Over the past few years the local community has had to fight to retain the area's special peacefulness against a tide of urban renewal. Ongoing crises have forged a strangely connected and caring social organism - our neighbourhood.



### NO! BOB THE BUILDER

Luca (5) and Aladdin (8) - my boys, seated (l to r)  
protest NSW Premier Bob Carr's plan to sell off  
public harbourside land at Callan Park for private apartments  
*Inner Western Suburbs Courier*, 19 August 2002

Below some fine remnant bushland lies King George VI Park and the remarkable sandstone outcrops and slender casuarina-clad beaches of Callan Point, less than 2km as the crow flies from the heart of Sydney's metropolis.



I have come to love every strange square metre of this symbolic urban frontier. Just this year Leichhardt Council tellingly re-christened the area Wangal Rozelle-Lilyfield Ward - invoking the name of a roaming local aboriginal tribe, most of whom were dispersed or dead from European disease by 1791! Although there are indeed still aboriginal shell middens on its harbourside sandstone ledges, the ward remains visibly colonial. Ribbed by Waterloo, Cambridge and Oxford Streets and neatly bisected by the Queen of Empire's carriageway (Victoria Road) it is today also besieged on its eastern quadrant by aspirational medium-density-executive-beige (Balmain Power Station razed and re-developed by Australand, to deliver *Balmain Shores*' 500 apartments).



David Watson *'Atelier' Rising* (2003)

The colony's new powerhouse is real estate, in ever decreasing footprints, and as the massing forces of urban consolidation creep inexorably closer I witness the conundrums of contemporary Australia - old/new, indigenous/introduced, public/private - play out in microcosm on my doorstep every day. Two hundred and sixteen winters ago aboriginal families sat shelling mussels on Callan Point.



David Watson *Callan Point* (2003)



Over recent years my family and I have worked with local bushcare volunteers to re-vegetate the public parkland and foreshore with indigenous species. We have broadened our knowledge of introduced weeds and pitted our guile against strangling invaders such as Madeira Vine, Morning Glory, Chinese Hackberry and 'Cobblers' Pegs'.



David Watson *Iron Cove Monster: Morning Glory vs Chinese Hackberry* (2004)

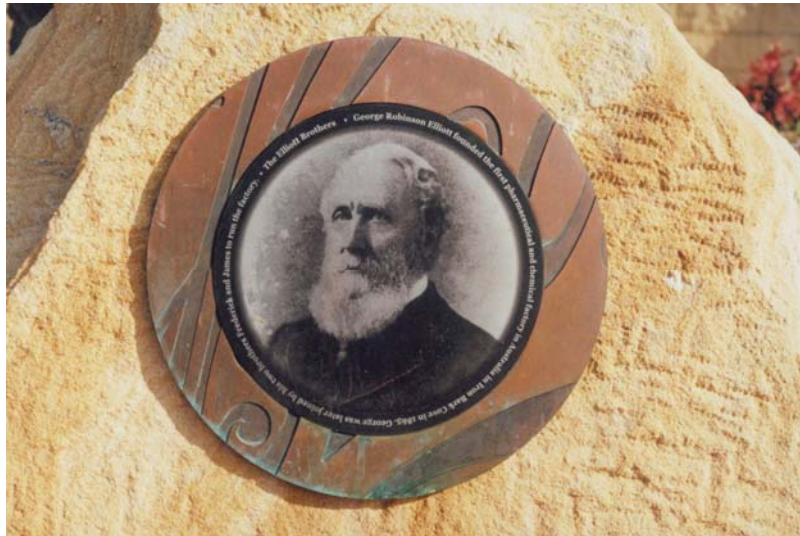
Our micro-debates about indigenous and introduced species echo strangely familiar macro concerns (eg white settlement, native title, refugees) and I have been drawn to fondly photograph some of these hybrid weed-girdled pockets.

For bush regeneration (just like Australia) risks being a little too intolerant - and I have learnt that urban ecology is a minefield where the purist is often the first casualty.

It is widely acknowledged, for example, that in the absence of indigenous cover, the widely-reviled South American weed Lantana forms an often excellent understorey which protects small birds (eg blue wrens) and native animals from assault by off-leash domestic animals.

