WATER PATHS AND THE LANDSCAPE:

POETRY OF WATER PATHS WATERCOURSES WATERWAYS AND RIVERS - FLUID LINKS BETWEEN ARTISTS, ECOLOGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Colleen Morris, Master of Arts RMIT
Candidate: Doctor of Philosophy
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School of Art
Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
To RMIT Higher Degrees

For Appropriate Visual Record

Declaration:
I hereby declare that the appropriate visual record and exegesis for the work entitled ‘Water paths and the landscape’ as submitted on March 22nd 2006 for the qualification of Doctor of Philosophy, represents the work of myself, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the documentation.

The work entitled ‘Water paths and the Landscape’ has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for any other academic award. The Appropriate Visual Record and Exegesis represent the work undertaken during the period of candidature from March 1999 – March 2006, being part-time by Research Project.

Yours sincerely,

Colleen Morris
March 2006
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Ms. Janet Laurence - Artist
Dr. James Bowler – Archeologist Professorial Fellow School of Earth Sciences, University of Melbourne.
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EXEGESIS – Water paths and the Landscape.

Poetry of water paths, watercourses, waterways and rivers -
Fluid links to landform artists, ecology and the environment.

‘For the Egyptians all water was fresh,
but especially that which had been
drawn from the river, an emanation of Osiris’
Gerard de Nerval, ‘Isis’ Daughters of Fire, Paris 1888.1

1. Introduction

My project is a tribute to all water paths, waterways and rivers. It is an acknowledgement of
their global significance, and of their mysterious and mythic presence in legend and history.
The main body of the research and studio practice focuses on the Murray-Darling River
System. Contained within the research there is a store of personal knowledge and memories of
a complex river network. I view this research as my personal tribute. The Murray and its
environment played a major part in creating a poetic element in my childhood, and thus
throughout this research project, while in the process of exploring facets of place and space, I
have taken the opportunity to revisit, and reassess, my ongoing relationship to and links with
the waters of the Murray River. I include these definitions to reinforce and clarify the extent
of my research project, siting the parameter as (n): a limit or boundary, which defines the
scope of a particular process, or activity, and the scope as (n): the extent of the area or
subject matter that something deals with, or to which it is relevant.2

Malcolm Andrews3 refers to interpretations of nature, landscape and environment by Royston
Holmes that show how artwork and ways of seeing by contemporary artists, have shifted in
emphasis over a period of time from viewing land as ‘landscape’4 to land as ‘environment’.

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1 Cited in Lippard, Lucy The Lure of the Local New York Press 1997 p.183
2 Concise Oxford English Dictionary, Oxford University Press, Melbourne 2004
3 Andrews, Malcolm. Landscape and Western Art (from British Journal of Aesthetics, October 1995 p.379
4 Landscape – a picture representing an area of countryside, all the visible features of an area of land.
Environment - the surroundings or conditions in which a person, anima or plant lives or operates; the natural
world, especially affected by humans.
They are as follows:

*Nature is the entire system of things, with the aggregation of all their powers, properties, processes, and products – whatever follows natural law and whatever happens spontaneously.*

*Landscape is the scope of nature, modified by culture, from the locus, and in that sense landscape is local, located. Humans have both natural and cultural environments; landscapes are typically hybrid.*

*An environment does not exist without some organism environed by the world in which it copes. An environment is the current field of significance for a living being.*

This is a significant change of viewpoint, where the experience of nature is as process, rather than the picture and occurs by shifting the emphasis from ‘landscape’ to ‘environment’. The geographer, Denis Cosgrove relates to this sense of landscape and the subjective experience of landscape, stating that:

*When a landscape becomes an environment, the scenic sense would be only one of many ways in which what becomes holistically the current field of significance. The interaction between landscape and artist now becomes more complex.*

**Contemporary artists and the multiple aspects of a changing landscape**

By examining the work of several Australian and international contemporary artists, I endeavoured to investigate how they dealt with issues relating to the landscape and environmental change. I chose to discuss aspects of their work that reflect an understanding of the multiplicity of these issues. At first glance, many of their works do not immediately appear to have any common link, but as the investigation proceeded the connections became more apparent. One of the more obvious links between the artists that have been selected is their philosophy in relation to the environment, seeing the land and landscape as part of the total global environment. They exhibit awareness, and sensitivity towards the wellbeing of the environment, with an awareness of existence within a landscape environment.

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6 Cosgrove, Denis, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* University of Wisconsin Press 1998

7 Andrews, Malcolm. *Landscape and Western Art* p.193
The selected artists have all worked with aspects of land and landscape and approached it by using a range of different methods. Richard Long, John Wolseley, Beverly Pepper, Andy Goldsworthy and John Davis, chose to work within a particular landscape environment, by marking it, referencing it, and frequently including extensive documentation of both photographic and text reference. Artists such as Janet Laurence, Bonita Ely and James Darling on the other hand, make works in or of the landscape that are environmental or ecological statements that related to the changed environment. Many of their works have been constructed as a series of specific projects linked to ecology and the environment. Most of the selected artists work across two or more of these approaches.

The work of several of these artists can be interpreted as making ephemeral gestures in the environment, or environmental performance art, as for example when Ely, Davis and Long by inhabiting, addressing, and altering a site call into question our relationship to landscape, nature and art. As Stephanie Ross defines it, ‘their largely horizontal gestures acquiesce in and complement the landscape.’

Michael Rosenthal, writes of Long:

> His works are ritualistic responses to the site with which they are interacting. That these quiet gestures will be quickly erased is part of the modest ambitions of the artists when they work in nature.

There are others, such as Laurence and Pepper, whose work has been frequently created for architectural installations and proto gardens. Some works by both Janet Laurence and John Wolseley, would fit as well into the context of a science museum, as a fine art museum. In my studio practice, my artworks reference and interpret water paths and watercourses, in relation to the aesthetics of water, and works that reflect how this poetic vision is threatened by damage to the riverine ecological environment.

Throughout my studio research, I attended several environmental symposiums and conferences, on issues relating specifically to the ecology and health of water systems and landcare. I made a number of field trips to relevant sites in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, to investigate various water paths and their surrounding environments. These activities, plus reading of related research of current studies on the Murray – Darling River System, have contributed to an understanding and knowledge of the issues related to watercourses and water usage.

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8 Ross, Stephanie, Gardens, Earthworks, and Environmental Art Essay contained in Landscape natural beauty and the arts p.171 edited by Kemal & Gaskell
9 Kemal & Gaskell. pp. 170 – 171
10 See Appendix: 1. reference to the symposiums.
**Landscape - Interpretations through my art.**

I have made artworks that can be read as interpretations of water paths, and believe that this body of work reflects the changing relationship of artists to the landscape, from purely beauty and reverie to one of ecological and social sensitivity. Four of my constructed artworks were installations made for exhibition at the Mildura Palimpsest events.\(^{11}\) In addition to the formal aesthetic concerns of space, placement and repetition, these artworks specifically addressed issues related to the ecology, and the damaged environment of the Murray – Darling River System. The initial Palimpsest work, *Water Transparency* 1999, indicated an overview of the natural and constructed water paths within the Murray – Darling River System. This construct portrayed water as the life source, indicating the human imprint and impact on the land.

‘*Mapping of Luncheons*’2000 - a large mixed media floor installation with place mats and place or site marks that mapped memories of journeys on land and water, settings in space and time. It was a metaphor of marks in a landscape, an indication of change and it has been exhibited since in several additional regional settings that were linked to related local issues of the land and water environment.

‘*Water Drawings*’2001 - a large wall and floor installation that linked the various waterways such as rivers, channels, billabongs, including the barriers like locks, weirs and barrages. It interpreted aspects of how irrigation changed the regional map with water distribution. This multi-panelled work also indicated a sense of the beauty and poetry linked with the water environment.

The large format digital photographic print, ‘*Trail of Water – Riverine Lakes*’2003, was constructed as a visual metaphor of the meander of the river system / riverine lakes. This work is a visual statement exhibiting the aesthetic of water paths and that makes reference to the riverine environmental concerns. In 2004 I participated in an exhibition, and talk during National Science Week. A series of the large digital photographic prints was displayed at the Royal Society of Victoria, as part of ‘Environment Matters – Art & Science’, an exhibition that linked several environmental issues, from the perspective of both science and art.

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\(^{11}\) The Palimpsest events, # 1-5 have been held at Mildura, beginning in 1998, and in conjunction with the Art/Science Symposiums since 1999. Palimpsest defined as –something bearing visible traces of an earlier form, a parchment or other surface in which later writing has been superimposed on effaced earlier writing.
My studio research is a body of art works that includes paintings, drawings, mixed media installation works and sound recordings of water. The installations are symbolic of an absent site, or site of memory. In his essay *Mapping Site: Robert Smithson* Nick Kaye refers to a definition used by Peter Eisenman, of site:

*As site being precisely a function of absence*, observing that *absence is either the trace of a previous presence, it contains memory, or the trace of a possible presence, it contains immanence.*

In this way they became metaphors for memory of place, significance of site, and through their aesthetic they indicated the poetic aspects linked with the presence of water. As indicated previously, although my artworks and philosophy are positioned primarily in relation to issues of the land, the environment and ecology, I am also concerned with poetry and aesthetics. My belief is that through this combination of factors, the significance of these issues can be communicated to a wider audience in the community.

The Murray – Darling Basin Commission, local Rural City Councils and Councils for the Arts assisted in the establishment of some links between the artists, scientists and the local communities, by supporting collaborative projects focussed on improved water quality, reduced salinity and restored river ecology. It is understood by most river communities that there needs to be mutual recognition of the goals and responsibilities in order to create and maintain healthy sustainable environments, places with a future.

In 2001 the Murray – Darling Basin Ministerial Council and the Community Advisory Committee released an Integrated Catchment Management (ICM) Policy for the region. This policy outlined the way in which natural resource management for the Basin would be undertaken. It outlined an approach that would span ten years and included setting targets for water quality, water sharing, terrestrial biodiversity and riverine ecosystem health.

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13 An example is the SunRise 21 Artists in Industry Project In the Sunraysia Region, the Consortium of Land, Water & Salinity Management Groups, scientists and artists collaborated on 5 projects that addressed salinity problems ‘5 Sites of Interception’, referenced in the Mildura Arts Centre publication, 2000. *Interceptions: Art, Science & Land in Sunraysia*

14 There are a number of longstanding issues affecting the river environment, such as methods of irrigation, the grazing of cattle in wetlands, water allocation, locks and weirs. These are historical issues that continue to exist within the current framework.

Some of the most important environmental challenges currently faced by us as a community in the twenty first century are water quality and water usage. By understanding and integrating people’s needs, and ensuring that the communities in the Basin are able to engage in the process of change, a sense of identity can be fostered, so that long – term sustainability becomes a shared goal. Salinity, algal blooms, trading water property rights, and establishing a balance between the needs of the environment and the needs of the communities in the consumption of water are some of the strategies that are planned under the Murray – Darling Basin Initiative.
2. SETTING THE SCENE
Terms and Definitions
A.

*Water* – (OE woeter), aqua, a compound of hydrogen and oxygen; drench, irrigate, moisten, soak, spray, flood. The liquid which forms the seas, lakes, rivers, and rain and is the basis of the fluids of living organisms. One of the four elements in ancient and medieval philosophy and in astrology.

*Watercourse* – a brook, stream, or artificially constructed water channel, the bed along which this flows.

*Water table* – the level below which the ground is saturated with water.

*Waterwheel* – a large wheel driven by flowing water, used to work machinery or to raise water to a higher level.

*River* – (L riparian), a large natural stream or flow of water emptying into a lake, sea etc. comes via Old French *rivere* from Latin *riparius* from ripa ‘bank of a river’. It is related to arrive, which originally meant ‘bring a ship to shore’. It is also connected to the word rival, that derives from Latin *rivalis*, originally meaning ‘person using the same stream as another’

*Stream* – (OE) flowing body of water or other liquid, brook, course, flow, current, cascade, rush, tributary. A small, narrow river. A continuous flow of liquid, air, gas, people or things.

*Lake* – (L lacus, pool) a large inland body of water, usually fresh water

*Channel* – (L cannalis-pipe, groove) bed of stream, strait, deeper part of strait, means of conveying, canal, duct, furrow, transmit, direct, guide

*Billabong* – (Australian aboriginal: billa-water. bung-dead, stagnant) a backwater channel or branch of a river that forms a lagoon, backwater or stagnant pool. Also Nineteenth century from the Wiradhuri language, bilabang ‘channel that is dry except after rain’

*Lock* – (OE loc) a short enclosed part of a canal, river, waterway, etc equipped with gates and sluices at each end which can be opened or closed to change the water level, used for raising and lowering boats.

*Barrage* – (Fr barrer) a manmade barrier in a river, an artificial barrier across a river to prevent flooding or to aid irrigation or navigation.

*Weir* – (OE wer) a low dam built across a river to raise the level of water upstream or regulate its flow, an enclosure of stakes set in a stream or channel to trap fish.¹

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B.  
*Water* – (n) a clear colourless tasteless odourless liquid that is essential for plant and animal life and constitutes, in impure form, rain, oceans, rivers, lakes etc.  
*Watercourse* – a stream, river or canal. The channel bed or route along which this flows.  
*River* – (n) a large natural stream of fresh water flowing along a definite course, usually into the sea, being fed by tributary streams.  
*Stream* – (n) a small river, brook. Any steady flow of water or other fluid.  
*Lake* – an expanse of water entirely surrounded by land and unconnected to the sea except by rivers or streams.  
*Channel* – a broad strait connecting two areas of sea. The bed or course of a river, stream or canal, a navigable course through a body of water.  
*Billabong* – a stagnant pool in the bed of an intermittent stream, a branch of a river running to a dead end.  
*Lock* – a section of a canal or river that may be closed off by gates to control the water level and the raising and lowering of vessels that pass through.  
*Barrage* – a construction across a watercourse, especially one to increase the depth.  
*Weir* – a low dam that is built across a river to raise the water level, divert the water, or control its flow. A series of traps or enclosures placed in a stream to catch fish.²  

C.  
*Anabranch* – a secondary channel of a river that leaves the main channel and re-joins it further downstream.  
*Catchment* – the area of land drained by a river and its tributaries.  
*Confluence* – the place where two or more streams flow together.  
*Ecosystem* – an independent biological system involving interaction between living organisms and their immediate physical, chemical and biological environment.  
*Environmental flows* – flows, or characteristics of the flow pattern, that are either protected or created to benefit the natural environment.  
*Ephemeral* – temporary or intermittent, for instance a creek or wetland that dries up periodically.  
*Floods* – flows that are high enough at their peak to overrun riverbanks.³

² B. Angus and Robertson Dictionary & Thesaurus Harper Collins Sydney 1992  
³ C. Section of Glossary in CSIRO Land and Water, 2001 Rivers as Ecological Systems pp. 287 – 293
I define “water paths” in the context of this research, as any tracts of inland waters and freshwaters. I include reference to water channels, including both natural and constructed, rivers, lakes, billabongs or tributaries and floodplains. The framework lies principally within an Australian context, as acknowledgement to the ecological environment of its fragile and ephemeral river system, rather than trying to investigate environmental change and ecological damage throughout the world or investigating issues and problems related to its water paths. There may be minor reference made to water paths outside the sphere of the Murray-Darling System and the Australian environment. This occurs when I reference similar issues of the ecology and environment in relation to the artworks of several international artists.

Most of the Basin is extensive plains and low undulating areas, mostly below 200 metres above sea level. Of greatest extent are the vast plains, the Darling Plain in the north, drained by the Darling and its tributaries, and the Riverine Plain in the south is drained by the Murray and Murrumbidgee rivers and their tributaries.
In my literary investigations, I use both scientific and historic references, related specifically to the expanse of the Murray-Darling Basin. I have read many articles and essays related to degradation of water quality, river systems and environmental damage. Throughout my research, I have gained a greater understanding and awareness of the field and current issues concerning riverine environments. I have attended a number of seminars and workshops, and undertaken several field trips, that are related to scientific and historic studies of this large region. Several of these seminars also provided opportunities for a dialogue to be established between scientists, historians, communities and contemporary artists working with the ecology and environment of landscape.

For my exploration into the environment, ecology and poetry of water paths, I have researched and will discuss the work of a number of contemporary visual artists, and quoted from works of both writers and poets, to further illustrate aspects of a water path and landscape environment. My selection is primarily governed by artworks that specifically reference the human traces that mark or imprint on the landscape, water paths in the riverine landscape and the linked ecology. By reflecting on the broader position of water, its usage and control, it can be seen how this factor relates to the health of our ecological environment, and the most likely impact water usage and control will have in the future.

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5 River Murray, South Australia, [www.abc.net.au/rural](http://www.abc.net.au/rural)
Through both studio research and exegesis, I encapsulate a key part of childhood memory and significance of place, and established a sense of its importance within my integral identity. Simultaneously, the research explores the duality of this river environment and its atmospheric moods. I encompass the meditative qualities and beauty of this specific river environment, and include some investigation of social and ecological factors related to the presence and usage of water in the Murray-Darling Basin.

In my imagination, water is almost always in a fluid state, a vision in transition, water that refreshes, water that quenches thirst, as evidenced by pleasures experienced of the sight and sound of rain, rivers, irrigation channels, a water storage tank, a sprinkler and gurgling stream. For me, the word or image of a water path, or watercourse, often acts as a mnemonic, or trigger for my childhood memories of the riverine environment and can at times become a signifier, where the sight, thought or image of a river has many associations and guises that reference other places and times.


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6 Mnemonic – relating to the power of memory, aiding or designed to aid the memory
7 Signifier – a sign’s physical form or symbol (sound, printed word, image), as distinct from its meaning.
8 Part of a water series – a number of small works on paper approx 20 x 35cm

*If it had been the purpose of human activity on earth to bring the planet to the edge of ruin, no more efficient mechanism could have been invented than the market economy.*

Irrigation was first introduced in Australia in the 1880s. With the construction of manmade water paths such as locks, barrages, weirs and channels in the early twentieth century, both usage and consequently the visual appearance of the land were changed. In 1887, development occurred along the Murray River in the Mildura and Renmark districts. There had already been a number of changes to the river and its environs. Paddlesteamers were introduced as a river transport in the mid 1850s, to move goods inland to the early white settlers, and return the settlers produce to market. In 1853 the ‘Lady Augusta’ under Captain Cadell was the first iron steamer to navigate the river. At the same time the ‘Mary Ann’, a red gum steamer built by Captain Randell was launched at Mannum. The steamers were fuelled by immense quantities of wood from the River Red-gums. These eucalypts were large spreading trees, 30-45 metres tall, that branched out not far above ground, with long leaves and smooth white or pale grey bark. During this period, they were logged in vast numbers, and taken from along the length of the river edge and its immediate surrounds.

Even at the early stage of settlement the clearing contributed to the deterioration and collapse of sections of the riverbanks. The opening of the river as a highway helped to reduce the isolation of small communities, but it also affected the physical and biological environment of the river valley. The riverboats not only used the eucalypts as fuel, but to ease their passage, they also required the rivers to be cleared of snags, thus resulting in the removal of many of the habitats and breeding grounds of the native fish, many small animals and birds. Thus there was ongoing degradation to the riverine environment.

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2 Paddlesteamer – a boat powered by steam and propelled by paddle wheels.
3 Reference in Williams, Rod. *The River Murray Journal* 1996 p.10
The path of the Murray River shows signs of its ancient past, of times when the river tracts or channels changed, and when the sea covered vast parts of this region. There are also signs of a more recent history, along the meandering journeys of the many water paths throughout the Murray – Darling River system and their local environs. This is a landscape that contains many emotional links to the past for the indigenous and white settler population. It is one where ownership, or possession, has often been in dispute, and where the cultural interchange between indigenous and white settler Australians is difficult. In the main, the stories and myths of the white settlers continue to negate the significance of Aboriginal communities and their presence along the Murray.

In the Murray region near Swan Hill and Nyah, there was a local phrase, ‘along the oven roads’ or ‘blackfellow oven road’. This phrase was used to describe the series of earthen mounds or middens made by the local Aboriginals at their base campsites. These mounds have been found along the banks of the Murray River and other dry or still flowing creeks where there would have been a range of food sources available for the tribal group to hunt and gather within reasonable distance of the main base camp. There are three basic mound types, all of which were artificially constructed. The types were: Type One- solely a mixture of oven refuse which would have been covered by flood waters, Type Two – much larger mound located on a slight rise near an ‘anabranch’, consisting of a core of refuse with the addition of sediments from the floodplain for it to remain above flood level and Type Three - built along the margins of the floodplain, probably built for occupation as a base camp during flood periods. They consist mainly of a mixture of charcoal, burnt clay pellets and floodplain sediments, which was the accumulated refuse from cooking activities. Because stones and rocks were rare in this area the local Aboriginals made clay pellets to use as heat retainers for the hearth and ovens.