## Sanitising Social Space - Local Layers - Metaphor-tography

Wulumay Close (c 2001) lies at the heart of the upwardly mobile semi-detached and slightly gated community of *Balmain Cove*, which adjoins *Balmain Shores*. It is also now the title for my latest photographic project - an attempt to resuscitate some resonant local layers too crisply erased and sanitised by 21<sup>st</sup> century development.



*Balmain Shores* plaque to the Elliott Brothers (2003)

Sadly, although there are historic plaques to the bearded burghers of Balmain throughout the site (eg to the Elliott Brothers, who built Australia's first chemical factory there on Iron Cove in 1865), there is no acknowledgment to the peninsula's original custodians, nor explanation of the origin of the several new aboriginal street names ([www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au](http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au), however, usefully informs us that 'walamai' is Gadigal for 'snapper', a delicious local fish).

'Something has to be shown and simultaneously not shown, in order perhaps to say something else again, a third thing' observed Gerhard Richter.<sup>114</sup>

When I go walking with my camera I 'see things'... things which suggest other things, other layers. I call it metaphor-tography.

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<sup>114</sup> Richter, op cit, p 226.



David Watson *Balmain Shores* (2003)



David Watson *Terror on Our Shores* (2003)

## The Lie of the Land

'Observing the machines at work removing hillsides, bulldozing topsoil, blasting away reefs of rock, scattering swathes of gravel, concrete, tarmac in the still raw wounds of the level site, one might conclude that our culture was indifferent to the beauties of natural localities.



David Watson *'Atelier' Bay* (2003)

'Yet within a few months, the ochre grooved and battle-scarred Martian surface has miraculously sprouted pavements, driveways, gardens and houses; emerald lawns and conifers grow up supernaturally young and bright.



David Watson *Swathe* (2004)

'And inside, photographs in rows, views through curtains, views of views (framed on the wall), wall-to-wall carpets are the modest argot out of which a new vocabulary of place is being improvised. And before long, what the property developers promised in their brochures begins to feel true: the lucky new residents are proud to have a place to call their own.



David Watson *Desert* (2003)

'At first it may seem bare, raw, un-lived-in, but before long it acquires personal associations...

'All of this occurs without any enquiry, without any curiosity, as to what was sacrificed in order to create the place we inhabit, where we gather together our books, our dreams, our children. No one appears to worry about what was cleared away when the streets were laid out according to a two-dimensional plan, when the natural topography was neutralized and in its place artificial vistas were carefully mortgaged. At no point in the process of arrival, survey, settlement and residence does the ground make any claim upon our attention.

'Let the ground rise up to resist us, let it prove porous, spongy, rough, irregular - let it assert its native title, its right to maintain its traditional surfaces - and instantly our instinct is to wipe it out; to lay our foundations on rationally-apprehensible level ground.

'We do not walk with the surface; we do not align our lives with its inclines, its folds and pockets. We glide over it... conceptualizing the ground, indeed the civilized world, as an ideally flat space, whose billiard-table surface can be skated over in any direction without hindrance.'<sup>115</sup>



David Watson *Rigging the Future* (2003)

### **Municipal 'Time Share'**

Like many Australians I derive great pleasure from participation in my local community. I enjoy the fact that although I am a house-owner/ratepayer, I in no way *own* my municipal haunts. Yet our lovely park (once a council tip, before that a mangroved inlet), its soccer goals, bamboo patch, playground, long-jump pit, sea-wall and tiny beach are mine, every day, for a time, in all manner of minute ways. Knowledge and good custodianship (as aboriginal people have known for millennia) are critical to this nourishing, shared yet rarely discussed form of contemporary urban 'ownership'. It is an inclusive rather than an exclusive ownership, a nurturing 'get your hands dirty', 'pick up the rubbish', 'bare feet' kind of ownership. It is an ownership which is precious, and which is under threat. It stands in stark relief against a fast-proliferating time-poor, semi-gated, body-corporate, user-pays, personal-trainer, heated-pool contemporary-beige mindset.