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5 This term is referred to in Sinclair Paul The Murray Melbourne University Press 2001 ch.4 Along the oven roads. p.35
6 ‘Midden’ defined in dictionary as a dunghill or refuse heap (origin ME myddyng, of Scandinavian origin). Referred to in Coutts, P.J.F. Readings in Victorian Prehistory. Vol2, The Victorian Aboriginals 1800-1860. p.99. ‘In northern Victoria, as we have seen, Aboriginals heaped their oven refuse into piles to form mounds. Some of these mounds were built up to form islands (often greater than a 1000 cubic metre in volume) for flood seasons at which time they could be occupied for brief periods for hunting and gathering expeditions.
8 Anabranch – a secondary channel of a river that leaves the main channel and re-joins it further downstream. Descriptor from glossary in the CSIRO Land & Water publication Rivers as Ecological Systems: The Murray-Darling Basin edited by W.J.Young. 2001
Middens and mounds are key sites that continue to assist in the exploration of local histories of the aboriginal settlements of this region, providing the most direct lines of evidence of the aboriginal presence. They provide evidence for gathering information on fluctuations of climate, aquatic food supply and estimates of past Aboriginal populations. The river in this region is a resource that provided for, and sustained, a large aboriginal habitation with a rich and varied food supply. The middens here are visible in the layers of clay and soil, where various layers of freshwater mussel shells, animal bones and evidence of cooking in the form of firestones, charcoal, burnt clay other edible waterlife were embedded in the riverbanks.

On the Murray near Nyah, Swan Hill and Boundary Bend, the local aboriginals regulated the river flow by constructing weirs of interlaced stakes and turf. These were built across dry creek beds close to their junction with the Murray, so that when the Murray flooded, water passed through the openings, it formed channels. When the water level began to fall, the openings were blocked so that fish were trapped behind and could be easily caught. In the same region there were many marked ‘canoe’ or ‘scar’ trees. These marked trees show where the local Aboriginals had cut them to make boats and canoes.

The Koori of the region had always used the bark of these eucalypts to make their canoes. At each campsite, great trunks had their bark stripped off to make shields, water vessels, shelters and to stretch drying animal skins, while the leaves and gum were used to treat various ailments.

The cutting down of the trees and removal of snags from the river channel severely affected the range and supply of food available. In the river it reduced the habitat of many species of fish and other aquatic life, and also removed the land habitat of birds and other small animals that used the vegetation and trees along the river’s edges. This degradation has proceeded to the point where now the environmental state of this river system also mounts an enormous

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11 Coutts, P. J. F. Readings in Victorian Prehistory. Vol 2: The Victorian Aboriginals 1800-1860 Ministry for Conservation, Victoria 1981. p8 ‘The outline of the canoe was cut out with a stone axe and levered from the trees. They were seasoned and caulked by packing them into puddled clay over a fire.’ Canoes took up to a week to make and could hold up to four persons. They varied in length from about 2 – 4 metres

12 Dingle, Tony. The Victorians University of Melbourne, pub. Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates. 1984.- additional information relating to food and habitat of the Aboriginal population is contained in Ch.1, Hunters and Gatherers. pp8-12
national challenge to governments and local communities, to recreate a more sustainable and healthy river. In the past the river waters appeared to be a renewable and infinite source for the taking. In retrospect this was an extremely short-sighted view. The environmental difficulties of the Murray highlight the need for a broader attitudinal change to water usage, with some assisted practical application related to the increased awareness, and the importance of landcare issues.

In the early 1960s, I remember reading the book *Water into Gold*\(^\text{13}\). The book’s title was a metaphor for water regulation. Written as a history of the towns of Mildura and Renmark, it was produced to celebrate their establishment fifty years earlier by William and George Chaffey,\(^\text{14}\) irrigation entrepreneurs and businessmen, who specialised in buying irrigable land and subdividing and servicing it with water channels. The book praised this particular business enterprise, and commended the outcome that resulted in the conquest of the river by regulation and irrigation. The venture was reported in many of the travel advertisements and government publications promoting the area, describing how ‘the alchemist’s art of turning base, valueless material into gold was alive and well in post-war Australia.’\(^\text{15}\) Writing in 2001, Sinclair refers to the earlier views of the benefits that accrued from the establishment of irrigation schemes, and the perception that the redirection and regulation of the river waters would ‘transforming’ the ‘useless’ country of the Murray Valley landscape. However, he concludes:

*The alchemy of irrigation redefined the cultural meanings associated with rivers. Rather than ‘river’ implying some individual entity and cohesion as a cultural concept, irrigation broke down this cohesion by segregating the river from the water it carried.*\(^\text{16}\)

The Murray still appeared to be a continuous source of bountiful supply and an advertisement used by the Irymple Packing Company sums up the attitude of the period:

*Water into Gold. In the fertile valley of the Murray Valley prosperity is based on production free from the hazard of drought – on the development of natural assets which have a limitless future.*\(^\text{17}\)

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14. Chaffey brothers – George and William Chaffey, Canadians who were pioneers of the irrigation development in 1888 at Mildura.
16. Sinclair. p.78
In 1887, the Chaffey brothers planned the largest independent development of vineyards and orchards, at the river towns of Renmark and Mildura. To support this venture, an irrigation system needed to be established and maintained. Giant steam pumps were specially designed by George Chaffey, to pump the water out of the river, and to use the high-level channels, to irrigate by gravity flow, once the main pumps had lifted the river water into the channels. By 1893, 8,000 acres were being irrigated. Evaporation and seepage caused problems, and more water than had been anticipated had to be distributed. The first full year of production was in 1893, but the river was low, preventing shipping, so the fruit had to be carted to Swan Hill to be railed to Melbourne, resulting in most of it being spoiled. The project went into liquidation in 1894, and the Mildura Irrigation Trust took over the following year. Immediately following the First World War, and again after the Second World War, land grants were allocated to returned servicemen. These were one of the major Government initiatives for extending settlement in areas otherwise deemed ‘unproductive.’ There were a number of these settlement schemes established along the Murray. Since the time when Mildura was founded as an irrigation colony in 1888, it has also been portrayed as a tourist destination, an oasis, full of shade, olives and vines.

The irrigated crops of this region are surrounded by the semi-arid mallee country in Victoria, and the river’s floodplain of low scrub, on the New South Wales side, with the Murray River as the focus. The ‘development’ had an immediate effect on the river ecology, and continued to affect the river environ into the twenty first century, when the controlled water flow meant loss of wildlife, and there were severely reduced flood patterns with the major diversion of water for use in the various irrigation settlements. Sinclair quotes Gerry Curtis, an elderly local Albury resident, who said that the most important change in the river had been its flow pattern:

Since man has controlled the river and has reversed the river flows he has destroyed the life of all creatures that live in it. Normally, before man (white man) came along, the river would flow heavily in the spring and would be just about dry by the autumn. As the river’s flow and ecology have been increasingly coupled to agricultural and industrial production, its cultural and social meaning has also altered. The river and its sounds, smells and textures were previously a central part of the river communities. The regulation of the

**References:**


19 Sinclair. p. 219-220
river, agricultural progress and large-scale development of irrigation are linked with the vision of barren land being made productive. From the 1880s on, the stories that are told of the river history reflect the development of these settlements, and the importance of irrigation and agriculture to these communities. Most of these irrigation river settlements were seen in the light of a series of positive steps towards overcoming or conquering a hostile landscape environment and ‘harnessing’ the waters of the river.

Irrigation was seen as a viable tool of expansion. In the 1880s several Australian government representatives visited India and the United States of America, with a view to examine irrigation developments\(^\text{20}\). Their visits confirmed that irrigation created landscapes, aesthetically and productively attuned to European notions of beauty and utility. Such visions assumed colonised landscapes were without cultural and economic value in their pre-European form. In 1948 the geographer and policy-maker, J. Macdonald Holmes said:

> It was not sufficiently realised that the human imprint of farms, irrigation channels and town plans sets a seal upon the landscape.\(^\text{21}\)

Peter Davis, a lecturer in medical biology and environmental studies at the University of Adelaide argued that:

> In order to make.... exploitation more complete we have subjected the [Murray River] to a ruthless surgery, giving little thought to the side-effects of our actions on the welfare of other creatures which are part of the river ecosystem, or of the effects of our actions on the life and integrity of the river itself.\(^\text{22}\)

Today there is considerable interest in the effects of the regulated river system coming from sectors within the general public and scientific community. This interest has generated some investigations funded by government, into how these changes have contributed to the impact on the health and wellbeing of the Murray and its ecosystem.

In South Australia, where the River Murray approaches the sea via Lake Alexandrina, there is an additional cause of degradation. In the 1930s barrages were constructed across the channels, in order to prevent seawater from entering the lakes and lower Murray. The Murray mouth, Lake Alexandrina and the Coorong are adversely affected by the altered river flow.

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\(^{21}\) Sinclair, Paul. *The Murray-a river and its people* p.43

\(^{22}\) Davis, Peter. *Man and the Murray* New South Wales University Press Ltd.1978 p.74
The Coorong\textsuperscript{23} is a coastal lagoon with a large estuarine influence, but not a typical estuary. Freshwater inflow from the Murray into the Coorong occurs at the place where the lagoon meets the sea, and the Coorong can be considered a ‘reverse estuary’ because salinities increase with distance from the river mouth.

\hspace{1cm} 4. Aerial view – Murray Mouth: the Coorong, South Australia. Photo; J. Bailey.

The Coorong receives water by exchange with the sea, via the Murray mouth, by freshwater inflow from the River Murray, and via rainfall and groundwater inputs. The flow conditions in the River Murray therefore have a significant effect upon the hydrology and biology of the Mouth area, the Coorong and estuary. Prior to regulated water flow there was an outflow ten months of the year, now reduced to approximately four months per year. The ongoing diminished flow of fresh water into estuaries is a worldwide problem relating to the increasingly heavy usage of the world’s freshwater resources. There are several environmental consequences that result from reduced flow of the river to the sea. The most obvious is that with less water available to scour out a channel at the mouth, sand bars may develop across the mouth and isolate the estuary and the Coorong from the sea. This stops fish and other organisms from migrating between the two areas. A second consequence of low

\textsuperscript{23}Thiele, Colin. The Coorong Rigby Limited, Melbourne 1972 p.52 ‘coorong’ from the aboriginal word Karangh, meaning a neck or narrow lagoon. It is part of the Upper South East Catchment, South Australia and is listed as a \textit{Wetland of International Importance} under the Ramsar Convention. See White, Mary. \textit{Listen our Land is Crying} p.179-181
flow is that the estuary is denied the input of fresh water that are necessary for the life cycles of estuarine dependent species and for influxes of nutrients that promote high productivity in estuarine systems.

The story of the Murray - Darling River system echoes that of early white settlement in many parts of United States of America. Lucy Lippard suggests that:

*Moving from one environment to another, we often unconsciously try to reproduce the conditions of our past. The early Euro-settlers did this without understanding the unique qualities of the different bioregions they moved in and out of. The anomalous absence of drought in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries deceived settlers into optimism.*

24 It is an attitude that is reflected in much of the development of irrigation centres along our river systems, mirroring parallel circumstances and lack of specific knowledge or understanding of the particular environment, something considered unnecessary in the late nineteenth century.

**Settlers, Science and Sustainability**

Earlier I mentioned that the development of horticultural communities along several of the major inland rivers had created a need for a constant and controlled water supply (in the form of irrigation). The horticultural need for a regulated water system to irrigate crops altered many of the characteristics of inland rivers. This resulted in major changes to the nature of the rivers and their landscapes, resulting in ecological damage to the river channels and their surrounding environment. All the river towns where irrigation was the main reason for their development and settlement have contributed in some degree to the deterioration of the river, the degraded water quality and its associated natural environment of flora and fauna.

While attending an Art and Science Symposium in Mildura in 2001, I heard a number of speakers, both scientists and artists who were invited to present papers relating to ecology and the environment of sustainability. One of the scientists I met at the Symposium was the paleobotanist, Mary E. White.25

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White spoke of the changed and degraded wetlands of the Murray River, citing examples such as the Loveday Wetlands Complex\textsuperscript{28}, the Chowilla Floodplain Complex, and the Barmah – Millewa Forest,\textsuperscript{29} and said that the Murray flows slowly, with water normally taking two

\textsuperscript{26} Photo \url{www.abc.net.au/rural}
\textsuperscript{27} Photo: \url{www.abc.net.au/rural}
\textsuperscript{28} Wetlands – cited in glossary of \textit{Rivers as Ecological Systems – the Murray-Darling Basin}, MDBC, Canberra. 2001 p.293. ‘Land inundated with temporary or permanent water that is usually slow moving or stationary, shallow, and either fresh, brackish or saline’
\textsuperscript{29} These examples are cited in White’s book, \textit{Listen our Land is Crying}, pp.134 – 137. Also cited in \textit{Rivers as Ecological Systems}, CSIRO Land and Water, 2001. p.137. The Barmah-Millewa Forest of 70.000 hectares and is located on the Murray, along the Cadell Fault/Block, which pushed the river northward around the block (formed 25,000 years ago). It is a flat region where a network of streams evolved and filled, forming the largest river red gum forest in the world.
months to travel from the Hume Dam at Albury, along the meandering course of 2235 kilometres to the Murray mouth.

Flow patterns have been altered by irrigation needs so that drought conditions occur 6 years in 10 instead of once every 20 years under natural conditions. This in turn, affects the biodiversity of the region, with many plants and animals dependent on the flooding, abnormalities occur that are caused by pesticides and water quality is degraded by urban contamination.

When there is artificial flooding this means that many wetlands are permanently inundated causing reduction of food organisms. Some wetland rehabilitation has been initiated since 1990 in the Barmah-Millewa Forest and the South Australian Riverland Wetlands. This program has given increased flows of water in these areas in order to remove accumulated salt and to revitalise the wetland system, and also by fencing, to exclude stock from areas that are regenerating. At Lake Merreti and Lake Woolpoloolo,30 the water levels are fluctuated to provide benefit to their environment and protect the water quality. The regulator is used to allow freshwater to flood the dry lakebed in spring with extra river flow – thus creating a rich temporary wetland that wets and dries in response to seasonal variations in river flows. This rehabilitation project is a major improvement – but there is continued degradation of the river ecology and the degraded riverine habitat.

The following observations by Sinclair and White indicate to some extent, the degree of difficulty in maintaining the river as an ecologically sustainable environment, a healthy river for the future.

Sinclair speaks in the first instance of the river in history, its natural flow and the richness of its environment, and then reflects on what it has become since it has been the primary water source for the production of rice, cotton and other crops:

Today the Murray is at least two rivers at any one moment The first river contains native species of flora and fauna that have adapted over thousands of years to cycles of drought and plenty; the second is the modern regulated river created early in the

30 White cites these lakes, Merreti and Woolpolool in, Listen our Land is Crying pp 137 – 139 The Riverland Wetland Rehabilitation Sites, South Australian Murray Valley.
twentieth century, whose primary purpose is to conserve, and then to convey, water controlled for use in irrigation and urban centre.  

White makes similar comments about the changes to the river environment. She writes of the essential nature of the Murray Basin as a flat landscape that has over a long period of time created the meandering path of the river:

*As a result of the flat terrain, water used to spread over vast areas across the floodplains (which vary from 2 to 10km wide, and up to 25km wide at one point) during years of high rainfall. The less dramatic seasonal flooding of average years maintained the wetlands and River Red Gum forests, drought years saw the river reduced to a trickle with permanent pools – natural cycles and pulses of life – but that was before regulation of the river.*

White and Sinclair both express concern in relation to the destructive nature of the intensely regulated water flow. This strict regulation of the Murray waters is a source of continual argument amongst farmers, irrigators, scientists and environmentalists.

The 2003 Art and Science Symposium at the Mildura Campus, Latrobe University, was held to coincide with the presentation of the large environment related exhibition, Palimpsest #5. At the symposium, I attended a presentation by Paul Carter, Professorial Research Fellow, The Australian Centre, University of Melbourne. In his public address to a gathering of artists, scientists and members of the public, he spoke of the self-destructive place myth, where the vision and stories of the wide, open landscapes known as our ‘Australian identity’, continues to erase the picture of what could be developed here, to create a sustainable living environment. Carter spoke of tree clearing, irrigation and agriculture, continuing to this day. In his view, an environmental art that contributed to a cultural change of mind, needed to engage less with ‘the site’ and more with the historical myth driving the environmental destruction and writes in his catalogue essay:

*In context, it is a willingness to relate local histories that best encourages the emergence of what I have elsewhere called an art of environmental difference. This indicates the artist’s role: to invent culturally and environmentally sustainable mythforms, to create places made after the story.*

In retrospect we can see that aspects of the settler’s views towards the Australian vegetation and the eucalypts mirror some of the difficulties that faced them when attempting to come to

32 White, Mary. Listen our Land is Crying Kangaroo Press, New South Wales 1998 pp. 124-128
terms with this alien landscape. The eucalypt appeared to have none of the familiar attributes of European trees, with little perceived variety and skinny branches with narrow elongated leaves that provided little or no shelter and little utility as timber. Another unsettling and unfamiliar feature for the settler was, ‘the nature of the eucalypt and its’ refusal to mark the seasonal changes which provided an ‘allegory of human life’, as noted by Barron Field in his Geographical Memoirs 1825. The felling of these trees can be viewed as a symbol of the settler’s attempt to overcome and tame the rough landscape, and in doing so, to gain a sense of belonging.

Writing of our ongoing relationship with the links between landscape and environment George Seddon views it more as an issue relating to the much broader picture of the environment, not only in regard to land usage and the changed landscape.

His main emphasis is placed on concerns that the conservation should be:

On intelligent land-use, and on environmental design, and not just on preservation, although there is also much to be preserved. The first step in design is recognition, the ability to see what there is. Only then can we ask whether a given structure is appropriate to its setting, or whether a proposed land-use is appropriate in a given environment.

During one of the earlier Art & Science symposiums, I visited the Cooperative Research Centre for Freshwater Ecology at its Mildura base. The Centre is one of several research sites of the Murray – Darling Basin Commission, and has a portfolio of integrated research projects addressing issues of flow-related ecological processes, restoration ecology, conservation ecology and ecological assessment. This visit gave me the opportunity to gain some insight into the current problems faced in relation to the Murray. I viewed several of the water, fish and plant experiments being conducted in the laboratory tanks, and also gathered information relating to several scientific field trips. At the Centre they were investigating strategies to

35 Seddon, George. Emeritus Professor of Environmental Science, University of Melbourne, Honorary Research Fellow, Centre for Studies in Australian Literature, University of Western Australia.
37 Reference in the Cooperative Research Centre for Freshwater Ecology. 1998/99 Annual Report part of CRCFE. Chairman’s Foreword p. 8
assist in alleviating some of the problems linked with the concept of ‘sustainability’\textsuperscript{38} and improved maintenance of the river system\textsuperscript{39}.

In light of my visit to this local research laboratory, it was interesting to note some of the discussions at the symposium. They centred around the importance of inviting keynote speakers, who would focus specifically on issues pertinent to the local sustainability research. A number of those present felt that the speaker’s presentation should be specific to regional land, water ecology and other related environmental issues at future Palimpsests. It was suggested that this would enable a closer relationship to develop between the various community sectors, the speakers and the research teams. Success in the long-term goal of sustainability requires support and collaboration on a broad scale. It may take the combined strength of local communities, the knowledge of scientists and cooperation of both state and federal governments, requiring an innovative approach and ongoing economic support.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{38} Sustainability – able to be maintained over time or continuously
\textsuperscript{39} See Appendix 3 for further notes
\textsuperscript{40} From 2005 the Palimpsest and Symposium events have begun to extend their contact and involvement across the entire Murray Darling Basin, involving artists, communities, government and scientists in four states
4. Current developments

In 1827, when passing judgement on the land and its rivers, the explorer Charles Sturt, spoke of the irregular behaviour of Australian rivers as a ‘seeming deviation on the part of Nature from her usual laws’\(^1\). The standard by which such judgements were made by the early explorers was always to cite European river systems as the exemplars. In 1829-30, Sturt went on to explore the Murrumbidgee, and travelled down its length, discovering its junction with the Murray in January 1830, and passed the junction of the Darling as it enters the Murray at Wentworth. He continued the full length, crossing Lake Alexandrina and on to the mouth of the Murray, where it runs into Encounter Bay, South Australia.\(^2\)

To some extent, this ‘eurocentric’ attitude still persists. In the CSIRO\(^3\) journal, Land and Water Link, it was noted that:

> Europeans found the landscape harsh and arid, lacking the green and park-like landscapes of Europe. The rivers were untamed: they flooded across vast plains and then dried up within weeks to become a chain of muddy pools before the cycle would begin all over again. Eight generations after settlement, we still have the greatest difficulty in grasping the role of water in our landscape and responding to it in an Australian way, rather than in a European or Asian manner.\(^4\)

Dr John Williams wrote this as part of a series of articles concerned with research into sustainable water solutions. He mentioned the three key myths that persist in relation to the Australian landscape environment as being a danger, when we need to live in harmony with our land. These are:

1. Water running to the sea is “wasted”.
2. The necessity to “make the desert bloom”.
3. The need to “drought proof” Australia.