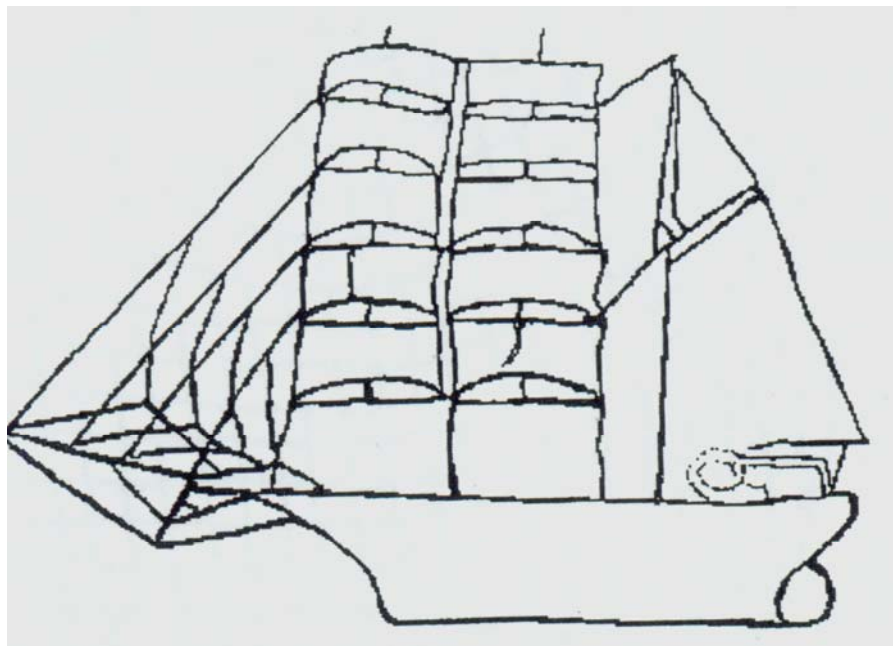
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<sup>115</sup> Paul Carter, *The Lie of the Land*, Faber and Faber, 1996, pp 1-2.

## Sometimes I Try To Imagine Myself Into the Ground - Traces and Tracings

Down on Callan Point, where my kids roam barefoot to play beneath the sprawling Moreton Bay fig, is an intriguing set of drawings (still often mistakenly believed to be aboriginal) carved into the soft sandstone. There are sailing ships, compass roses, a shark and one of a sombrely dressed woman the archaeologists call 'Queen Victoria'. There is also an alpaca (or so it is thought - as Callan Park Asylum once kept exotic animals for the benefit of its patients) and a gentleman in a hat with an almond-shaped eye. The drawings (swiftly now being erased by the heavy traffic of Nike runners and dog owners) are said to be the work of The Callan Park Artist, who lived on a boat in Iron Cove from about 1850, and made the drawings over a number of decades.

With the help of local archeologist John Clegg<sup>116</sup> I recently traced some of the drawings for inclusion in my MVA exhibition at Sydney College (atop the hill!) - a further local layer as the accretions and erasures of history sail ever on...



The Callan Park Artist *Three-master on Mushroom Rock at Callan Point* (date uncertain, probably between 1850-1910) About 2 metres long.

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<sup>116</sup> John Clegg has recorded the drawings over a number of years. See Bibliography re his 'Making Sense of Obscure Pictures from Our Own History' and *Conservation Management Plan for Callan Point*, Appendix B.

## Conclusion

### Bare Feet - Eyes Peeled

There are simply too many kooky-looking footwear options for me up at Hylands Shoes in Rozelle. In airconditioned mega-malls across the country, even in country towns, the choice is bewildering. The ranks of ever-more-intricately-moulded trainers remind me instantly of Third World exploitation and the unsustainable largesse of the West.

My best shoes are a pair of rather stylish 1960s leather lace-ups which I purchased for \$4 at St Vincent de Paul in West Ryde. But more often than not these days I find myself getting about 'in bare feet' - up to the Mobil for some milk, or across to the pool with the kids. Every suburban journey is now interesting: I know the gutters and glass-strewn verges of the Inner West intimately thanks to the surveillance which bare feet demands, and the continual scanning of bitumen and kikuyu for glass, blue metal and dog excrement ignites tiny municipal mysteries around every corner.



David Watson from NEW SOUTH WONDERLAND (2000)



The 'wearing of bare feet' (unless you are very young and/or at the beach) is rarely condoned in our casual but cautious culture. However I find it a most useful practice and metaphor. Bare feet offer a direct, unmediated connection to the earth and to the 21<sup>st</sup>-century landscapes I inhabit. Floating free, unshod, and re-connecting via unlearning 'sophistication' is intrinsic to my life and work.

### **The Indecisive Moment**

As the reader will by now have gleaned, I am interested in a photography which is perhaps the antithesis of Henri Cartier-Bresson's 'Decisive Moment'.<sup>117</sup>

Cartier-Bresson wrote 'Of all the forms of expression, photography is the only one which seizes the instant in its flight. To take photographs is to hold one's breath when all faculties converge in the face of fleeting reality.'<sup>118</sup>

Adrift in an unsettled global environment, Australia is today a most ambiguous place, its self-image mercurial, uncertain. One of the world's few remaining earthly paradises (still relatively unspoilt despite two centuries of pretty appalling custodianship) - Australia's lived culture seems as shallow and lacking in nutrient as its ancient soil. Courtesy of colonial misunderstanding and disdain, and a meanspirited contemporary regime, we are not encouraged to be receptive to the rich spiritual potential of this land. As Humphrey McQueen recently observed (correcting John McDonald) 'We suffer not from a "culture of forgetting". The problem runs deeper than that... our obstacle is rather a "culture of having never known"'.<sup>119</sup>

By choosing *not* to freeze time and place, my photographs seek to exude a little of this ambivalence.

Such fluidity also harbours energy and possibility - a future lubricated by curiosity, hope, and a deeper recognition of our layered humanity?

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<sup>117</sup> Title of Cartier-Bresson's 1952 book.

<sup>118</sup> Mis-quoted in the *Sydney Morning Herald's* Cartier-Bresson obituary [6 August 2004] 'fleeting reality' became 'fleeing reality'- an inadvertent contemporary update?!

<sup>119</sup> The observation formed part of a letter to McDonald re his 'Federation' exhibition at the National Gallery of Australia, in *Postwest 18*, p 23, 2001.

For although 'All art (is) the scant visible evidence of immense processes in a landscape that even the artist scarcely perceives'<sup>120</sup>...

I like to believe that lots of precious little makes a precious lot.

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*The Shell Guide to Australian Wildflowers*, painted by Dennis Adams, chosen and described by Malcolm McGregor, c 1960.

Watson, Don, *Caledonia Australis: Scottish Highlanders on the Frontier of Australia*, William Collins, Sydney, 1984. Re-published Vintage, Sydney 1997.

Willey, Keith, *When the Sky Fell Down : The Destruction of the Tribes in the Sydney Region 1788-1850s*, William Collins, Sydney, 1979.

Winkler, Paul, *SYDNEY BUSH*, 16mm film, Australia, 1980.

## **Appendix**

David Watson

NEW SOUTH WONDERLAND (2000)

- Invitation
- Exhibition flyer

- Review 'Colour and Memory', *Art Monthly* 4/01

David Watson

TERROR AUSTRALIS (2004)

- Invitation
- Exhibition release
- Exhibition catalogue
- Barry Keldoulis and David Watson discuss DW's exhibition, *Arts Hub*, 4/04

David Watson

WULUMAY CLOSE (2004)

- SCA Postgraduate Catalogue text

## **Resumé**

### **David Watson**

Born 1957 Melbourne

Education

- 2003-04 Master of Visual Arts, Sydney College of the Arts (SCA)  
*University of Sydney Postgraduate Award 2004*
- 1993 Graduate Diploma Visual Arts [Photography] (SCA)
- 1978 Bachelor of Arts (Communications & Mass Media)  
 Macquarie University, Sydney

#### Exhibitions

- 2004 **Wulumay Close**  
 MVA Exhibition, Sydney College of the Arts  
**Terror Australis** (solo show)  
 Gallery Barry Keldoulis, Sydney
- 2002 **Sexdecim 2002** (group show)  
 Groundfloor Gallery, Sydney
- 2001 **New Work** (group show)  
 Salon Callan, Sydney
- 2000 **New South Wonderland** (solo show)  
 Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney
- 1999 **Sydney Sub-urb** (group show)  
 Museum of Sydney
- 1992 **Sydney: Seven Years' Stranger**  
 Grad Dip Exhibition, Sydney College of the Arts
- 1990 **Full House** (group show)  
 Slide installation/back-projection, Glebe Festival, Sydney
- 1989 **Finale** (group show), EMR Gallery, Redfern
- 1983 Edinburgh Festival, Scotland; Portfolio Gallery, London