Mary White understands this historical European concept of the landscape, and is in accord with Williams, when she maintains that the challenge facing us, is to maintain a flexible balance between sustainable aquatic ecosystems, and sustainable socio – economic

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\(^1\) Davis, Peter S. Man and the Murray New South Wales University Press 1978 p.24


\(^3\) CSIRO – Commonwealth Scientific & Industrial Research Organisation

\(^4\) Williams, Dr John. Chief, CSIRO Land & Water. Challenging our Water Myths Land & Water Link, CSIRO April 2003 (online journal)
enterprises, using ‘adaptive management practices which are based on the fundamental principle that variability is essential for sustainability – an extremely difficult task.’

In 1997, there were a series of scientific workshops held in Albury and Canberra, organised by The Murray - Darling Basin Commission and the Cooperative Research Centre for Freshwater Ecology (CRCFE). The members of the Commission reviewed their scientific understanding of sustainability, river management and floodplain rivers:

*Understanding the principle that every river is a complex ecosystem and not just a channel that conveys water, is basic to understanding how it functions and what it requires to remain healthy. The floodplain rivers of semi-arid and arid Australia are so far removed from ‘typical’ rivers that understanding their requirements assumes another dimension.*

One of the current items of interest is the ‘flood-pulse concept’, which is complementary to, but distinct from, the previous ‘river continuum concept’. The flood-pulse concept, a term developed to describe floodplain rivers overseas, sees the inundation of floodplains as the main driving force behind river life, with the most important ecological processes happening across a river and its floodplains, not along it. There is reference to this concept in the CRCFE publication ‘Living on floodplains’. In a flood-pulse river, the flooding cycle is more important than any gradual, downstream shift in ecology along a river’s length – the river is more like a long continuous ocean shoreline than a conduit carrying water from the mountains to the ocean. Ecologists now believe, that much of the carbon needed by river life is supplied by floodplains during floods, and is not taken up from the air in-stream by water plants and algae, or fed into rivers from their catchments.

Where floods are unpredictable in terms of their timing, species with flexible life cycles are likely to have a selective advantage. Sedentary organisms such as attached algae, will be at a disadvantage in those environments that experience rapid rises and falls in water levels. If this is so, rivers isolated from their floodplains may no longer be able to support large

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6 Mussared, David, *Living on Floodplains* The Cooperative Research Centre for Freshwater Ecology, MDBC.1997 definition: A floodplain is the area of relatively flat land covered by water during a major flood. It is built, layer upon layer, of nutrient-rich sediments deposited by the river during floods. p.4
7 White, *Running Down* p.95
8 ‘Flood-pulse’-term used to describe a particular flood event in the flow record of a river, defined in glossary, White. *Running Down* p.264
10 Sedentary – inhabiting the same locality throughout life
numbers of fish and other organisms and growths such as algae, cyanobacteria and other related destructive growths will flourish unchecked. In such a scenario, floodplain water bodies and vegetation are very important indeed – billabongs, swamps, lakes, marshes and flood runners may well be the main food supply for rivers. They are the natural state of our water paths and their environs.

Most of our rivers are ephemeral\(^{11}\), some rarely have any water in them and many do not run to the sea. Our rivers in the main, are subject to floods that are among the world’s most extreme and because of the low gradients and vast inland plains, the area inundated by flooding can be very large. Their variable flow has greater fluctuations than seen in rivers in any other part of the world. These rivers have an unpredictable flow that occurs largely as a result of local rainfall, thus the tributary flows tend to be highly ephemeral, and have high evaporation rates. The CSIRO article written in 2001, published by the Murray-Darling Basin Commission provides an excellent example of this aspect of variable and unpredictable flow.\(^{12}\) The Paroo River is the last unregulated major river in the Murray-Darling Basin. During large flow events this river can reach as far as the Darling River near Wilcannia in New South Wales. In the lower reaches of the river, below Nocoleche Nature Reserve, the Paroo diverges into a system of uncoordinated channels containing ephemeral and semi-permanent water holes. Flood flows from the river spill into a number of semi-permanent and ephemeraloverflow lakes – flows in this section are not gauged because the river essentially terminates at this point and the median annual flow is close to zero.

![Diagram of the Murray Basin.](image)

7. The Murray Basin.- Mallee & Riverine Plain\(^{13}\) Photo: MDBC.

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\(^{11}\) As defined in the glossary of Young, W.J. (editor), Rivers as Ecological Systems MDBC. 2001 p.289 ‘ephemeral in this sense is temporary or intermittent, for instance a creek or wetland that dries up periodically.’

\(^{12}\) Article by Gehrke, P.C. Rivers as Ecological Systems Murray Darling Basin Commission, CSIRO 2001 p.120

\(^{13}\) White, Mary. Running Down Kangaroo Press 2000 p.210 ‘The Murray Basin formed as a result of tectonic activity associated with Australia’s rifting from Antarctica and subsequent movement north in the Late Pleistocene period, 6000,000-100,000. It contains thin horizontal sedimentary strata that have been accumulating since the Basin began to sink 60 million years ago. It is a huge structure, covering 320,000 square kilometres’
The River Murray Channel is the main artery of the river system and forms the link between forest, floodplain, wetland and estuarine assets. It provides in-stream habitat for many aquatic plants and animals, including the Murray cod and other threatened species. River regulation was a significant factor in the decline of native fish species:

Although never a substantial fishery when compared to the market for ocean fish, Murray Cod were an important cultural symbol of the river’s abundance and character; their limited economic importance did not reflect their cultural power.¹⁴

Current objectives are to increase the frequency of higher flows in spring that are ecologically significant, overcome barriers to migration of native fish species between the sea and Hume Dam, and maintain current levels of channel stability.

The Murray - Darling Basin Commission (MDBC)¹⁵ is in the process of implementing a number of initiatives to improve the interconnectivity between the river channel and the floodplain. They have established a sea fish passage program, constructing fishways (fishladders)¹⁶ on all locks and weirs between the sea and Hume Dam to support the recovery of native fish populations. In November 2003, west of Mildura at Lock 8, a fishway was implemented concurrently with an upgrade and replacement of the navigable pass of the lock and weir. The design allows for fluctuations of weir pool to operate over the range of potential flows. Another initiative of the MDBC is to provide in-channel habitat ‘resnagging and riparian restoration’¹⁷ of the adjacent riparian zone to enable a long-term viability of existing native fish populations. By developing a wetland management plan, they will improve its environmental condition and function. These are some of the intended improvements being investigated by the MDBC for the ecology of the Murray.

As Paul Sinclair comments when writing on environmental change to the river:

Since … 1945 water quality has deteriorated, populations of native species have declined and the river has been isolated from the floodplains and wetlands with its natural flow checked by weirs, barrages and dams…¹⁸

The Murray system is one example of a wider ecological and social change occurring in other parts of Australia. There are many challenges to local beliefs, histories and activities, with the

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¹⁶ Fishways / fishladders – pathways enabling fish to traverse locks & weirs along the river
¹⁷ ‘Resnagging & riparian’ restoration – relating to the restoration of snags, branches etc in the shallows and banks of a river.
¹⁸ Sinclair, Paul. The Murray-A River and its People p.19
current dependence on this river system to sustain entire communities. With the introduction of irrigation the early settlers hoped to transform and reshape the landscape, to align it with a more European vision and experience of landscape and northern hemisphere river systems. This was also seen partly as taking control or conquering and moulding nature and the environment.

8. Fishway – Torrumbarry Weir on the Murray River.¹⁹

Dr John Williams, Chief, CSIRO Land and Water in 2003, says that our challenge will be, to take into account the many interests at stake, and to engage all parties in reaching decisions based on social considerations, economic costs and environmental benefits. Scientific evidence is an important input to this decision making process:

Possible solutions are likely to include better flow management scheduling and operational improvements, effective water trading systems, more efficient water use and greater investment security for irrigators who have a pivotal role as prime users of the resource base that underpins their livelihood, and which contributes around $10 billion a year to Australia’s agricultural wealth.²⁰

The local rural communities and the city food markets are supplied with fresh produce from the irrigation settlements. The Murray - Darling River system supplies two thirds of the local fresh food market and trades internationally. In order to promote better and more efficient water usage and to restore the health of the river system, there must be cooperation and

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¹⁹ Photo: [www.enterprise.canberra.edu.au](http://www.enterprise.canberra.edu.au)
²⁰ Williams, Dr John. Why the Murray River Needs Help. Land & Water, CSIRO Nov 2003 (online)
positive communication between the communities, government and environmental scientific research.

The Murray waters

As part of my research, I have investigated the visual and social impact of the construction of the locks and channels, both on the land, and within the settlements situated on the river\(^{21}\). One example of artwork that was concerned with similar environmental degradation of the river landscape is a work by Bonita Ely, ‘*Murray River Punch*’, that she first performed in 1980.

Ely grew up during the 1950s and early 1960s in Robinvale, a township and its surrounding district on the Murray River, and situated approximately half way between Mildura and Swan Hill. This was the region of the Murray environ that was my site in time and space, the place of my childhood experiences and memories. Many of our visual impressions and social encounters were probably similar – specifically relating to the irrigation settlement and the river. The damage to the Murray waters became more apparent in the latter period of our childhood and by the mid 1960s its environmental significance and the severe impact of irrigation were in the early stages of investigation.

This example was one among a number of Ely’s performances that strongly depicted aspects of undesirable environmental change to the Murray. She presented the demonstration and recipe in much the same manner as a marketing promotion. Ely set up a table in the foyer of the University of Melbourne Student Union building as part of the ‘Women at Work’ performance week in 1980. Ely proceeded to market a product and while constantly talking to the audience with her sales patter, she demonstrated the making of the punch mixture. She then distributed free samples of the ‘punch’ to any of the audience willing to participate, in a similar manner to methods frequently used to market new products in supermarkets with muzak machines providing the background sound.

\(^{21}\) Six locks were constructed along the South Australian section of the Murray between 1922 and 1930. The only access for fish over the weirs and lock chambers were when the boats passed through, except at Lock 6 where a fishway was installed. Further reference in Williams, Rod. *River Murray Journal*, 1996 p11.
The recipe is as follows:

Using a blender or beater combine:
- 6 cups deoxygenated water
- 2 tbsp. Fertiliser
- 1/4 cup of human urine
- 1/4 cup of human faeces
- 1 dsp. dried European Carp

Place mixture on a gentle heat
Add 2 cups salt
Stir constantly until salt dissolves then bring to boil
Remove from heat
Stir in
- 2 tbsp. Superphosphate
- 2 tbsp. Insecticide
- 2 tbsp. chlorine

Serves 18 people.

A sentiment that echoes in Ely’s performance, is expressed by Ivan Illich’s comments on agricultural and industrial change and the reflected health of the waters:

*The streams carry the memories, the historian will learn to distinguish the vast register of their voices...will recognise that the H2O which gurgles through plumbing*

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22 A performance script of the ‘sales pitch’ was most generously supplied by Bonita Ely to assist my research
23 Engberg, Juliana. *Breadline*. Artlink Vol 19 # 4 1999 pp.31-33
is not water, but a stuff which industrial society creates. The historian will realise that the twentieth century has transmogrified water into a fluid with which archetypal waters cannot be mixed.\textsuperscript{24}

As the water quality of the river systems continues to be degraded, we leave our mark, or ecological footprint on our environment. The barrage at Goolwa, South Australia near the mouth of the Murray River (see below) where the water flow is reduced and contains an increased salt content, is just one example of this mark.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{barrage.jpg}
\caption{Barrage at Goolwa South Australia}\textsuperscript{25}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{24} Cited in Lippard, Lucy. The Lure of the Local p.160 Illich, Ivan. H2o and the Waters of Forgetfulness Heyday Books 1985  Ivan Illich (1926 – 2002) was a philosopher and cultural critic. During the last decade of his life he increasingly questioned the notions of environmental responsibility, \url{www.wholeearthmag.com/ArticleBin/111-7}.  
\textsuperscript{25} A performance script of the ‘sales pitch’ was most generously supplied by Bonita Ely to assist my research.
5. Landscape environment and the artist

a. Historical – The relationship of artists to the Australian landscape

My research focuses primarily on artists either working in the environment, or working on issues related to the environment, concerned with the fragility of land and physicality of materials. During the latter part of the twentieth century, artists have become more aware of issues related to the environment, consciously exploring aspects of place, ecology and the environment. The following is a brief summary, to provide some historical background, in relation to the work of earlier artists, and their depiction of the Australian landscape. I do not provide more than a glimpse into the history of Australian landscape artists, but reference them briefly in order to establish a background or overview of the genre as it developed in Australia.

On their expeditions in the late eighteenth century, early explorers of the inland and Australian coastal regions had accompanying botanists and surveyors as part of their team. From these expeditions there were numerous botanical and geographic studies made and sent back to Europe. The explorers, botanists and surveyors were often recording exotic flora and fauna for the various governments, including specimens for their respective Botanical and Natural History Societies and their Geographical Societies. Many of these travellers wrote about, and depicted, a harsh unfriendly environment – an alien landscape.

However Joseph Banks, a young botanist with scientific interests, wrote much more enthusiastically. While he was travelling on the Endeavour with Lt James Cook in 1770, he noted with interest, the extensive range of plant life that existed in this part of the world. Later, in his capacity as President of the Royal Society in 1788, he continued to follow this interest and was most influential in ensuring the gathering and recording of rare plant specimens from Australia for the collection of the Society. He was particularly delighted to receive both specimens, and illustrations, of exotic plants and animals, which were sent by the first governor of the colony, Governor Arthur Phillip, and were added to his natural history collection.

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26 Ludwig Becker (1808-1861) an artist, naturalist and geologist travelling with the explorer Robert O’Hara Bourke in the Victorian Exploring Team in 1860 was also an enthusiast of the desert landscape in its entirety as noted in his reports, drawings and paintings. See reference in Haynes Seeking the Centre Cambridge University Press 1998 pp.100-103
A little later, in the developing colony of the early nineteenth century, artists such as Joseph Lycett portrayed a more picturesque and romantic vision: the pastoral frontier. Barron Field was appointed Supreme Court judge in New South Wales in 1816. Field cultivated scientific and literary interests throughout his life, and in 1825, as editor of the *Geographical Memoirs on New South Wales*, he included a number of his own papers, noting that:

*New South Wales is a perpetual flower garden, but there is not a single scene in it of which a painter could make a landscape, without greatly disguising the character of the trees.*

This was the popular view amongst artists and writers at the time, and began to change only when a wider range of scenery and terrain was explored, and there was an expansion of settlements.

John Glover, who settled in northern Tasmania in 1858, interpreted the landscape with his memories of Claude and Poussin, an exotic and heroic European vision. Glover attempted to capture the spirit of the Australian landscape, by acknowledging differences in the light, the translucent foliage and sense of vast space present in the colony, but still within the vision of his European counterparts. This is hardly surprising, given that, at this time most of the colonial art was produced either for an English audience, or a local audience that viewed England as ‘home’.

Late Colonial artists such as Eugene Von Guerard, who was working in Australia in the 1850s and 1860s, saw and recorded nature in her grandeur, painting grand and sublime views of rugged scenery and mountains, with a very European interpretation. The depictions were essentially alien to the Australian context of dry atmospheres, clear bright skies. These visions developed from the picturesque and topographical forms of landscape, where rocks, plants and animals were used as a range of essential components to form the ‘typical’ landscape.

By comparison with Von Guerard, in the late 1880s Louis Buvelot approached the landscape in a manner that was more reminiscent of the French group, the Barbizon School and Gustave

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27 In England Joseph Lycett was convicted of forgery and sentenced to transportation for 14 years. He arrived in Sydney on 7th February 1814. He was employed by Governor Macquarie between 1819 and 1821 to make drawings of pictorial views of the settlement and its progress. He was pardoned in 1822. Referred to in Smith, Bernard. *Australian Painting 1788-1970* Oxford University Press Melbourne 1978 pp.20-21
29 Sublime – excellence, grandeur or beauty as to inspire great admiration or awe.
30 Picturesque - visually attractive in quaint or charming manner.
31 Topographical - the arrangement of the natural and artificial physical features of an area.
Courbet. He arrived in Australia in 1865, and settled in Melbourne, painting ‘plein air’, rural countryside scenes, in locations like Templestowe, and using areas in the Port Phillip District for his subject matter. In his paintings Buvelot sought to incorporate the local atmospheric colour to portray Australian scenery. He caught the particular light, and subtle colours of the Australian landscape, incorporating the life around him and the effects of man on nature.

The two painters, Frederick McCubbin and Tom Roberts, had been students together at the Gallery School in Victoria during the mid 1870s. In 1881 Roberts went to study briefly in London, then he joined John Russell and Will Maloney on a walking tour, to Spain and the south of France, where probably, he first heard of the French Impressionist painters. On his return to Australia in 1885, Roberts joined McCubbin, Streeton and Conder, in setting up artist’s camps, where they could paint in the local bush areas around Melbourne. Located initially at Box Hill, they began to sketch and paint ‘plein air’, moving later to Eaglemont, near Heidelberg, where they rented a house overlooking the Yarra River.

They further developed an appreciation of the character of the stereotypical Australian landscape, with its particular atmosphere of light and subtle colour, including aspects of the settler’s life, and evidence of pastoral and farm activities. The physicality and directness of the medium, and the method of the application of paint for these works, is similar to some of the methods used in my small preparatory ‘water studies’, that focus on the fluidity of the medium. The works from their experiments with colour and rapid paint application were painted on numerous cigar-box lids, and when some of these ‘plein air’ works were exhibited they became known as the ‘Exhibition of 9 x 5 Impressions’. These works formed the first Australian impressionist exhibition, and opened in Melbourne on the 17th August 1889.

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32 ‘Plein air’-open air, conveying feeling of out-of-doors, frequently used of the work of the Impressionists. As defined in Thames and Hudson, Dictionary of Art and Artists 1994 p.284
33 Templestowe is now a suburb of Melbourne.
During the 1920s and 1930s there was an:  

*Emphasis upon the creation of an Australian mythology, and the importance of the interior of the country as a kind of ‘emotional heartland.*\(^{36}\)

This opinion foreshadows trends in the manner that the Australian landscape was to be portrayed a little later by the Australian born artists Arthur Boyd and Sidney Nolan. In the early to mid 1940s Arthur Boyd\(^{37}\) was developing his individual surrealist depiction of ‘antipodean monsters’\(^{38}\) in his bush paintings. Sidney Nolan\(^{39}\) had painted the Wimmera series in 1942, and had continued to approach the landscape in a similar way to the Heidelberg School, with a direct and vivid impression of the seen landscape. In the late 1940s, Nolan was also developing an authentic national myth, using local legendary figures such as Ned Kelly.\(^{40}\) They frequently served as the inspirational focus, when portraying the landscape vistas that included pictorial and allegoric aspects in a naïve\(^{41}\) and decorative style, similar to a type of folk-art. In the works of this period, both artists were using the landscape primarily as a backdrop for their narratives.

In the late 1950s, and early 1960s, Fred Williams\(^{42}\) approached the depiction of the Australian landscape in a more idiosyncratic way. Fred Williams used landscape as a motif, initially painting it in a naturalistic tradition. In Williams next landscapes he developed graphic paint marks that were to translate as a series of generic features creating a pictorial shorthand that became a recognisable language of Australian landscape. He often placed the horizon line near the top of the picture, or it was not there at all, so that the work could be viewed as if from the air. The artwork had become more about the evocation of place, rather than a particular or specific place. William’s trees and vegetation were abstracted images:  

*A tangle of colour, shape and movement dancing across the land. His images suggest a sense of the changing moods and seasons of the landscape.*\(^{43}\)

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\(^{36}\) Smith, Documents on Art and Taste in Australia p.23. – in reference to an article written in 1909 by the artist and critic, Sydney Long.  


\(^{40}\) Ned Kelly – an Australian bushranger and folk hero.  