Review 'Colour and Memory', Kathryn Millard, *Art Monthly* 4/01, pp 27-29.  
 (see Appendix)

#### Employment

- 2001-2003 Cinémathèque Consultant, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
- 2002 Judge, TAFE Art & Design Prize (with Mandy Martin)
- 2002 Consultant Curator (surf movies) ScreenSound Australia
- 2000 Consultant Curator (art/cinema/sport) Cinemedia, Melbourne

- 1999            Manager Communications and Cultural Development  
                  NSW Film and Television Office, Sydney
- 1989-99        Project Co-ordinator: Cinémathèque  
                  Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney  
                  Co-Curator: **TV TIMES: 35 Years of Watching Television in  
Australia** (1991); **Paul Winkler: Films 1964-94** (1994);  
**Phantasmagoria: Pre-Cinema to Virtuality** (1996);  
                  Commissioning Editor: *The Dawn of Cinema: 1894-1915* (1996),  
                  *Something Secret: Portraiture in Warhol's Films* (1993);  
                  Editor **Australian Movie Map** (1996).
- 1984-88        Senior Researcher, Exhibit Co-ordinator, Photographer  
                  Museum of the Moving Image, London

David Watson

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### **List of Images on CD**

- 1 **David Watson**  
**TERROR AUSTRALIS (2004)**
- 2 Gallery Barry Keldoulis, Meagher St, Chippendale - frontage, April 2004

- 3 Installation shot *Horizon* (1), (2), (3), *Koala*, *Horizon* (4), (5), (6), (7)
- 4 *Horizon* (1)
- 5 *Horizon* (2)
- 6 *Horizon* (3)
- 7 Installation shot *Horizon* (4), (5), (6), (7), (8), (9), (10)
- 8 *Koala*
- 9 *Horizon* (4)
- 10 *Horizon* (5)
- 11 *Horizon* (6)
- 12 *Horizon* (7)
- 13 Installation shot *Horizon* (5), (6), (7), (8), (9), (10), (11)
- 14 *Horizon* (8)
- 15 *Horizon* (9)
- 16 *Horizon* (10)
- 17 *Horizon* (11)
- 18 *Horizon* (12)
- 19 Installation shot *Horizon* (9), (10), (11), (12) with *Ellipse* (1) - (9)
- 20 Installation shot *Ellipse* (1), (2), (3) [top row], (4), (5), (6) [middle row], (7), (8), (9) [bottom row]
- 21 *Ellipse* (1)
- 22 *Ellipse* (2)
- 23 *Ellipse* (3)
- 24 *Ellipse* (4)
- 25 *Ellipse* (5)
- 26 *Ellipse* (6)
- 27 *Ellipse* (7)
- 28 *Ellipse* (8)
- 29 *Ellipse* (9)
- 30 *Ellipse* (10)
- 31 **David Watson + The Callan Park Artist**  
**WULUMAY CLOSE (2004)**
- 32 *Iron Cove Monster: Morning Glory vs Chinese Hackberry*
- 33 *Balmain Shores*
- 34 *Tracing of rock drawing Three Master* (Callan Point, Rozelle)

- 35 *Rigging the Future*
- 36 *Tracing of rock drawing Alpaca (Callan Point, Rozelle)*
- 37 *'Atelier' Rising*
- 38 *Desert*
- 39 *Terror on Our Shores*
- 40 *Tracing of rock drawing Compass Rose, Head, 1908*
- 41 *Ark*
- 42 *Swathe*
- 43 *Tracing of Queen Victoria*
- 44 *'Atelier' Bay*
- 45 *Callan Point*

## **Catalogue of Work Presented for Examination**

**David Watson**

**TERROR AUSTRALIS (2004)**

12 'Horizons' 70.5 x 47cm

Digital colour photographs from 35mm slide-roll ends

Koala

60 x 40cm

Digital colour photograph from 35mm negative

10 'Ellipses' 24.2 x 37.5cm

Colour photographs

**David Watson + The Callan Park Artist**

**WULUMAY CLOSE (2004)**

6-10 Images face-mounted to 3mm perspex

96 x 64cm

Digital colour photographs from 35mm negatives

3-4 tracings of rock drawings at Callan Point, Rozelle

Varying dimensions from 80cm wide to 200cm wide on plastic