\(^{41}\) Naïve- produced in a style that deliberately rejects sophisticated artistic techniques and has a bold directness resembling a child’s work.  

\(^{42}\) Williams (1927-1982)  

John Olsen,\(^44\) was a young Sydney artist and member of the Contemporary Art Society. Olsen was a student of John Passmore, and also part of the local movement towards informal abstraction. With assistance from a generous patron in 1957, Olsen was enabled to travel to Europe and to live briefly in Spain in the late fifties. By his return in 1960, he had already become interested in his paintings being:

\emph{A personal encounter of man with the environment, a palimpsest of moods, memories and physical sensations, revived and relived in the act of painting}.\(^45\)

Bernard Smith viewed Olsen’s work as a number of random sensations, passionately experienced, a totality, and wrote:

\emph{In his celebration of vitality, Olsen has invented one of the few original schemata for Australian landscape since 1885, at its best, it stands honourably in the company of Roberts’ Heidelberg studies, Streeton’s ‘Fire’s On! Lapstone Tunnel’, and Nolan’s Wimmera series}.\(^46\)

Olsen had a strong commitment to landscape as environment rather than scenery, a mix of harmony and discord:

\emph{An ecology of the genius loci the sullen, brooding, spirit of place, embattled and barricaded against time}.\(^47\)

From this point he abandoned landscape painting from a fixed position, saying it was totally out of phase with our changing concepts of the universe and our modes of travel.

### b. Changing relationship of contemporary artist to landscape

More recently there has been a greater global awareness of the changed and degraded ecological environments, a timely reminder of the fragility of the planet:

\emph{Subject both of science and art, the landscape functions as a mirror and a lens: in it we see the space we occupy and ourselves as we occupy it. And we have consistently sought to connect on some level with the landscape. Among the most complex and fascinating of these artistic responses to the earth are the works that have come to be called Land Art}.\(^48\)


\(^{46}\) Smith. p.355.

\(^{47}\) Smith. p.355.

This art form provided a platform for a number of artists as they expanded their art making approach to include related social and cultural issues and reviewed their place in and of the present landscape environment. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, but particularly since the 1990s, there has been much a stronger interest shown by artists in making a statement related directly to issues of landscape environment and ecology. This has entailed, not only considering the aesthetic wonder, and pure reverie of landscape, but also human impact on the environment.

In the late 1960s, and during the 1970s, several artists in the USA and Europe were producing large-scale artworks, as significant mark making gestures in the environment. These works known variously as ‘Land Art,’ ‘Eco and Environmental Art’ or site-specific sculptures were sometimes constructed by huge earthmoving machines, by manipulating the landscape as a material in its own right or for artists such as Richard Long, where the construction became a solitary documented performance.

In New York, in 1968, Robert Smithson organised a group exhibition, ‘Earthworks’, in which Long participated. The exhibition consisted primarily of photographic documentation of artworks that were either permanently in distant locations or had been destroyed. The works were often monumental and simulated the spatial expanses in which they were sited. They were frequently inaccessible and in order to view them clearly aerial vantage points were required. Robert Smithson’s most famous example is ‘Spiral Jetty,’ a long spiral of rock and earth built 1500 feet into the Great Salt Lake in Utah which created an interaction between the natural and the artificial aesthetic, the scale creating a disorienting sense experience:

> Few individuals go out there before seeing a photograph of it first: the images are the nonsites that set the site/nonsite relationship in motion.

Many of Smithson’s sites contained elements of industrial or geological transition, blurring the distinctions between industrial and natural environments.

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49 These terms were used to describe a number of large artworks, either marking, and intruding into the landscape, or being incorporated within the land.

50 Essay Comparing Natural and Artistic Beauty, Donald Crawford in Kemal & Gaskell, Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts p.195 illustration plate119 p.209


There were some philosophic and physical differences between the work of land artists and environmental artists of the 60s and 70s. The artists who were engaged in ‘land art’ were usually creating work that was taking over, or claiming the land, on a monumental scale. Their use of heavy machinery frequently required corporate grants or capital funds and occasionally the purchase of land for their constructions to be realised.

The environmental artists by comparison had priorities that were more lyrical, their works tended to celebrate and communicate the spirit of landscape, ‘utopian landscape art’. A number of other artists were engaged in exploring ways in which different aspects of landscape/environment art could be envisaged. Their interpretations were more likely to be marking and interrupting the landscape either on the land such as Richard Long, Andy Goldsworthy, Christo and Jeanne-Claude, or by making onsite and studio works such as Pat Steir and Beverly Pepper, who were creating physical statements about the environment of land and space. There was direct physical involvement and the works frequently focused on the artist as an individual in a one-to-one relationship with the land and contained an emphasis or a symbolic link with the earth and contemporary forms of ritual. These artists reacted in a sense against the monumentality of ‘land art’ and instead made transitory and ephemeral gestures as an evocation of the physical.

Further reference to Long, Goldsworthy, Steir and Pepper is contained in the section ‘Paths through the Land – Paths in the Land’.
Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s land works such as ‘Valley Curtain’ 1971-72 and ‘Running Fence’ 1972-76\textsuperscript{54}, large site-specific temporary installations, were not concerned with environmental issues. They focussed attention on the landscape in a new way, bringing it to the foreground of discussion and eventually leading to a reshaping of ‘landscape art’, one more in keeping with the concerns of the time. The ‘wrapped’ works were ‘performances’, ephemeral artworks that introduced artificial elements into the landscape. Their large North American installation, ‘Running Fence’ was a forty kilometres long white fabric fence that crossed two counties north of San Francisco and existed for only two weeks. This art form created an altered landscape, where land was seen not as physical matter, but more as a metaphor or signifier. It projected a concept, or an optical construction that sometimes manifested as a diagram, sentence or photograph.

Several contemporary Australian artists such as Bonita Ely, John Davis, Janet Laurence, James Darling and John Wolseley, have created art that exhibited landscape in a new light, exploring social and political issues. Their work encompasses the elements of landscape and its environmental diversity. They raise the issues of ecological degradation, changes via agricultural and irrigation settlements and the effects on the rivers and their environs.

\textsuperscript{54} Andrews, Malcolm. \textit{Landscape and Western Art} Oxford University Press 1999 Illustration plate 85 p.159
The artwork is frequently site-specific, and located in a landscape environment or exterior. For the temporary or transient works, they usually include documentation with text and photographs.

13. Salt extraction at lake near Mildura. Photo: J. Bailey

1. Artists and social responsibility

There has been increased awareness, and concern in European countries, related to the extensive, rapid and frequently irreparable damage caused to the ecological environment in the latter part of the twentieth century. The pursuit of ongoing economic development, has been a critical factor that has produced a lack of concern and responsibility, towards the environment. This exploitation has impacted on many aspects of the environment, causing dramatic climate change, water shortage and the increase of salination.

Frequently artists in earlier periods have engaged with social issues, but throughout the second half of the twentieth century, an increasing number of artists’ works have directly confronted issues of ecology, and environmental damage. Marcia Tucker, the Director of the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York said in relation to artists and social responsibility,

55 Photo from www.abc.net.au/rural Online Rural ABC
56 Salination – the concentration of salts in soil or water, usually sodium chloride.
‘I believe art cannot exist separate from social, political, and cultural concerns. I think that those who would like to put art in an ivory tower are working from an assumption about the world that is, to me, very unrealistic.’

For my exegesis I have chosen to investigate several contemporary artists, writers and poets, whose philosophy and artwork is relevant to environmental awareness and human impact on this environment. I have explored their particular methods and philosophic intent in relation to both aesthetics and issues of the environment in their artwork. There is both a poetic aspect, and environmental awareness in their artwork, creating an ambience in which contemplation, and awareness of issues can take place, without always presenting overtly politicised work. Their works appear to create a time and space for the imagination, including also very physical experiences that occupy ‘real’ space and time.

The poems of John Jenkins capture a sense of place, one that is a reminder of a riverine childhood that includes the atmosphere by the water’s edge. The first poem is an image and feeling of a tranquil night spent camping by the river’s edge that evokes a sense of the relative scale of the human to the wider elements of air and sky in the environment.

**Trance of Light**

‘We are tiny and surprised in our tents
Of skin and hope, but can’t contain the
Balloon edge of outward wheeling stars.
We wake to parade our brave, pathetic
Uniforms of self and let the daylight in’

In the second poem Jenkins gives a brief glimpse or haiku - like detail of the minute water life dancing just above the water surface, a succinct image of the movement and beauty of the insects, reminiscent of watching the water flow from a river bank in the early evening, just prior to the quiet of the oncoming night.

**Walking on Water Tension**

‘Little random harvests, of tiny dragons
and damsel flies, what armoured adults emerging
into fire!’

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58 Real – actually existing or occurring, as it is not merely as it may be, not virtual.
60 Haiku- a Japanese poem of seventeen syllables, in three lines of five, seven and five.
6. MEMORY AND MAGIC: The source

For me, the Murray River environment is significant as both place and space, with its physical attributes of fluidity, its sense of spatial infinity and transformation. It induces a sense of contemplation and imagination and appears to be timeless. Its long journey from mountain source to river mouth has resulted in it being a quintessential water path of memories and dreams. Currently, the Murray River and its many tributaries are under enormous environmental and ecological stress, in an ongoing crisis situation that is the subject of many inquiries, debates, and political discussion. Even now there still exists the other face of the river and its related waters, a face that exhibits a more poetic aspect, and allows memory and imagination to work in partnership, creating a space and place, for reflection and dreams. A water path in its many guises suggests a host of different images to the individual and is often seen as a metaphor for life and renewal, as noted by the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard in this context:

*The language of waters is a direct poetic reality; that streams and rivers provide the sound for mute country landscapes, that murmuring waters teach birds and men to sing, speak, recount; and that there is in short, a continuity between the speech of water and the speech of man.*

Lawrence Durrell also alludes to the voice of water, its presence and personality in his portrait of the Rhone, which could also be said of most great rivers:

*Every great river gradually grows its own history, its own temperament, its own quite distinguishable personality. To the mapmaker it suggests a living artery in the body of a country. But to the historians it is always a road - a highway along which the peoples of the world have always undertaken their slow pilgrimages.*

In a sense this encapsulates the very physical sense of a river, and the many parts it plays in its relationship to the people, who are engaged in utilising it for practical purposes, and for the more reflective and meditative activities.

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1 Bachelard, Gaston Water and Dreams The Pegasus Foundation Dallas Third Printing 1999 p.15
Abram’s\textsuperscript{3} sense of place and its associations reflect an intense physicality that is similar to my experiences and memories of the riverine environment. In the following he attributes an individual character to the place or environment in nature that is akin to that of a human:

\textit{The singular magic of a place is evident from what happens there, from what befalls oneself or others when in its vicinity. The songs (sounds) proper to a specific site will share a common style, a rhythm that matches the pulse of the place, attuned to the way things happen there – to the sharpness of the shadows or the rippling speech of water bubbling up from the ground.}\textsuperscript{4}

The particular music of water and its associated sounds also creates the sense of a magic related to memory and place.

\textbf{Water}

A body of fresh, flowing inland water creates a visible presence that involves colour, flickering and mirroring reflected images. The shades and transformations of water through green, grey-green, transparent, silver, and even opaque, muddy appearance is an ever-changing phenomenon. In summer, there are many associated perfumes, such as when the first raindrops from a thunderstorm fall on the hot soil and vegetation. For me, it evokes mulch, mushrooms and the promise of the autumnal cool. The water has a very different scent as it rushes from the waterwheel, when it is first released, and then guided along the red sand of the irrigation furrows.

\textit{‘Whenever we enter the land, sooner or later we pick up the scent of our own histories’,}\textsuperscript{5}

During the course of my studio inquiry, I discovered a significant relationship and a strong sense of connection to my memories of place and accompanying memories of sound. The link between them led me to explore and incorporate the associated sounds of water into several of my installations. My understanding of the importance of ‘sound memories’ extends to an overall memory, or sense of place. This resulted in further sound exploration which in turn lead to making several recordings, resulting in a series of ‘water sounds’. The recordings of

\textsuperscript{3} Abram, David. Ecologist and philosopher whose writings have had some influence upon the environmental movement in North America and Europe.

\textsuperscript{4} Abram, David. \textit{The Spell of the Sensuous} Vintage Books 1997 p.182 ‘Each place has its own dynamism, its own patterns of movement, and these patterns engage the senses and relate them in particular ways, instilling particular moods and modes of awareness, so that unlettered, oral people will rightly say that each place has its own mind, its own personality, its own intelligence’

\textsuperscript{5} Lippard, Lucy. \textit{The Lure of the Local} William Least Heat-Moon p.21
various water environments enabled me to expand my range of media and enrich the research project to become incorporated as part of the installed artworks.

In my imagination, I hear the water’s voice and the music it creates according to its location as it drips, rushes, gurgles, laps, sighs and quivers along its way. From amongst my childhood memories there are also a large range of associated and evocative sounds of the river environment, the deep sound of frogs croaking at the water’s edge, the shrill sound of crickets, the call of birds and the busy buzz and hum of insects. With the slightest of winds the leaves of the large trees sigh and rustle, their creaking branches unloading with the sound of falling bark along the riverbanks.

Bachelard writes of the imagination and power evoked by the river:

*Despite its thousand faces, the river takes on a single destiny; its source takes both the responsibility and the credit for the river’s entire course. The strength comes from the source. The imagination barely takes tributaries into consideration, the dreamer who sees a river flow by calls up the legendary origin of the river, the far-off source.*

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7 [www.abc.net.au/rural](http://www.abc.net.au/rural) 2005
As a child my clearest early recollections of the Murray are of a large path of water that was seemingly endless. The river and its surrounding environment had an extremely dominant local presence, creating its own special atmosphere, that of a silent companion. For many people, the body of the river waters created a place of special significance within the landscape, a place of life and renewal.

Stories bring nature into culture and ascribe meaning to places, species and processes that would otherwise remain unheard. I have a host of river memories that are related to specific space and place. It is possible that some of the collective stories, memories and histories of the river can galvanise the affected local community groups into action where they could be used as tools to enable the planning of a sustainable future for the Murray River.

The French philosopher, Gaston Bachelard, recalls his lifetime special relationship with water, and the memories and dreams that he associates with its’ presence:

I still take pleasure in following a stream, in walking along the banks in the right direction, the way the water flows and leads life elsewhere. I cannot sit by a stream without falling into a profound reverie, without picturing my youthful happiness. It does not have to be the stream at home, water from home. The same memory flows from all fountains. ⁸

Amongst my store of memories there are many that are linked to family picnics by the river in summer. Frequently, at the end of a hot weekday in February and March, in the height of the fruitpicking ⁹ season, my sister and I persuaded our parents to drive us in the early evening to the river, where we would spend time swimming before it became too dark. After our swimming, there was always some extra time taken to have a leisurely picnic at one of the many favourite local sandbars ¹⁰ along the river. At these times, the food always seemed to taste especially delicious. When we were finished, we piled into the car to escape the mosquitoes, and drove home through the dark of the night, over the grey, ‘powder clay’ tracks that wound through the eucalypts on the floodplain.

In the northern region of the Murray’s meandering near Boundary Bend, Euston and Robinvale there was a significant amount of local floodplain vegetation. Amongst some of the

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⁹ ‘Fruitpicking’ – term used to describe harvesting the grapes and other fresh fruits.

¹⁰ ‘Sandbar’- sand forming a shallow place in the sea or river.
more interesting growths were the many close clumps, or ‘forests’ of large bushes known as ‘lignum’\textsuperscript{11}. This plant was local to the area, a skeletal, blue grey whipstick scrub, with a most memorable, and slightly eerie appearance when it was picked out by the car headlights, with all other vegetation virtually disappearing into the night. At the river there was a sense of enjoyment, with the peaceful flow of the great body of water sliding past. I listened to the sound of the different birds returning to settle in the red gums and other trees, frogs and crickets beginning their evening chorus, while my friends and I frolicked and swam within each seasonal ‘safe haven’ of explored river. There were designated ‘safe’ swimming sections and sandbars that were cleared by the locals at the beginning of each summer. The fallen branches and snags were removed, and the river section was checked for any dangerous currents, or new deep holes, that had formed from the previous winter/spring water flow or flood.

Later during my teens I often cycled to the river, sometimes alone more frequently with friends, often just to sit, look and think, sometimes swim and occasionally catch shrimp and fish. It was an intensely personal environment to inhabit when alone, one that was conducive to hours of contemplation – the gentle river sounds and its surrounding atmosphere provided a perfect environment to enjoy this type of solitude. This environ could also be a place of communication and happy community interaction where it was possible to engage with others in many of the local social activities. The waters of rivers, streams, billabongs and channels continue to evoke a host of memories, a store of images, sounds, smells and countless hours of solitude and imagination, watching the flow and listening to the speech of the water.

\textbf{Floods}

The Murray River, with its surrounding river flats and floodplains, has a multi- faceted character. It can display extremes with effects that will range from the usual peaceful, steady flow of water, through to the massive devastation caused by periodic raging floods. There are stories in each of the river districts of a number of very large floods and the damage they caused. These have been written about or spoken of by the settlers and also recalled by later residents of the river settlements. The most common stories record the devastation these floods caused. There was loss of stock, damage to properties, and occasionally, human deaths were part of the flood environment. There was also damage and loss of trees, other floodplain vegetation, and many native animals, along with soils carried away by the force of the waters.

\textsuperscript{11} ‘Lignum’- any of several Australian plants which form tangled, impenetrable thickets.
The periodic floods also present a more positive aspect, restoring some natural balance to the riverine environment. Frequently a resurgence of life occurs during and after floods. It is a period when a great variety of aquatic plants\(^\text{12}\) thrive, and a number of eucalypts, particularly the River Red Gums, receive much needed nourishment. There also are many different species of birds, insects and animals that find the ‘water-flood’\(^\text{13}\) environment more conducive for growth and reproduction than at any of the drier times.

I have childhood memories of times when the height of the floodwaters was measured by marking trees, the evidence was the debris left behind, caught high in the branches of the red gums as the waters receded. There was a sense of both excitement and accompanying fear, when the vast expanse of a water landscape made the familiar appear to suddenly be very unfamiliar and threatening. The sound of rushing waters during the night in places more usually dry and dusty, created a sense of unreality and unease. There was the sound of waters lapping the road edges, with no visibility beyond the headlights of a car or torch and the sense of a surreal landscape when seen in the daylight. The floods presented a frightening sight as they spread over the vast plains.\(^\text{14}\) It was a most memorable childhood experience. All night vigils, at key flood sites, were common during this time. Many local people were building and maintaining ‘levees’\(^\text{15}\) to halt the flow of the rapidly rising waters, and to protect people, their homes and properties in the community.

Built to combat some of the isolation of the regions, and maintain the transport links during floods, there are several extensive bridges that span the river and river flats at Mildura, Echuca, Barham, Robinvale/Euston and other river towns along the Murray. They were constructed by gangs of unemployed workers on ‘sustenance’\(^\text{16}\) during the economic depression of the late nineteen twenties and early nineteen thirties. These bridges provide road transport links in river regions between Victoria and New South Wales, where they often extended several kilometres into New South Wales travelling above the river floodplain. In a number of the South Australian river towns in place of a bridge there are river ‘punts’ to transport people, cars and goods across.

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\(^{12}\) Refer to Mussared *Living on Floodplains* p.49 macrophytes or ‘big plants’ like Nardoo and the native reed Phragmites are important habitats for the swarms of tiny animals that inhabit floodplain waterbodies. Often floodplain waters are completely carpeted by floating water plants like the tiny *azolla* fern with roots dangling beneath in the waters.

\(^{13}\) ‘Water-flood’ – combination of normal river flow and periodic flooding.

\(^{14}\) The 1956 floods, both the Murray & Darling waters overflowed and met

\(^{15}\) Levees – embankments built to prevent overflow of water from rivers and channels.

\(^{16}\) Sustenance or ‘susso’- In 1930 a government relief scheme for the unemployed, to provide goods rather than money in exchange for work. The work done by ‘susso’ gangs was for public parks, the Shrine of Remembrance, drainage systems and roadworks.
Irrigation

Prior to the release of the designated water allocation\textsuperscript{17}, there was a wonderful sense of excitement and anticipation. In childhood, the watering regime was always a welcome respite after the long hot, dry and dusty stretches, with its accompanying dust storms and excessive heat. There was a rush of water and pleasure immediately after the outlets were opened, one could hear the sounds of the water pulsing, then gurgling through the pipes and see the waterwheel begin to turn, forcing the water through its central bubbling outlet to the red sand furrows.

The visual effects within an irrigation region generally overlay or cut across the natural landscape environment, creating a more formal grid that interlocks with the formations of the properties planted with vines, citrus and olive groves and is in marked contrast to the natural meanders of the Murray. The land and water configurations of flowing channels, sprays etc were a part of the yearly allocation of river water, ‘watering time’ for the crops, vines etc, in the river land communities. The sprays and channels created an interesting visual aesthetic seen frequently in many of the irrigation districts. They displayed a beauty that appeared to have been accidentally created, a chance encounter between the natural and the construct. The associated sounds and the changed land formations created a sense of poetry, a language of reflection and transformation. The channels, repetitive furrows, sprays, sprinklers and waterwheels created an environment or illusion of an oasis environment, one in which water played the key role and it was revered for its life giving properties.

The flow of the water running transparent along these furrows created patterns in the bed of the bright red sand and mirrored the patterns and flows of much larger water channels. The running water changed the appearance and colour of the sand. As the flow began its journey it trickled slowly along the passage until it had established its track, then the pace altered and became a steady flow hurrying through the furrows.

For this brief time each year we revelled in the freedom to use a sprinkler in the early evenings by setting it to create a transparent water barrier that would cool the hot winds and

\textsuperscript{17} Referred to in Dingle, Tony, \textit{The Victorians-Settling}. Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates 1984 pp.125-126

Water allocation – The Water Act of 1905 lead to the formation of The State Rivers and Water Supply Commission. These government bodies administered the central pumping facilities and the ‘allocation’ or fixed annual quantity of water with its compulsory levy rate to the irrigated areas. A water right was given to all properties in irrigation districts.
make the night more pleasant. Other summer memories are of the sprinklers in operation, with the water spraying and making giant drawings and numerous changing patterns as it moved through the air, creating a cool sensation and wonderful repetitive movements - time for reverie and play.

Poems, books and music have been created about water and its magic as a ‘source’ for life. They are of imagined pictures from the water sounds, and a time for reflection in silent moods and quiet journey. In my water thoughts and dreams I think most about inland fresh water, of rainwater and rivers rather than the saltwater sea:

*The stream, the river, the cascade have, then, a speech that men understand naturally.*

*As Wordsworth said, “it is music of humanity”* (Lyrical Ballads)

The surface of freshwater is like a soft mirror, it becomes the vehicle of watery reflections, of transitory images and imagined pictures, a place for contemplation and thought or reverie.

The following poems are water/river portraits, each creating a different sense of place, and personal environment by the water.

**RIVER RUN.** Peter Porter

There is no source, though something like a bird  
Distances the very distance in its hoverings  
And, tugging at a twig, will mark the start.

Out of nowhere to a little gully, the bits of life  
Like startings- up of always crying ground  
Gather and roll forward to a pool.

A pool, a pearl, another pearl, a pool –  
The river is arriving where the dew  
Dries on the early paperbarks as dust.

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18 Bachelard, Gaston. *Water and Dreams* p.194 ‘a poeticised ear brings unity…when it submits to the song of the water as its fundamental sound. The stream…’
LAMENT. John Kinsella
Warning this waterbody
Is affected by potentially
Toxic blue-green algae
Contact with water
By humans and animals
Not recommended
Avoid contact
With water.19

THE OPEN BOOK. Paul Eluard.
‘Here no one can be lost
and my face is in the pure water I see
a single tree is singing
rocks softening
the horizon being reflected.20

15. Irrigation channel- sunset: Victoria.21 Photo: J. Bailey

19 From a collection of poems, linked by the interaction of humans with waterways- their use and abuse, the conscious and unconscious role they play in our lives. Peter Porter, Sean O’Brien John Kinsella. Rivers, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2002. Part of Porter’s poem, ‘River Run’, p.16 and part one of Kinsella’s poem ‘Mackie Siding’

20 Cited in Bachelard, Water and Dreams p. 26 Eluard, Paul. The Open Book. Referring to the face reflected in the centre of the spring, a universal mirror.

21 photo: www.abc.net.au/rural
Contemporary artists and their individual responses to landscape and nature

As discussed previously, earlier landscape art was often linked with the power and possession of land. By making a statement relating to the landscape or ‘place’, the artist portrayed this possession or ownership, often reflecting human endeavour and achievement in taming, altering and ‘improving’ nature. The development of a greater global awareness of the ecological changes has lead to a more considered view of the landscape as a ‘whole environment’. Since the mid twentieth century there has been greater recognition of the frequently negative impact of mankind on the state of the natural world. This recognition has lead in part to some community understanding, and seeing a need for the development and implementation of more creative strategies for long term maintenance and nurturing of our ecology, in order to achieve a sustainable and healthy environment¹.

One such project was located in a former industrial public space in Pennsylvania, United States of America. It was a 5 year plan, where the focus was to address and research the health and ecology of three rivers, the Allegheny, the Ohio and the Monongahela, and their tributaries, to enable creative public advocacy and to effect change. In 2005 members of this project organised an exhibition, ‘Groundworks’, as part of a conference that examined the artist’s role in social and environmental change.

It has been said that there is an ecological wisdom², part of a broader wisdom that comes from the past cultures and involves seeing the ‘big picture’, the entire spectrum of humans and their relationship to the planet. It involves an ability to see, appreciate, respect and value nature. By artists linking with scientists, and becoming involved in collaborative ecological projects and events, they may provide some constructive and creative insights, which in turn can provide an avenue for increased public awareness of the ecological issues such as the increasingly fragile global water quality:

For today’s artists who work in and for the environment, it is no longer only the formal visual orders through which values and ideas or experiential qualities are observed.

Many try to understand the land as a living entity with qualities that are intuited with experience through time; they try to make those at first sight unapparent life qualities

surface in their designs. As opposed to Modernist or Minimalist design practices, the “identity of place”, “locus solus” comes back to life in their work.³

Many Australian and international artists working on ‘environment’ issues since the 1980s, through to more recently at the beginning of the twenty first century, work directly with nature, by creating site-specific installations that often address the ecology of a specific region. Their work is frequently linked with enterprises such as reclamation of land, filtration of rivers and waterways and possible involvement with wetland restoration projects, like the Barmah-Millewa Forest on the Murray River. These artists are concerned with creating a dialogue and engagement with environmentalists, scientists and the local communities where they are working.

The selected landscape artists working in the latter half of the twentieth century and beyond, have engaged in making art such as ‘environmental art’ and ‘eco-art’⁴, including aspects of performance, ephemeral and permanent artworks, and which addressed damage to diversity and the dynamics of ecosystems. They responded to the shift of focus, from depicting a ‘possession’ of the land towards seeing how mankind is located within the structure. By taking a more holistic approach to the landscape in their artwork, they attempt to establish the place or position of people as an integral part of the natural world. A common thread amongst this diverse group of artists is the sense of participation, or mark making, in or on the landscape, thus creating an involvement within facets of the landscape and at times, merging into the land and its characteristics. In several cases the opportunity has been created for artists to establish links across disciplines, and has provided a basis for ecological and ‘cultural restoration’.⁵

John Wolseley migrated from England in 1976 to settle in Australia. Wolseley has explored the relationship of people to the landscape through a body of work, in which he documents his own journeys in the interior of Australia, in a similar manner to the nineteenth century amateur collectors. Wolseley attempts to incorporate the environment into his work, not in the role of an inanimate object for observation, but in the role of an active collaborator during his

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⁴ Ibid. p.91 Definitions: ‘environmental art’ is a broad term with connotations of activism, it facilitates environmental health through education, reclamation, fostering a respect for nature. ‘ecoart’ is a more abstract term for work which usually addresses scientific issues, and defines a larger context for creating artworks.
⁵ Cultural restoration – an interactive change in the way a community thinks about infrastructure and ecosystems. – in this instance the relationship between humans, land and water.
journeys, and in an ongoing role when he collects his ‘buried works’6 and reunites them with their folio counterparts.

Whilst on location, becoming a participant in the environment, Wolseley separates and records the different layers, surfaces and observations, and builds up a palimpsest of the particular region that he is exploring. He uses a map-like format, or ‘map paintings’, and the works are often accompanied by a narrative of exploration, sometimes with a legend, an overall impression of a general location. They are usually supplemented with journal notes, and small works on paper that he produces of the particular region that he has explored.

Viewing a number of Wolseley’s works, it is evident that he has collaborated with nature by working directly on the site and frequently incorporating found objects within the work. An excellent example is ‘Study for a honey increase’, watercolour on paper, 1980 -19908. During the creation of this work, while on a painting field trip in 1980, after drawing and painting on the watercolour paper, he tore this initial drawing in half. He retained the upper section after making notes of his actions on the artwork, he then buried the lower section, along with a number of other parts from work that was completed while on this painting trip.

Ten years later, he returned to the initial site while on another painting field trip, and retrieved the earlier buried works, attaching them to their original partner. After this time in the soil, the work had acquired a number of stains and marks etc, from the affects of weather, insects and minerals in the earth, to which he added some further notes on the drawing, a ‘poem’ or homage, relating to the passing of time in nature and the environment.

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6 ‘Buried works’ referring to the sections of paper drawings that he buries, to be recovered years later.
7 Watercolour and charcoal of various Australian indigenous trees. 112 x 242 cm.
8 Grishin. Sasha, John Wolseley-Landmarks Craftsman House, Sydney 1998 plate 36
He noted in his journal at the time:

*I hoped that by juxtaposing fragments of paper with different images and systems on them, something might happen in between the images and the systems. Meaning is somehow not in the thing itself, but in the gaps in between. The result is, I hope, a painting in which I was looking to say something important about what is there, by drawing about what is not.*

Works of this nature, exhibit the recording of a number of layers of meaning and memory, acting as a signifier, where the environment has itself become the palimpsest. There are many aspects of John Wolseley’s artworks and installations that involve physical engagement with the land, and raise some interesting issues relating to the environment, time, memory and site. In this manner, Wolseley engages with the landscape in a very direct way, with the sites of his painting and drawing activities on the field trips, in a sense, becoming yet another part of his total immersion in the landscape. In many of Wolseley’s works he employs a process of assemblage and collage, a technique known as bricolage.

He views the whole earth as a single living unit, and comments on past and present usage of a place, and of links to time, both past and present:

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11 Bricolage – construction or creation from a diverse range of available things.
It is within those traces found in the landscape, like the scribbling of nature as strange hieroglyphs, that a message emerges which frequently carries within it an eschatological note.¹²

Janet Laurence is also engaged in a range of issues related to landscape, focusing on the process of transformation in nature, and atmospheric change as the consequences of industrial pollutants in the environment. Laurence is a Sydney based artist, whose works frequently contain a mixture of architecture, art and science. She utilises their cross-sectoral links, and her works often refer to the land as signifier. Many of her artworks are sited in the public domain, and are frequently the outcome of commissioned public projects. Laurence’s commissions are fundamentally interdisciplinary, often requiring her to move outside her discipline and expertise. To assist in the realisation of the projects, she enlists the participation of scientists, engineers and architects as part of a collaborative effort in the initial stages of the process.

Laurence’s environmental awareness is evident in ‘Veil of trees’ 1999¹³, a collaborative work with Jisuk Han for the Sydney Sculpture Walk, The Domain Sydney. This work both celebrates trees and acts as a memorial to them. In this installation the large glass panels filled with honey, resin, ash and native tree seeds and with fragments of the writing relating to trees by Australian poets were interspersed with plantings of young eucalypt seedlings. Several species of trees originally growing on the site were planted between the panels thus the whole work acting as a transparent pathway or creating an imaginary landscape within the actual landscape of the park.

Another example of Laurence’s work involving environmental issues is ‘In the Shadow’ 2000, an installation in Boundary Creek at Homebush Bay¹⁴, the site of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. This work includes a fog, a casuarina¹⁵ forest, bulrushes, ‘resin marblo’¹⁶ wands with stainless steel bases installed, placed as if in a Japanese garden, along the creek that is crossed by three rivers. She has constructed an apparently benign landscape that

¹² Grishin, Sasha. Wolseley p.149
¹⁴ This work linked with water remediation is one of several environmental projects following research in 1999 for the Department of Environment, cited in Rachel Kent’s essay. Janet Laurence: Transpiration Sherman Galleries Goodhope, Sydney. Exhibition Catalogue 25 August – 16 September 2000
¹⁵ Casuarina – a tree with slender, jointed, drooping twigs bearing tiny scale-like leaves, native to Australia and SE Asia
¹⁶ Resin marblo – a manufactured marble-like material.
celebrates the beauty in nature – but this is only the surface. The rods in fact indicate the
toxicity in the watercourse, following years of manmade poisoning, and realising this, our
response to the work becomes different, changed.

18. Janet Laurence *In the Shadow* 2000

Photo: Janet Laurence.

Another artwork within this scope of her recent environmental projects is of cloud formations,
‘*Picture the Dark Face of the River*’ 1997, an installation of columns clad with photographs
from the archives, glass laminated with oxides and ash, and patinated brass. This work
was commissioned by the Department of Environment, Australia and located in Canberra,
ACT. These works indicate a deep understanding and intense perception related to the
environment and a concern with the effects on the ecology, extending ideas of transformation,
exploring the transition of nature into culture. They create a place where one can mediate
upon environmental phenomena and processes and create an awareness of these issues.
Laurence has a strong philosophic commitment, an innate sense of identity and historic
reference that is evident in many of her installations and public commissions.

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17 This installation is related to water remediation strategies. It is sited at the southern end of Olympic Boulevard,
in Boundary Creek, Homebush Bay, Sydney. Height between 2-9 metres
18 Laminated – overlay a flat surface with a protective material, manufacture by placing layer on layer
19 Patinated – a green or brown film on the surface of old bronze or brass, a sheen produced by age and polishing
I met with Janet Laurence several years ago when she was the recipient of the MacGeorge Fellowship, University of Melbourne and was engaged in the early stages of the Glasshouse series, ‘Fugitive Realities – Towards the Construction of a Glasshouse’. This became like an imaginary garden linked with the Botany Department at the University. It was a place where various ambiguous elements were transformed. We discussed aspects of ecology, nature, substance, the knowledge and transformation of site, and a mutual interest in reflection of histories and the various ambiguities within our individual art practice.

The work ‘Trace Elements’ is an excellent example of the link between site and memory. It is a site- specific installation that was created for Perspecta – ‘Between Art and Nature’ at the 1997 Sydney Biennale. This two - part installation was located in both an exterior and interior setting. The exterior section was composed of large sandstone blocks, loosely stacked, with text of extinct species written in iron oxide, and the internal section of stone, glass, salt, oil, and texts of lost and threatened species. It is a piece about nature and culture, loss and memory, in which Laurence explores the properties of the natural world, the human relationship and history to it and thus the archaeology of memory. It is a site that is created to contain reflections and shadows, an imaginary site that alludes to change and the passage of time. It evokes a powerful sense of place/site, space and memory in and of a long gone landscape of the past.


Many of her works signify the reflections and transformations of nature - sites of memory, deciphering time and its effects, reflections and shadows. In an interview with Laurence, Peter Emmett writes that:

_In her long search for the artist’s place in the Australian landscape, she says that in this country, whether it be personal or public space, we must search among the absences, the spaces in-between, wherein dwell the elusive places of memory. In these shadowy and sometimes watery spaces there is loss, but there also a passage of light unfolds._

In a more recent body of work, ‘Verdant Works’ 2004, Laurence uses glass as the working base. The works emphasise the images of layered semi transparencies, a fluidity and fusion with the environment, a sense of moving in and out of the landscape. She creates shadows and ambiguities in a landscape space – these are viewed as reflection, through photographs of mossy forests and formal gardens, which dissolve the actual and create a veil, a mysterious landscape of nature and light which heightens the sense of being part of the imaginary space.

Compare the ephemeral nature of many of Laurence’s installations, with the sense of solidity in several works by Andy Goldsworthy. In the previous artworks from Laurence’s ‘Memory Matter’ series and the new series ‘Verdant Works’ 2004 Laurence deploys various elements to record and transform the landscape, using transparent layers to objectify the landscape, she creates an ephemeral sense of mystery and remoteness. Goldsworthy on the other hand also utilises elements in a landscape environment and often makes very concrete, physical and permanent statements relating the landscape to the human scale. Goldsworthy’s artwork, in the First Refuge d’art series 1999 ‘River of Earth’ Digne - les - Bains, Musee Departemental, France is a good example of how he exploits both the physicality of material and of site.

In both July 1998 and 1999, Goldsworthy was in France at Digne - Les - Bains, Haute Provence where he was engaged in constructing several permanent works for the Centre at the Reserve Geologique in and around the Bes River. During these periods he also used the river path and its surrounds to make some works that were ephemeral or temporary in nature. Goldsworthy had established a strong connection with the river during an earlier visit to the region, and had returned intending to initiate some further more permanent projects in the

_inside Installation: section of site-specific installation of stone, glass, salt, oil and texts._

region – this resulted in his series of Five Water Cairns\(^\text{22}\) or ‘*Refuges d’art*’ through the Reserve. He liked the links of the projects with the geology of the mountains of Haute Provence, and the path it created, as it travelled through the valleys of the Reserve Geologique.\(^\text{23}\)

20. Andy Goldsworthy: *River of Earth-First Refuge d’art* 1999\(^\text{24}\)

The ‘River of Earth’ work was the first in the ‘refuge’ series. It was created on a large wall in a building that was shortly to undergo renovation. Using several of his earlier floor and wall clay works as a reference, he could roughly gauge some of the visual effects of the clay as it dried. By taking great care with the preparation of the wall and the application of the clay, the installation became quite solid. The cracks created forms as a result of what was underneath. The structure and geology of the building affected the way the clay dried. Goldsworthy made the clay wall with differing thicknesses, so that as it dried, a form would appear in the cracks – relating to transport, boats and rivers, suggesting the course of a river. Goldsworthy works as a craftsman, he is always concerned with building the work technically well, as the work frequently becomes a monument, or more permanent statement in a particular site.

There are a number of more ephemeral works by Goldsworthy, of which some examples are the river marks of carved sand in Wales and Holland in 1980s\(^\text{25}\), the ‘*Beach Holes*’ at Morecombe Bay, Lancashire in 1990, which were washed away by the incoming tide, and ‘*icicle and earth drawings*’ made in the winters of 1991 - 1992 at the Edinburgh International

\(^{22}\) Cairn – a mound of rough stones built as a memorial or landmark


\(^{24}\) Example pp.6/7 in *Varia: Refuges D’Art*, Editions Alpha 2002

\(^{25}\) Photos of these works, *Beach Holes, Icicle & Earth Drawings and Wet & Dry Sand*, are in *Time-Andy Goldsworthy* Thames & Hudson 2000 pp.192 & 194
Festival. In 1990 another of his more ephemeral works was ‘wet and dry sand’, cones of sand were constructed on the beach at Ille de Vassiviere, France. Nine years later ‘snowballs with dye from beech nuts thawed on paper dried’, were exhibited in March 1999 at Fort Vechten, Bunnik in Provincie Utrecht Holland\textsuperscript{26}. These artworks of stained snow and icicles were left to melt on the paper which buckled as it dried to form landscapes of hills, ridges and valleys, an example of where the artist is the initiator but not the controller of the final piece.

Goldsworthy also worked on a project with snow and ice making cairns and ice drawings in Nova Scotia at Fox Point during the winter of 1999\textsuperscript{27}. He was located at the mouth of an estuary where the sea came up the river, a meeting of two flows and energies, a meeting of two waters, river and sea. As he worked on this site he had to contend with various types of weather, having to take into account aspects of its’ seasonal unpredictability. This location required Goldsworthy to be able to accommodate several changes to his initial constructs, always with the flexibility to refocus and alter his ideas on the work in progress.

There are similar issues evident in several artworks and installations by Bonita Ely, whose works have been part of an ongoing investigation of land and river ecology, linked directly to the environment of the Murray – Darling River system. Ely was involved in a variety of art projects concerned with the environment in the mid seventies and 1980s. One of these projects was the anti-uranium installation / performance ‘Jabiluka U02’ 1979 - 80, performed in both Melbourne and Canberra.


\textsuperscript{26} Illustrated in \textit{Time-Andy Goldsworthy} Thames & Hudson 2000 p.131
\textsuperscript{27} Referred to in \textit{Time- Andy Goldsworthy} Thames & Hudson London 2000, Nova Scotia 30th January-13\textsuperscript{th} February 1999 Notes pp. 96-121
\textsuperscript{28} This work was exhibited at the National Gallery of Victoria 1980. Photo: B. Ely
In 1979 Bonita Ely constructed and completed a ground installation, ‘The Murray River’ which used a combination of river sands, pigments, etching, handmade paper stained by natural earths, laid out as a river path environment.

Her installation series ‘The Murray River Project’ was completed during 1978 – 79. Ely worked on this installation project as a participant in a South Australian ‘artist in residence’ program. The project encompassed a concept, images and processes, at a number of specific sites located along the Murray. The initial part of the series was ‘Concept’ at Coleman Bend, near the headwaters of the Murray. This was a metaphor on which to base a sense of reality – Procreation. The next stage was ‘Image 1’ - The River’s Edge, a meeting point of the elements water-air-earth (birth) that is located between Barmah and Echuca, where the river is feeding flat, semi-desert terrain. This was followed by ‘Image 2’ (youth), the human condition, its’ cycle, and was located at a sandbar near Boundary Bend, where there were changing currents, changing water volume and sandbar shifts. ‘Process 1’ (old age), documenting a grid constructed to ‘map’ a section of the river’s edge. This site was at Swan Reach, near the end of the river, where its current was slow, and where its banks show the fossilised residue of an ancient landscape. The site where the last stage ‘Process 2’ (death) took place was the metamorphosed landscape at Point McLeay, where the estuary dissolves into the vastness of its origins.

29 Ely, Bonita. Murray / Murrindi. Experimental At Foundation, South Australia 1980 - Initial part of Ely’s field work along the Murray. Grid on river’s edge to document changes to river’s edge,
30 Ely made a number of similar works related to the Murray environment.
31 Ely, Bonita. Murray / Murundi. Experimental Art Foundation, South Australia 1980
Of this process Ely says that:

*To create, however, we must feel out an empathetic, holistic view of all the qualitative consequences of our activities. Could we regard our life cycle as part of the regenerative life cycles found in nature and therefore correlate loveless exploitation of our land to the havoc wrought*.

Charles Green notes of Ely commenting in relation to her work:

‘*Representation, the artist has continued to assert, is both political and personal*’


Photo: B. Ely

**Immersed in the physicality of the land**

The artwork of Richard Long is an excellent example of a relationship to both the physicality of the land and the immersion of the human with the land. His works reference landscape by using various simple methods of marking and recording. Long approaches his works with a considered, calm, and minimalist approach. By attempting to make comparatively little immediate, visible impact, on the sites, he prefers to use photographic documentation and text as the enduring record. Long is a contemporary landscapist, who uses himself as a physical agent of direct intervention, working with the environment. His works create a sense of

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32 Ely’s introduction to Murray / Murundi
34 Work on paper (detail)Full size of work :480x180cm, exhibited at Artspace, Sydney 1987
36 Long, like the other selected artists, works with the landscape by comparison to the earlier objective and picturesque view of landscape.
otherness, isolation, plastic and visual purity, seeking expansion towards space, with a critical and poetic interaction with the surroundings:

*He operates somewhere between no trace and monument, leaving discreet traces. He says that he likes ‘the idea of using the land without possessing it.*

A very personal, and direct sense of physicality, is evident in his series of mapped walks, mud works and waterworks. This physicality acts as both a contrast, and foil to the meticulous recording. Long has made several works of lines of poured water on earth and rocks and walls *‘Shadows and Watermarks 1983’,* where the splashes quickly evaporate and disappear. In galleries he has often worked with mud on floors and walls. These works have ranged from lines walked in River Avon mud to hand and thumb prints, enormous circles, lines, arcs and ellipses – some with visible handprint, others made with fast broad gestures, the mud is splashed and sprayed widely, on walls it runs towards the ground on floors it is contained within the line or circle.

The following is a description of Long’s *‘Mud Walk’,* which he made in 1987:

A 184 mile walk from the mouth of the River Avon / to a source of the River Mersey / casting a handful of River Avon tidal mud / into each of the River Thames, Severn, Trent and Mersey / along the way.

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‘Water Walk’ 1999, was a coast to coast walk from the Irish Sea to the North Sea. This was a walk that Long completed, by walking the 149 miles in 11 days, carrying water to water. These walks bring together physical endurance and principles of order, action and idea. The artworks of this type are site-specific only in the sense that the work was made on site, they exist for the time they take to complete, and the places they pass through. They are most frequently temporary, like transient sculptures, and the photographs and writings become the record:

In Richard Long action and its continuity, or more specifically his strenuous efforts as a walker or the mere prospect of reincarnating them at any time are already works in themselves. 39

‘Waterlines’ encapsulates a sense of his solitary recorded excursions across the landscape. His walking is a kind of drawing, a time consuming marking process that inscribes the landscape. These long walks, the gallery space installations and the ‘mud works’, maintain a close physicality with the particular location or site where they take place. Long uses local stones, sticks and mud, all the natural materials of the sites, which in effect, becomes his studio.

![Waterlines Image](image)


Long’s physical and text works are evidence of his close engagement and interaction with nature and the environment. His focus is based on an understanding that all people leave a trace or sign however small on the surface of the land:

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The implication of what he shows you is simply that he was there and has gone, leaving his mark, however hard that might be to see. What he does takes time and the duration of the working makes the character of the piece.\footnote{Catalogue essay, Some Notes on the work of Richard Long Michael Compton, 1976 Venice Biennale, British Pavilion. p.5.}

The artworks are cumulative, in an ongoing search, where the old works frequently inform the new, various layers, working with his personal walking story, but never making more than one piece in a single place. The place and work are completely identified with each other:

*To do another sculpture in the same place would be like carving two sculptures out of the same stone.*\footnote{Catalogue essay by Compton, 1976 Venice Biennale p.8}

The artwork of Richard Long demonstrates a thoughtful view of art and nature, a consideration of the beauty of ideas, and the beauty of image, a poetic view. They could be thought of as ephemeral gestures in the environment. The documented walks could also be considered environmental performance art, where the act of walking the line, is the movement through space, and the path walked, becomes the mark on the surface of the land. The walks are a very physical act and his text and photographic documentation is evidence of the idea where he refers to several different kinds of walks, speaking of them:

*As ritualised walking, explaining that the purpose of the walk is not to make a journey, the passage is marked by criteria other than arrival.*\footnote{Tromp, Ian. From Walk to Text Essay in the British Art journal Modern Painters, Summer 2000 Volume13 Number 2 p.79}

The titles give a simple explanation; slow walking or meandering, straight walking or fast walking, from uncertainty to certainty. In other works, the title or text, describe either the materials used to mark the walk, or the actions involved.

In 1985, the environmental artist Robert Irwin, defined Richard Long’s work,\footnote{Referred to in essay by Stephanie Ross, Gardens, Earthworks and Environmental Art} as falling into the category of work that is “site conditioned/site determined”. Irwin considers that:

*The sculptural response draws all of its cues, or reasons for being, from its surroundings; the site itself determines all facets of the sculptural response.*\footnote{Kemal & Gaskill, (editors) Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts Cambridge University Press 1995. pp 175/176}

Long’s method is to make the art both more visible and invisible, using ideas, tracks, water and time in a flexible way, constantly reassessing. He is primarily using the land to pass through, not possessing it nor making monuments, and the scale of the artwork is both
intimate and infinite. The map, photograph and text works tell a story. They are signs that reveal aspects of the experience of the walk providing:

*Sufficient information for the viewer to imagine the circumstances that led to their creation.*

The materials like stones, sticks, and mud are used, less to represent landscape than to embody a distillation of experience of the land and the river. Long is more interested in ‘ideas’, where the physical beauty is the result of logic and thought. What is conventionally outside sometimes makes an intrusion, such as into a gallery space, as is the case with the mud drawings and others of a similar nature.

The walks of Richard Long are intensely personal statements, that result from his reflection and experience in the ‘particular’ environment. There are some aspects of Long’s 1987 ‘Mud Walk’ the 1999 ‘Water Walk’ and his ‘Waterlines’ that have a physical resemblance, but different intent, to Basia Irland’s activist art project begun in Colorado, United States of America. In contrast to Long, Irland’s *Gathering of Waters,* was a project that created a social and ecological awareness by engaging the local communities in the activity, and was intended to provoke a social responsibility, the people participating became the metaphoric river on its long journey:

*They participated by accepting a special canteen called the River vessel from someone upstream, add water, and pass it to someone downstream with its accompanying logbook.*

In this way they were symbolically carrying the waters from the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo from its source in Colorado, through New Mexico to the sea into the Gulf of Mexico.

The *Gathering of Waters* project was begun in 1995 and lasted five years, and was initiated by the environmental artist Basia Irland to highlight environmental issues related to the waterflow. This river loses water not only due to evaporation and seepage, but it loses most of its water from agriculture and industry, resulting in times when parts of it are dry and therefore unable to complete its journey. As Irland writes:

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47 Basia Irland is a North American artist engaged in many international art projects related to water and the environment. Some reference in essay by David Williams, *Navigating the currents,* Bath, England April 2001 at [www.unm.edu/~bsia/BIRLAND/HTML/essay](http://www.unm.edu/~bsia/BIRLAND/HTML/essay)


49 Gerber p.44
This project was conceived as a symbolic carrying of the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo’s waters from source to sea, to re-establish peoples connection with the river and with each other along its 1,875 mile length.\textsuperscript{50}

It brought communities together and the passing of the water allowed people to become aware that their actions have impact on others who live downstream, where people had often been in conflict over water rights and separated by language, culture and economic status. It reinforced their dependence on the river and raised awareness of its plight.\textsuperscript{51} Irland said in an interview, that she hoped that Gathering the Waters would:

\textit{Inspire other riverside communities anywhere in the world to find their common heritage. And each gathering would be different, because each river is a different being.}\textsuperscript{52}

The Australian ‘ecoartist’, James Darling, uses his farm at Duck Island\textsuperscript{53} in South Australia, situated between the town of Keith and the coastal Coorong wetlands as the environment to draw from for his artwork. It is the primary source for his large-scale photographs and installations. In his three-dimensional works there is a very strong sense of physicality of place and object – the materials and images have a direct link to his farm and farming, forming an evident rapport with his property, of broad shallow watercourses, mallee gums and sparse vegetation. His works seem to echo his style of farm management – minimum management and minimum impact; they appear to work with the land.

In his book \textit{James Darling},\textsuperscript{54} Daniel Thomas calls the main direction of Darling’s works as ‘ecocentric’, that is, they are dealing with landscape ecology and aspects of salt land, water tables, mallee roots and malleefowl nests. These nests are built by the birds in volcano-like mounds up to five metres in diameter. The simulated ‘nests’ made by Darling throughout the late 1990s, have an organic physicality that is apparent in the completed construction.

\textsuperscript{50} A section of Basia Irland’s unpublished notes, in Gerber’s essay \textit{The Nature of Water} p.44
\textsuperscript{51} See Appendix for further information related to \textit{Gathering of Waters} project.
\textsuperscript{52} Williams, David. Essay \textit{Navigating the currents} Bath, England. 2001 p.5
\textsuperscript{53} Duck Island bought in 1964 by Darling’s father (for part ownership by the sons) and bought outright by James in late 1970
\textsuperscript{54} Thomas, Daniel, \textit{James Darling. Instinct, Imagination, Physical Work} Wakefield Press South Australia 2001

In much of his work there is a particular concern with seasonal changes, where the material textures, and spatial relationships have an aesthetic austerity and intensity. There are some aspects of James Darling’s circular works that appear to contain certain aesthetic links with Richard Long’s concentric rings. This is more evident when the materials that are used, relate strongly to a particular place, where they gain a certain presence by their simplicity and directness.

27. James Darling – ‘*Circlework*’  

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55 Thomas, Daniel. p.47. installation at Assembly Hall, Penola High School, Penola Festival. One of the seasons of the Malleefowl Nests series. Photo – James Darling  
56 Circlework, water, stainless steel, granite, slate and concrete. 225 x 800 x 400. 1999 Soldiers Memorial Park, Dukes Highway, Keith, South Australia.
In 1999 the South Australian Country Arts Trust initiated a number of cultural development and public art projects linked with water, exploring the concept of water and water management in Australia’s driest state. James Darling who was one of the invited project participants was awarded the South East Region Waterworks Project. He worked with the community as the project artist in his local township of Keith. As Australian farmers have cleared and irrigated the land, the levels of underground watertables have come closer to the surface resulting in soil and water salinity on large tracts of land including Darling’s local region, the Tatiara District. His large completed piece ‘Circlework’ 1999, was sited within the town of Keith. His farming experience on naturally saline land with large areas of watercourse and bushland and his methods of conservation management was the ideal background to begin the project:

_I see art, the environment and agriculture as being inextricably linked. Each informs the process of the other. I also have a relationship with water as the major environmental factor shaping the land I farm, as an artist the more particular and personal I can be, the more general and universal the end product is._

The project led by Darling was to design and construct a fountain that was metaphorically enacted the cycle of water through the Australian landscape. The fountain/sculpture contained a wind sensor that governed three modes of water in the fountain - gushing water, bubbling water and the almost silent still water. It conceptualised the principle of watertable management, with equal recharge and discharge of water and enacts this cycle of balance and management.

**Space and place relating to metaphor and physical environment:**

The selected artist’s works are concerned with a particular range of ideas, imagination and contemplation and centred in a particular physical site or environment. In addition several of the selected artists engage in large - scale collaborative public and corporate projects. In this respect there are similarities in several of the major works of Janet Laurence and Beverley Pepper, where the intention is that the works will operate in relation to the space of the physical environment in which their commission is sited. Both Pepper and Laurence

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57 Watertable (as defined in glossary of White’s Running Down): groundwater – saturated zone acting as a water reservoir & Murphy’s footnotes re watertable: an aquifier, the upper limit of the portion of ground saturated with water.

58 Murphy, Catherine. Essay ‘Salt of the Earth’ in Waterworks publishers: SA Country Arts Trust & Catherine Murphy 1998 p.40
frequently worked in collaboration with the architects, designers, builders and others in the planning and construction of their public projects. They have a comparative engagement with external bodies in the process of planning and completing public and corporate commissions.

Linking with several of the spatial and contemplative elements of Laurence’s work are some of the art projects of Beverley Pepper, an American born artist who has lived and worked on landscape environments and sculptures in Europe for many years. Like Janet Laurence she has been involved in many public commissions for large-scale sculptural pieces, many of which are sited within and of the landscape environment. Her commissions require her to work with a particular landscape environment – usually a formal parkland, cultivated garden space or city square. One common aspect of her artwork is that the physical environment will generally inform her outdoor sculptural works, in the sense of landscape architecture.


Pepper has worked on projects with architects, to create a landscape environment that links with the cultural aesthetic of the sited piece. One example is ‘Teatro Celle’ 1989-91, a sculptural – theatre landscape project in Pistoia, Italy. This work has a downward sloping, ringed seating area, located in a landscape environment, and utilises the natural form of the
site. The heart of the matter for Pepper is the relationship of the revealed to the concealed, of the mass to the silhouette, of the solid to the void, of exterior to interior.\textsuperscript{59}

Another of Pepper’s works that is set within the landscape is ‘Sand Dunes’, 1985 in Florida, situated on the beach. She uses the structure of the beach as a sharp division between earth and water, stillness and motion, dark and light. The work intervenes between these elements, as the tide came in, the water would creep up along the channel of the sculpture:

\textit{Between the times of high tides, she wanted the sculpture itself to ‘water’ the beach through the way its own material would capture the reflections of the sky. She wanted the profiles of the dunes to descend into the forms of the work and thereby to ridge the beach’s flatness. But beyond, she wanted to create a representation of an ‘inside that was not the sculpture’s own, because it belonged to the depths of the land.}\textsuperscript{61}

There is a common interest in space and the physical environment in the work of Bonita Ely and John Davis. Both artists have made works in which they have selected materials and sites that are often metaphoric and symbolic within the landscape. Their work evokes a strong sense of place, of identity and uniqueness either within the specifics of the objects, or within the spaces in which they are installed or placed.

Ely’s’ \textit{Murray River Punch}’ performance 1980, and \textit{‘Murray River Project}’ completed in 1980, are directly linked with site, materials and metaphor. As discussed earlier, the methods and materials that John Davis and Bonita Ely have used in their installations appear to have strong philosophic links with Richard Long, as is evident in their regard for nature and the environment. This is particularly obvious in the more ephemeral pieces that weather naturally and eventually disintegrate over time.

\textsuperscript{60} Krauss, Rosalind. \textit{Beverly Pepper. Sculpture in Place} Abbeville Press, New York 1986 Illustration p.132
\textsuperscript{61} Krauss, Rosalind. \textit{Beverly Pepper. Sculpture in Place} Abbeville Press. 1986 p.130.
John Davis\textsuperscript{62} was an Australian contemporary of Wolseley. There are similarities in the method in which both artists approached the use of landscape in their work and the direction they took in relation to the ephemeral nature of their installations and works on paper. Both had a similar love of ‘the bush’ and inland Australian landscape, understanding its age and fragility and attempting to address this passion in their art. Davis wrote:

\begin{quote}
If my materials are temporal, it does not concern me. It’s what they express at the time of their existence which matters, and if the materials deteriorate over time, then that becomes part of the work; the process continues as part of the content just the same as the space works in their installation. Therefore the materials embrace time and journey through their own history.\textsuperscript{63}
\end{quote}

Davis’s work ‘Flag renamed Place’ begun in 1978/79 and exhibited as part of his installation at the Venice Biennale in 1978, was a work in progress. It is an irregular flat piece of canvas with twigs and feathers held in place by loops of canvas. Davis kept adding to it or altering it over several years. Davis’s own description of the work is in Scarlett’s book. The essential meaning of the work is derived from the country, the landscape:

\begin{quote}
It evokes the landscape from above distantly, and can be viewed from a distance generally, or very close, specifically. It is very portable (like a map) and because I have been working on the piece for some years, it also has the signs of its own evolution and history obviously built into it.\textsuperscript{64}
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{62} John Davis (1936 - 1999)
\textsuperscript{64} Scarlett, K, The Sculpture of John Davis, Hyland House, Melbourne 1988 p.129
Davis spent his formative childhood years at Swan Hill, a Mallee border town along the Murray River. He related how he spent considerable time in the flat bush environment of the rivers, waterholes and open spaces, and when alone he often experienced the sense of isolation that exists in this vast landscape. He also learnt to appreciate the beauty and fragility of this environment, and gained an understanding of his part in that particular landscape. Davis described aspects of his work and related how it is concerned with the interrelationship of objects within a space, and the use of a space as a component of the objects. There is an excellent experiential depiction when he viewed the work, and he refers to the particular kind of space he saw operating in Australia, the wide, flat open expanse of land stretching to the horizon:

*I approach the work from a distance and see it as an object, then you come in and almost press your nose up against parts of it because some of the parts are very small. That’s how I think Australia works, it’s vast, but there’s tiny little fragile things in it.*

In 1976 John Davis made several ground installations at Hattah Lakes. One was a construction of two parallel bundles of twigs placed some distance apart. Another was made from short sticks, broken in similar lengths and arranged in a zigzag pattern within a rectangular frame lying on the sand. They were almost like installation sketches, ephemeral

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65 Scarlett, K. *John Davis*, Hyland House Publishing Pty Ltd 1988 p.141
66 Scarlett, K. *John Davis* Hyland House Publishing Pty. Ltd 1988 photo: John Davis p.100
pieces that now exist only in photographic documentation. They represented the early stages of Davis’ determination to work with the natural environment and simplify the range of materials he used to construct his works.

As Davis stated on numerous occasions, the temporal aspects of a number of his works did not concern him:

*The deterioration of the materials over time becomes part of the work, the process continues as part of the content just the same as the space works in their installation.*

The physical environment has been a significant factor in the work of Wolseley, Ely, Davis, Laurence, Long, Pepper and Goldsworthy. The site has frequently determined the work, but in some instances the intended work or commissioned project has been a guiding factor in the selection of site. In their works there is a sense of working in direct contact with the environment. The artists exhibit an understanding and empathy for the site, location or place that they are working with, by using both its character and presence as an integral part in the outcome of the specific artwork.

**Physicality of materials:**

The selected artists take particular interest in the choice and appropriate physicality of materials for their artworks. Their works convey the sense of the artist being at one with the material, sculptures and installations relate to the specific site, and the selection of materials conveys sensitivity to the landscape. In this regard he work of the American artist Pat Steir stands out, for the body of her paintings and installations in landscape, which are similarly concerned with physicality. The surface texture and types of marks and gestures used in her paintings emphasise both the materiality of the paint and the physical action of her application.

Steir’s works exhibit the basic characteristics of paint and use its relation to gravity and an element of chance to form the work. Sometimes she applied paint from a brush or stick, sometimes a ‘pour’, each time emphasising its fluidity through the consistency of the liquid. Their physicality, the force of gesture and directness of the paint application negates pictorial space, becoming an immersion in the material and a physical experience. In the paintings she

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67 Temporal / temporality – the state of existing within or having some relationship with time.

68 Ibid Scarlett.p.110

69 McEvilley, Thomas. *Pat Steir* Abrams, New York 1995. Referring to the Waterfall Series, McEvilley writes, ‘They are also materially or gravitationally real through the fact that the fluid here was not painted onto the canvas but actually did fly, splash, and run itself down into that configuration.’ p.69
unites the literal and the figurative in a single encompassing motif, the flow of water down a surface:

Steir’s drip marks are produced as much by random happenstance as by her premeditation of such factors as the amount of color to carry on the brush to the canvas, or the amount of water to dilute it with.\textsuperscript{70}

32. Pat Steir ‘Waterfall’\textsuperscript{71}

Steir’s\textsuperscript{72} lyrical waterfall paintings are intrinsically linked with the Chinese Tang Dynasty 8\textsuperscript{th} and 9\textsuperscript{th} Century Daoist painters known as the Yi – pin or ‘untrammeled class’ who developed splattering, staining and monochrome techniques. Their work envisaged the human relationship with the elemental qualities of earth, air, fire and water. This group was most unorthodox in their painting method, and it was not until the 1400s in Japan when the Haboku or ‘flung and spattered ink’ painters worked in this manner, that their innovations were more fully appreciated. This account of material nature has interested Steir because it suggested an elegant way to allow paint to flow over a vertical surface. Steir has found the means to maximise and exploit the liquidity of paint, both as a material and as a signifier.

\textsuperscript{70} McEvilley, Thomas. Pat Steir Abrams, New York 1995 p.64
\textsuperscript{71} McEvilley, Thomas. Pat Steir Abrams New York 1995
\textsuperscript{72} reference to article, Watercourse way. Art in America, New York 1999, vol 87, issue 11,written by G. Roger Denson. pp.114-121
Steir’s large scale painting/installation ‘Panorama’ 1990 created an architectural environment, an encompassing waterfall ten feet high and a surround of 360 degrees. Installed in the Laing Museum at the 1st Tyne International, Newcastle, England, it was a black and white constructed waterfall environment with murky blue light and waterfall sounds:

*Panorama sought to resonate with the outdoors itself, suggesting experiences available not in art museums but in nature.*

Her installations in the landscape, similar to *Panorama*, are concerned with the physicality of the spatial relationship that is created on the particular site. The most recent work by Steir, ‘*Blue River*’, a large canvas twenty five feet long, is a:

*Vast pigment waterfall that gains an allegorical dimension through its red, silver-white, and blue color. The delicious drips and spatters go right to the soul of modernist painting.*

In this work she appears to take great pleasure in the fluidity and physicality of the paint, pushing the medium to its limits thus emphasising its links with water and the water landscape. In many respects Steir’s paintings have an affinity with Joan Mitchell’s pastel drawings and paintings of landscape-waterscape.

Mitchell was an American artist who worked and lived in France from the nineteen fifties, travelling occasionally to exhibit in New York and settling in the French countryside.

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74 McEvilley, Thomas. Illustrated pl.71 Panorama.
75 Robinson, Walter, [www.artnet.com/Magazine/reviews/walrobinson5-10-05](http://www.artnet.com/Magazine/reviews/walrobinson5-10-05), review in Weekend Update. May 2005
permanently in 1968. In many of her works she used the riverine landscape at her home in Vetheuil, outside Paris, as her principal motif, informed by it visually, and responding emotionally to its changes. The physicality of Mitchell’s direct paint application and her use of the drips of fluid paint for her ‘sensations’ of landscape are closely aligned to the method used by Steir in the series of ‘Waterfall’ paintings. Mitchell painted water, in fact all kinds of water:

*Peaceful, fluid water, glowing under the sun, indigos of the twilight, blues of the night, pinks of the morning, black breaking the tempests. Mixed waters and all the beautiful blue or green rains.*

The Australian contemporary installation artist Wendy Mills, constructs artworks and water sculptures that relate to the ephemeral, exhibiting an interest in the exploration of materials and conceptual issues that I confront in my own studio practice. Mills practice is principally working with inter disciplinary collaborations, sculpture and temporary installations. Her works are often site – specific and conceptually based using the particular significance of site. In the nineteen eighties she used layered transparent light – based media and worked with clear reflective materials to establish her ephemeral architectural installations.

![Image](image.png)

**34. Wendy Mills – On this Auspicious Occasion. Brisbane1999**

During the 1990s, Mills was engaged in a number of public art commissions. These had components that were often beyond her individual technical skills and where this occurred she collaborated with others. Amongst this group it has included water and lighting designers, architects and composers. One of the large public art pieces is ‘*On this Auspicious Occasion*’.

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76 Joan Mitchell  (1926-1992)
77 Flohic, Catherine. *Ninety - Art in the 1990s* no.10 France – Joan Mitchell p.4
2100 x 300 x 100 cm,\textsuperscript{78} a permanent water feature installation commissioned by the Brisbane City Council in 1999, and located in the Queen Street Mall, Brisbane. It has nine glass topped stainless steel tables and straight-backed chairs. The ‘banquet piece’ is animated by the flowing tablecloth of water that falls in a continuous sheet and reflects the colonial past. The feature is accompanied by the music of nine songs for the Brisbane River.\textsuperscript{79}

\textsuperscript{78} Illustrated in Institute of Modern Art catalogue, IMA Publishing. 2003. Wendy Mills p.28
8. Interpretations of water paths reflecting the changing relationship to the landscape: from purely beauty and reverie to include ecological and social sensitivity.

My own studio research is primarily focussed on the relationship between the space and flow of the natural water path and its immediate environs, and the impact of built human interventions, such as locks, dams and weirs, into and through this space. During this investigative process, I have unlocked many memories, revealing aspects of the poetic and visual imagination that are integral to my being:

_The isolation of the city and the refusal to grapple with its environmental problems will only hasten the deterioration of the countryside._

Anne Spirn’s statement relates more broadly to human activity and the ecological environment, but this sentiment is part of the picture in relation to our interaction with the environment and how we perceive our position regarding its’ state.

For several years my studio practice has sought to highlight the river-related environment, and its fragile ecological balance, to bring it to the forefront, of a social consciousness. I have undertaken this investigative research in an acknowledgment of balance; one between the needs of sustainable communities and between the physical and spiritual requirements of the particular environment.

My studio projects focus primarily on a series of site responsive environmental installations, a series of paintings and assemblages, and the inclusion of several water sound scapes. With these artworks I encompass aspects of space and memory. The resulting body of works present a multi-faceted series of stratum, layers within, a palimpsest that reflects time and place, and in the process reveal a cognisance of, and sensitivity toward a personal history.

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Chronology of works:

*Water Transparency* – mixed media installation (Palimpsest#2)

Water tracks series – works on paper

*Mapping of Luncheons, Dining on Sites* – mixed media installation (Palimpsest#3)

*Water Land Nuances* – Shoalhaven series on paper

*Flowing Water* series -works on paper & board

*Current* –Nature 2001 Exchange print folio

*Water Channels /Water Flow* series –works on canvas

*Waterwars* –Art& Politics 2002 Exchange print folio

*Water Drawings* – mixed media installation (Palimpsest#4)

Waters

*Trail of Water, Riverine Lakes* – digital print of Petrie installation (Palimpsest#5)

*Cyanobacteria* –Culture 2003 Exchange print folio

*Lunettes and Waters* – digital prints of Petri dishes

*Sounds -Waters & Environment* series – various water recordings, water related wet installations, petrie dishes etc

*Riverine lakes* –Green World 2004 Exchange print folio

*Mapping of the Waters*

*Murray – Portrait of a River.* –Portrait 2005 Exchange print folio

*Mouth of the Murray* - installation including sound

**Studio Practice**

In my studio research I create a series of artworks as a response to my understanding of the degradation and changed state of our major river systems, with particular reference to the most important water path of my childhood, the Murray River. I view this river and its surrounds as an integral part of my being, as a signifier that holds memory, place and identity.

In my initial installation I interpret one aspect of the changed river system and its related environment. The artwork *‘Water Transparency’* was conceived and constructed for the Palimpsest\(^{81}\) #2, and exhibited at the Mildura Regional Arts Centre. This exhibition consisted of a series of site - specific displays celebrating the early local history, white settlement, the

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\(^{81}\) Palimpsest- a parchment or other surface in which later writing has been superimposed on effaced earlier writing. Referenced in Oxford English Dictionary 2004
Murray River and surrounding environment of the Mildura district. (See Stephanie Radok article re Palimpsest)\textsuperscript{82}

‘Palimpsest’ was selected as the title for a series of exhibitions to be staged in the Mildura region, representing the area and its many faces. For this purpose a Palimpsest is defined as that which has been overwritten, the original having been rubbed out or covered. I intended to approach the riverine landscape as a palimpsest – a preparation for writing on the landscape (site- specific artwork) and wiping out or erasing again (layers of environment related history). My work was to be a metaphor for the way land is changed by human activity, an interfacing with issues of land, environment, history and culture in contemporary Australia.

The key factors in this inquiry are identity, location and responsibility. The waters of the river are the life source and evidence of our imprint and impact on the land. They form the relationship between the space of nature and human interventions into this space. The first step in my exploration was to view and compare various water paths that linked with the Murray and its environs, natural and constructed. Some of the constructed forms were: channels, the major irrigation waterways and other systems also linked with water control – dams, locks and weirs. The natural forms I included were: rivers, meanders, islands, floodplains, wetland and billabongs. Investigation at this stage led me into and through the underlying layers of history, memory and beauty, all of which was linked with an awareness and concern relating to environmental change and ecological damage.

My investigation of improved landcare and sustainability issues links specifically to the Murray - Darling water system. I visited various watercourses and explored their locale, taking a number of trips through several of the North and North -West regions linked with the Murray irrigation settlements and Murray water basin. On these field trips I began to record with photographs, small sketches and brief jottings, a number of water related sites. These sites were of natural and constructed water paths. My documentation proved useful as source material at a later stage in the studio research. At this time I also explored and photographed several large irrigation channels in the central and north - west region of Victoria. These channels are fed from the Murray waters and its tributaries, and had been built to carry the river water through the land for dairy cattle and various seasonal crops.

\textsuperscript{82} Radok, Stephanie, \textit{New Geographies of Knowledge} p.59 – 61 Artlink vol.19 # 2
Several times throughout the research I stayed at a number of key locations along the Murray River, to refresh memories of this particular environment. By staying in some of the areas for a short visit it enabled me more easily to reflect on, and relate to, some of the changes made to the intrinsic nature of the river and the impact of these changes on this locale. While at these sites I explored the sites of old floods, overflows and several naturally altered water paths, such as billabongs and small creeks. I also took time to visit some of the more arid areas linked with this environ and made small working studies of mixed media in the exploration of colour and space in relation to placement, a metaphor of layers, of history, and changed landscape.

There were some concerns raised regarding durability of selected materials, and practical issues, such as a water transference system, safety of placement, insufficient lead time to complete, and the difficulties associated with being located a long distance from Melbourne, regarding transport and installation. The cost of the first plans for installation made it necessary to rethink the concept and produce a more practical solution. Being unable to set up the work myself, a major consideration was to ensure the simplicity of any installation as it was going to be installed by others, following my directions. Over several months the final project concept was developed and the construct was eventually assembled, being documented progressively in the Melbourne studio – this whole process of the individual pieces and their documentation became the final artwork.

On my return after these field trips I began planning the installation ‘Water Transparency’. In the initial plan it was to be constructed for external display in the gardens at the Arts Centre in Mildura, or along the banks of the Murray River. The site appeared to be impractical and unsuitable for this artwork, hence the concept was altered early in the process. The second idea was to install a layering of water related items along a section of the river flats, near to the Arts Centre at Mildura. Eventually both these plans were abandoned, proving to be unworkable for this particular project.

The first part of the revised construct was gradually built up from a progressive photographic documentation of several large, gestural ink drawings on graph paper. These drawings were gradually covered with multi layers of coloured transparent material, almost disappearing from sight and becoming only a memory. The transparent layers of this section signified the mystery of the waters, the poetic vision of its variations and degrees of transparency.
The photographed series of the total layers, including transparent fabric configurations in progress were an indicator of the range of colours and depths of the river. They gave a sense of the waters’ beauty, its source and its journey, creating by its existence a memory of the Murray on its southward journey through the land - thus forming the first section of the total construct.

For the second stage I selected a number of photographs from many taken while on field trips. These photographs were shot either while on the road trips or included some aerial photos that I had taken when in a small plane over the north west of the state. They depicted the natural (river, creek, billabong) and constructed (channels, dams) water paths, in formation as another part of the series, with the images arranged in grid format.

The final section of the piece included the transparent padded envelopes filled with packages of the coloured fabric. The padded envelopes were attached to the wall, suspended beneath the large photographic grid format. Each of the sections became part of the total, in much the same way that each aspect of the river path, its health and ecology, its history of communities and its memories all become part of its total environment.

This assembly was photographed as a total construct to assist in the installation. All the sections were packaged separately and posted to the Palimpsest exhibition, with instructions and photographs enclosed in a much larger parcel. In this way it was transformed, becoming a compressed symbolic landscape, which was transported and returned to a site close to its source. It became a signifier, relating to space and place and thus to my identity.


Approximate dimensions: 166 x 168cm
Some of the formal considerations related to this work were:

- Working within the structure of a grid format, and utilising its relationship with the geometry of space. I emphasised the element of repetition, and considered placement by considering the space between sections, creating elusive places, pictorial absences.
- Sections of the grid were grouped according to a pattern. – a constructed water path environment (layered transparencies) - a natural water path environment (river sections) and manmade water paths (channels).

The whole artwork read as an environment, a layered transparency reflecting change, a pictorial experience of site-memory, embodied in place. There was evidence of the earlier history of the river and its uses. It was important to highlight the role of the river as a food source and ecological habitat for both humans and animals, and as a communication channel, through to its present traces of archive and midden and its future as a place capable of environmental healing and restored beauty.

The installation ‘Water Transparency’\(^{83}\) encompassed several threads or links with the past and the present of the waters of the Murray. It symbolised a place where layers of childhood memories linked the imagination in time. It read as a memory of perception to evoke public and private consciousness. It acted as a memorial to the passage of time and place, nature and culture, inheritance and extinction and loss and memory. It reflected an enhancement or transformation of the ‘actual’ memory as it receded to a more mythical ‘memory of memory’ in time. It symbolised site as the cultural and environmental landscape of memory, where water is perceived as the primary life source, where the beauty and flow of the water course becomes a regenerative agent acting both as a restorative and a provider for the mind and body.

The layered transparency evoked a passage of time acting as a reflective boundary, another space, evidence of stories and feelings – with related colour tones placed one over the other in varying degrees of transparency. This series of transparencies became transformed, and through a blurring or hazing vision, translated the intertwined narrative of memory, thus

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\(^{83}\) *Water Transparency* was installed in the Mildura Regional Art Gallery during Palimpsest#2, 1999. It was subsequently purchased for the Collection of the gallery.
creating yet another spatial and tonal nuance in the layers of memory and imaginative site. The combined mediums were reflecting environmental change and fluidity or state of flux.

**Water Studies - Tracks & Channels.**

The preliminary studies for larger works on canvas explored river tracks, channels and water storage sites and investigated the physicality of materials, fluidity of inks, saturation of paints, and patterning and path of visual language (interpretation). At this time I established some studio and field conditions that gave me the most physical freedom for the work to take shape. I began by utilising elements of chance, beginning a number of calligraphic dialogues adapted from mapping marks and charts, observing and exploring the movement of water paths and the fluidity of rivers – translating these to a personal visual vocabulary.

These works extended aspects of my exploration in mark making and creating the space within. My extensive use of large soft calligraphic brushes in some of the paper works had a general reference to some of the brushwork techniques of Chinese and Japanese calligraphic ink paintings, in particular to the distillation of marks and the simplicity of the concept. My method was to work rapidly, using a selection of calligraphy brushes fully loaded with ink, brushing and dripping, directly onto a number of damp or saturated papers – spreading shapes, considered spaces.

The small paper studies incorporated a dry – wet technique, utilising the bleeding of the inks to form shapes. The initial studies explored a wide range of mark making techniques – from the simplest marks into and of the surface, through to a complexity of change and more gestural marks which were brushed, drawn, splashed, bled, dragged and rubbed. I also made a series of small collages and mixed media works. These works linked texture and text, in an attempt to capture a range of visual sensations to convey a sense of the poetry and presence of water paths.

Concurrently other small studies on board were created, which would eventually lead to a number of works on large canvas, the series ‘Record of Falling Water’ On the hard surface of the boards I could explore different grounds, the build up of the surface using brushes, knives.

84 See this aspect of calligraphic brush marks of Chinese Tang Dynasty 8th and Daoist 9th Century painters referred to in Section 7 Footnote 72 in earlier writing relating to Pat Steir’s ‘Waterfall’ series
and various dragging implements. Pigment was rubbed into the surface, using minimal colour, a restricted palette and a series of grids, with multiple placements that created a formal structure. The signifiers were the land mass and the water flow, which created an integrated simplicity. By documenting the placements viewed from above it enabled the viewer to gain a macro view of the smaller sections. There was virtually no brush painting involved in these small works. They were created as a passing moment, a sense of chaotic choices. The method used to create the calligraphic marks explored the materiality and physicality of inks and paints.

The board studies formed a grid configuration, utilising degrees of colour and line to create a distinctive atmosphere. This depiction of line in nature, by reduction, eliminating anything extraneous, gave a sense of being 'in nature', rather than a naturalistic depiction of it. The brushes were manipulated to create the marks, by shifting them from thick to thin lines, and sometimes achieved, by dripping and movement of the worked surface. Lines were not taken to the edge, thus creating a spatial compression, a central space and focus on patterning.

When making the grid placements on the floor with the boards as the ground, and arranging different juxtapositions of the works, I photographed and shifted them to form new spatial arrangements when this grid format was arranged on the wall. A number of these studies were eventually incorporated into the ‘Mapping of Luncheons’ floor installation. I explored the ‘inside-outside’ aspect of site – non-site, the transfer or collection of materials related to outdoors issues (site) to the non-site (gallery/warehouse). In the following excerpt, one of the exponents of Land Art, Robert Smithson, speaks in 1970 of a similar relationship of the landscape and the gallery:

\[ \text{The landscape is co-extensive with the gallery, an exchange between the artist’s mind and the materials of the natural world, where one is seen in terms of the other.} \]

As part of his inquiry on natural and human agencies in the shaping of the landscape, he also spoke of his work at this time in these terms, instead of putting something on the landscape I decided it would be interesting to transfer the land indoors, to the non – site, which is an

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\(^{85}\) Considering the relationship of an interior gallery installation where the ‘outside’ is brought in, by transferring objects usually associated or located in nature and relocating them in a gallery, and the external installation on-site in the natural landscape setting.

\(^{86}\) Andrews, Malcolm, Landscape and Western Art Oxford University Press 1999 p.206
abstract container’. This was a departure from traditional landscape aesthetics and re-established a dialogue with the earth.

Preliminary Studies

‘Mapping of Luncheons – Dining on Sites’

The placement of several small flow and gesture studies of collages and calligraphic works on the floor/ground in a number of grid formations became the starting point for this artwork, acting as the catalyst for the initial format of the picnic assemblage. The Mallee/Sunraysia region that borders on Victoria and New South Wales is currently in the midst of a range of ecological and environmental problems. As discussed, these are mainly related to the usage and subsequent degradation of the Murray River, its major water path and the riverine environs. In the construction of this assemblage, I intended to draw attention to the ecological crisis confronting us in relation to our river system.

My choice was to select those drawings that were most reminiscent of water current/flow as the placemats for individual picnic settings in the initial structure. Their placement was evocative of an environmental table setting. This enabled me to develop a concept that would lead to the metaphoric mapping of site, a creation of time and place in a living landscape. There was a repetition, an emphasis of calligraphic markings, and the evocation of memories, rhythm of marks and a stress on the physical nature of the materials. The complexity of the installation grew as I experimented with the relationships of the materials, to the concept of a journey or path of the degraded river.

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The assemblage highlighted a number of specific issues associated with land, irrigation and the river environment and attempted to link these with formal aesthetic considerations of placement, spatial relationship and site. My initial investigations focussed on the river settlements and the introduction of irrigation. By travelling to, and viewing some of the affected areas along the Murray, I recalled the earlier beauty of the river environment. The work reflected both childhood memories and an awareness of the degraded water system with water as life source – a continuous flow of the water path. This piece was intended to create a sense of place and room for imagination, a place for reflection. Gaston Bachelard reflects on his own identity when he recalls water experiences:

_The region we call home is less expanse than matter; it is granite or soil, wind or dryness, water or light. From it we solicit our fundamental colour. Dreaming by the river, I dedicated my imagination to water, to clear, green water._

Exploring the city and searching in unlikely places for interesting materials that would work cohesively, and act as suitable markers for the picnic assemblage, I regarded the gathering of all these components for the assemblage, as part of a metaphoric voyage or odyssey. It was a journey that engaged with the past and the present, whilst preparing for a dialogue with the future. At this point my experiments began to develop, with several ideas related to following the river path, mapping the river journey and incorporating picnic stops at key locations along its banks. At first this appeared to be the most appropriate configuration for this mixed media

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artwork. I included drawings and maps in the first placement, envisaging a work that could be viewed from an aerial site (external/objective) and also a work that could encompass a direct engagement and/or participation (internal/subjective) at the site.

As the work took shape, the experiments with various combinations of the elements and their spatial relationship to each other began to indicate the formation of a horizontal assemblage. It was important to consider the relationship of each of the individual parts contained within the whole piece. My intention was that the audience should interpret the work, in a spatial context and as a metaphor relating to site, to indicate traces of the human presence, and how this related to the changed riverine environment of the Murray – Darling system.

A range of multi-layered series of fabrics and nets created the environment. These elements would evoke the layers of memory of a specific environment, while the repeating units would explore the relationship of site, space and human presence. Each individual setting invoked a reflection related to aspects of environmental change. The whole assemblage was intended to create a site where it would be possible for some constructive discussion and collaborative projects to take place with other artists and scientists attending the Palimpsest and Symposium. The formal picnic dining setting contained a series of placements within a defined ground space. Within this setting there were a number of repeating units that reflected both key changes to the environment and also a ‘memory’ or concept of a visible landscape in time and in the past-within oneself. The “picnic landscape” itself was acting as a visual mnemonic.

In the work there is an exterior / interior of time & place, a relation between the perceptual world/landscape and world of ideals/thoughts. Memories of the rhythmic sounds of water and its significance, a palimpsest or layering, a number of repetitive elements – the creation of a memory of site and an awareness of a sensuous world – with sounds, smells, the sight of water paths and their environs.
The sight of particular features in the land activated the memory, giving a set of visual clues. When the various components for the assemblage were gathered I was reminded of the past, the location and associated memories of my childhood. The collection of nets, produce, water drawings, salt, sinkers, hooks and maps became symbolic references to the changed environmental state of the Murray River.

The symbolic setting became one of the sites of discussion relating to the improved maintenance and reformed regulation of water usage. The assemblage contained a number of conflicting elements about the effects of irrigation, initiating some discussion pertinent to the local environment, and in particular the restoration of the health of the Murray River waters.

This assemblage, ‘Mapping of Luncheons – Dining on Site’ has since been installed at several different sites / locations in regional areas, and at each site it has created possibilities to be read or interpreted, according to the particular environment of its location. The issues it engages with remain pertinent as the changed and degraded river environments are still prominent issues in many communities, both regional and metropolitan.

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89 This assemblage/installation was first exhibited at Palimpsest #2, Mildura, and formed part of a travelling exhibition, ‘Art Animals’ at the Horsham Regional Art Gallery, Gippsland Regional Gallery, Sale, and Walker Street Gallery, City of Dandenong.
The Water Channels – Water Flow (work on canvas series) followed directly from the previous installation. My focus was on the issue of river water flow and the methods used to inhibit and interrupt the natural flow. My investigations explored the effect of barrages, locks and weirs on the water flow of the river system, particularly the impact on the Murray River. The first group of these large works on canvas was linked to a previous series of small studies, which used the flow, fluidity and physicality of paint and ink as the principal vehicle.

In this series of paintings, I continued my journey in the exploration of water paths through and of the land and referenced the nature and properties of water, by using its fluidity as a
guide. Exploring the materiality of paint and how it could be employed to reflect minimum and maximum flow and mimicking natural conditions by manipulating paint flow and the overlaying of many semi transparent paint layers with variations of fluidity, moving down the canvas surface and using it as a symbolic floodplain.

My working method in these paintings was intended to reflect the action and nature of the water paths. By dripping, blocking areas, preventing natural flow of the aqueous paint and creating under layers I created the surface texture. These under layers affected the painting surface by building up areas that directed flow lines or water paths. The completed works were to evoke an imaginary river, waters enriched by reflections and shadows and to depict the sensualism of the river current – a very physical presence.

Bachelard writes of the presence and poetics of water:

Where the poetic power of water becomes heavier, darker, deeper; it becomes matter.
And then that materialising reverie, uniting dreams of water with less mobile, more sensual reveries, finally builds on water and develops a more profound and intense feeling for it.\textsuperscript{90}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{image}
\caption{Colleen Morris: \textit{Open Channel} 2002/03 182 x 137cm.}
\end{figure}

During the development of the series, the importance of physicality became more evident, both in the scale of the work, and in my method of paint application. The surface appearance and the presence of the medium became more apparent as this series progressed and became the factor to decide the appearance or aesthetic of the works. These works also incorporated the effect of gravity on the fluids. The pure, visual presence, dissolving the mark, and the dripping paint, eradicated the brushstroke almost completely. By abandoning of any type of brush controlled paint flow, it allowed the random marks and drips to run freely down the canvas.

The over saturated brush was loaded with paint to produce the effect of water flow. As the series developed this became a much more physical activity, involving pouring and throwing the paint from a container, thus the paint ‘became’ the water path. My entire creative method and process at this point became an increasingly physical response, an experience ‘of water’, a representation of water channel. The works were unified through the idea of paint as a material presence – the construction made of paint as a form of reference. The interplay in this series, multi - panels with the marks and drips, show the painterly process and a symbolic reality. I have used these calligraphic elements and conspicuous ‘empty’ spaces, to reference an implied pictorial practice in which the word and the picture or signifier and signified are
one and the same, as is evident in some Chinese and Japanese calligraphy of the 8\textsuperscript{th} and 9\textsuperscript{th} Century\textsuperscript{91}.

\textbf{Shoalhaven Series}\textsuperscript{92}

42. The Shoalhaven Series – \textit{Land Nuances, Water Nuances}. 2000

The Shoalhaven works were on paper and made in response to a particular river environment. During one part of my field and studio exploration of water paths and their environs, I was awarded an artists’ Studio Residency at the Bundanon studios in New South Wales located at one of the Arthur Boyd Trust properties on the Shoalhaven River in the southern coastal part of the state. Throughout this eight week residency I investigated the river flow, meanders, surface changes as the tide receded, colour variations at different times of day, sounds of the river environment, and its particular location within the river valley.

For my initial preparatory studies, I took many photographs and made small sketches of the nearby environment and river flats that surround the Bundanon homestead. I also explored the immediate proximity of the Shoalhaven River. When taking walks through the bush and paddocks on the property, observing the various layers of the terrain, and occasionally also exploring along the river edges, I watched the surface of the river and its changing water patterns. Much time was spent sitting by the river, overlooking the river flats in contemplation, and listening to the surrounding sounds of water and animal life.

I carefully observed many aspects of this river and creek environment using the time to gain a feeling and knowledge of this particular place, space and its environment, in a sense

\textsuperscript{91} Note earlier reference related to Pat Steir’s ‘Waterfall’ series
\textsuperscript{92} Shoalhaven Series – mixed media works on paper 76x54cm
becoming part of the environment, immersed in the surrounding riverine landscape. The strongest or most powerful visual impact of this location for me was of multiple views from the homestead and the studio, which emphasised and simplified the triple horizontals of river flat, river and cliff, and sky. It was evident that these features reinforced the sense of the Shoalhaven River as the principal presence in this environment, whether actually seen or in the knowledge of its flow and location.

The first works in the series was a record of my response to this particular water path. The Shoalhaven Nuances were worked principally on paper, using a wide range of mediums to explore the horizontals on a vertical format. By using a mixture of charcoal, inks and paint, rubbing back into the ground and dragging wet paint across the surface, it emphasised the fluidity of the paint and ink. The surfaces were worked and manipulated with sticks, sponges and brushes, to create a sense of open and free flowing space, enabling one to enter inside the work and to envision a momentary glimpse, or sense, of a particular location and time.

The works were initially created on the floor, to allow the fluidity of the inks and paint to adhere to the flat surface, but later in the series I altered my approach and worked on the pieces in an upright position in order that the runs, dribbles and washes were able to flow more freely down the surface. As the series progressed, my marks and the formats of the works became more open and simplified, as if translating and creating a type of visual shorthand of this landscape environment. I experimented with different placements, variations
of mixtures and combinations, alterations of elements in order to record the relationship of placement and configuration.

When this series was nearing completion, I installed most of the works in a studio gallery space on location. They were arranged in a horizontal line and, located at the approximate height of eye level in a line continuing around the entire room. This configuration echoed the format of the work and it also reflected the physical landscape format of the Bundanon property, which could be viewed simultaneously through the windows of the exhibition room.

In this context, a ‘virtual’ landscape was created within a confined space (the gallery), and this was located in a ‘real’ landscape space, allowing the observer to experience and contemplate an enriched spatial environment, an outside / inside landscape. The works could be viewed from outside while in the landscape, through the windows into the constructed internal space, or the viewer could move to observe the works and landscape together, from the internal site looking at the external, with the ‘viewer as participant’ in this environment.

In relation to this particular configuration and its duality of space, I refer to some of the installation works of Janet Laurence such as ‘From the Shadow’ at the Canberra School of Art and ‘Blind Spot’ at the Ivan Dougherty Gallery Sydney. In the late 1980s early 1990s Laurence began to explore grids and the geometry of space, concerned with the spaces between sections where the body can move through an installation creating a fluid encounter between inside and outside. Laurence’s spatial configuration regarding the interior in ‘breathing’ 1991 of interior space, is a somewhat uncharacteristic concern, where she is more frequently concerned with aspects of the lightness of the outside. In this work the site has a memory and the installed work in the Rocks Coach-house was viewed through slits in the walls of straw, Emmett writes that:

*The interior scene is seen through the imagination, the sound of horseshoe scrapes on stone, the pungent smell of damp straw...the enticement of enclosure’ which in a sense is also concerned with ‘inside-outside’.*

There were some aspects of the relation of the Shoalhaven Nuances to the local land/river landscape format and the type of gallery installation of the works that related closely to Nick Kaye’s notes on ‘site-specific art’:

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Space, as frequentation of places rather than a place stems from a double movement: the traveller’s movement, of course, but also a parallel movement of the landscapes which he catches only in partial glimpses, a series of ‘snapshots’ piled hurriedly into his memory and, literally, recomposed in the account he gives of them constructs a fictional relationship between gaze and landscape.  

Water Drawings

Following the residency, my next major preparation was Palimpsest #4. This was an installation of wall panels and assemblage, a series of ‘Water Drawings’, of the Murray River waters in their natural state. The piece symbolised the passage of water as energy and life and that its presence was the source of dreams. It also indicated that these waters travelled through irrigation channels and pipes for more practical purposes.

My objective for this piece was to create an installation that would link the formal aesthetic and beauty of the river and a sense of its meditative presence, with a range of contrasting visual configurations. In the gestural ink studies there was a hint of movement that was reminiscent of the water movement created by sprays, waterwheels and weirs. These studies also suggested the contrasting movement created by the strong pattern and flow of the central current, and the presence of eddies at the edge of the river as it meandered through the environment.

The underlying concept embodied in this piece was to contain images that would convey the sense of water and fluidity, and could also indicate the methods used to carry the river water to land sites. The installation emphasised the contextual extension of the natural water path, and its link to the constructs of channels, pipelines and furrows. The manmade paths were to be represented in several different ways, including the use of pipes, tubing and various other materials within the installation.

In the initial small studies I investigated several different ways of depicting a long water journey. At first by using a series of local maps on the ground as abase, and placing the objects in different configurations, I intended to explore the possibilities of running water and sprays as an integral part of the installation. The location of the installation site was altered,

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and the new site was not really suited to linking water pipes, forcing me to reconsider the configuration of the entire installation.

In the second stage of experimentation, I used a collection of coloured and transparent tubing, hoses and fabric strips, to explore the relationship of space and placement of various elements on a horizontal plane. The installation at this stage was difficult, it appeared to lose the sense of its context in the series and therefore its visual strength and impact were diminished. Despite this hitch I continued to photograph the different placements and configurations. My earlier assessment was confirmed. The various placed elements were unable to work in a cohesive and meaningful way – each of these elements continuing to read separately, and the whole lacked any sense of unity or visual poetry. My intention had been to create an installation that would convey a sense of beauty and meditation. This event forced me to rethink the concept and to consider a total restructure.

Wondering how to create a sense of the physicality of water and its presence in various guises, I began with the idea of making a series of hanging screens or scrolls that fell down the wall and spread out across an expanse of the wall, anticipating that some sections of the installation would appear to tumble out of, and off the wall, to cascade over the floor in much the same manner that energetic waters travel. In this context I assembled a number of additional components on site and experimented with the most appropriate way to attach and present the finished piece, given that the wall was made of old marked brick.

44. Colleen Morris Water Drawings 2001. Approx 250 x 400 x 100cm

95 Mixed media installation of Water Drawings located in Aurora Packing Cooperative building, Irymple.
For the next part of the construction while beginning to work with inks and paint on several large pieces of fabric and rice paper, I made a number of drawings on scrolls, cloth and large paper, concentrating on maximising the effects of fluidity within the medium. The series of gestural marks were reminiscent of water spray, or marks and runs of ink as in rivers, streams, channels etc. These works became the base or under layers of the second and third scrolls of piped and channelled water constructs. The layers were built up with transparent plastic sheets, transparent fabric and blue and green coloured tubing and some clear tubing which was threaded, tied, and left hanging as an extended three dimensional drawing. The tubes extended to the floor and beyond, into the floor space, where they curled in on themselves and spread in a tangle of confused lines, creating a sense of freedom and abundance. By comparison the first scroll was relatively austere. The use of simple, flowing ink marks were reminiscent of depictions of water and poetry used in some Chinese and Japanese landscape art. The entire installation was attached to a large wall and extended across the floor. It was an extended component in discussion on the river environment and water usage, linked implicitly with its symbolism and closely related to the irrigation district.

The selected site for Palimpsest #4 was within a large, unoccupied ‘packing shed’ in a section of the original building of the Irymple Dried Fruit Cooperative. I regarded this location as an appropriate venue for the exhibition considering the nature of my research and the direct links that it had with the irrigation district.

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96 See earlier reference to 8th and 9th Century Chinese and Japanese calligraphy
97 Water Drawings, Palimpsest #4
98 ‘Packing shed’ – basically a large shell of a building used for the collection, storage and market distribution of dried fruit
99 This was one of a number of co-operatives established in the irrigation districts along the Murray River after the First World War
In 1907 the Australian Dried Fruits Association had been formed\textsuperscript{100} to package and market the crops of the district and by post First World War it was the principal agent for the marketing and export of the dried fruit industry. These large packing sheds were built and located in the fruit growing districts along the Murray and were established as ‘Co-ops’.\textsuperscript{101} They were used for the storage of the filled ‘sweat boxes’\textsuperscript{102}, prior to packing and distribution of the products of the expanding dried fruit industry following the First World War. By 1921-22, new irrigation communities were established at Swan Hill, Nyah, Robinvalle and existing ones extended into the towns of Red Cliffs, Irymple and Cardross in the Mildura district as soldier settlement allocations for returned servicemen\textsuperscript{103}.

\textsuperscript{100} ADFA – Australian Dried Fruit Association
\textsuperscript{101} Co-operatives
\textsuperscript{102} ‘Sweat boxes’ were the large, wooden, storage containers that the fruit was transported in, from the property to the Co-op after it had been dried. As the name suggests, moisture was still present in the dried fruit and the containers allowed for some air circulation, in order to preserve the fruit and avoid mould forming.
\textsuperscript{103} Dingle, Tony. \textit{The Victorians – Settling} University of Melbourne. Pub. Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates1984. Refer for additional notes related to the irrigation settlements and the dried fruit industry. pp.185-86
Space and place through contemplation, construct and physicality of materials: Ecology of environment – signifier and metaphor

Waters
I prepared to extend my project by investigating several aspects of water flow in greater detail, by viewing its relationship to the overall river environment, and beginning the exploration of complex water flow patterns, and noting how these flow patterns impacted on the river environment. I explored the increased existence of water growths that have caused much of the ecological damage to the waters and their surrounds, including degraded catchments. This section of my investigation gave me the opportunity to reassess and refresh my understanding of the essential character and beauty of these meandering, ephemeral water paths.

In Australia, our idiosyncratic river system can both, send its waters deep within as they journey through the vast expanse of the land, or, as is the case of several of the rivers, they have the capacity to fill and flood rapidly and then disappear within weeks. I wished to construct a series of works that could convey both a sense of beauty and an environmental awareness, acting as a mirror or partial reflection of the complexity of our water.

I met and heard James Bowler at one of the Art / Science Symposiums, and after reading more about of his research on Mungo and the Willandra Lakes, had became intrigued by the drastic changes that took place within our land mass, thirty two million years ago. This was the time when the sea levels began to rise and a shallow sea covered the Murray Basin from the south-west, and the sea water advanced four hundred kilometres into the Basin, flooding and drowning the rivers. When the sea finally retreated, approximately six and half million years ago, it left a legacy of abandoned shoreline features, a series of roughly one hundred and fifty shore-parallel ridges from the Willandra Lakes to the present coastline. This information lead me to examine the effects of this period more closely in relation to the main river system, and its water paths.

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1 Dr. James Bowler is an archeologist, author and Professorial Fellow, School of Earth Sciences, University of Melbourne.
2 Bowler, James, Lake Mungo - Window to Australia’s Past University of Melbourne Press CD 2002 The two photographs illustrated are used as reference on the CD documentation.
During this research process I investigated parts of the Murray Basin, the southern sector of the Murray - Darling system and encountered a range of common characteristics to many areas of this vast riverine system. By looking at the chain of dry lakes within the Willandra Lakes region that had formed along the Willandra Channel, there is an ancient course of the Lachlan River. My initial exploration was sourced from the various patterns that were created from satellite views. There was visual evidence of the ancient formations of the lakes and rivers, and where the ancient channels of the Riverine Plain converge to join the Murray trunk system.

The Willandra System is representative of a much larger distribution of now dry lake basins. There are many elliptical depressions, lunettes, spread across both the Plain and the Mallee, reminders of the ice-age climates when water was abundant. The lunettes\(^4\) that were formed along the eastern side of the lakes, were formed during the transition from the wet climate (freshwater), with its deposit of beach sands and quartz dune, to the dry climate (saline/ dry) with wind action depositing a blanket cover of clay pellets from the basin floor over the earlier quartz dune. As each dune grows the basin is deepened, forming the dry basins in the current landscape of these regions.

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\(^3\) Bowler, Dr James. CD - Lake Mungo- Window to Australia’s Past. University of Melbourne 2002

\(^4\) Lunette – a crescent-shaped or semicircular alcove or formation, in this case they were ancient sand dunes
In the initial experiments, there were a series of transparent bags of related colours that were arranged in grids, with each bag or container holding some visual memento or symbol of the nature of these water paths. It was an assemblage, which used the format of a wall grid as the underlying structure, with objects and images contained in transparent pockets. As the construct proceeded, this format appeared to have limitations. It required a much stronger or more defined set of images to maximise its visual impact. The objects in the pockets seemed to disappear within the format, and became invisible thus appearing to render them irrelevant to the work.

The work read as a self-conscious attempt to convey a message through design. It was obvious that this particular format was no longer a necessary component to the whole – I believed that the use of the grid in this instance was unnecessarily formal for the work, tending to be a confining element. The work seemed to require a freer, more expansive investigation of surface, a suggestion more in tune with the fluid nature of water.

In the development of the next work I allowed my thoughts to wander freely. At first this mental journey consisted of a series of random images that gradually developed taking shape as a number of phrases that were relevant to the main thread of my research. They immediately linked contextually with my work and by having a personal resonance, I believed they would act as a metaphoric echo, a fluid voice, heard or understood to convey these ideas.

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5 CD Lake Mungo—Window to Australia’s Past, Bowler, Dr James. University of Melbourne 2002
WATERS OF SPACE
WATERS OF PLACE
WATERS OF SITE
WATERS OF MEMORY
Poetry…………...6

As this series developed, it departed from the format of wall grids and the mixture of extraneous materials. The grid had become a familiar configuration, and had been used in a number of my earlier works as the underlying structure of the assemblages. Now I began by envisaging extremes – extremes that could explore some aspects of space and extremes that were the memory of place. The objective was to construct one work or several works that could be viewed simultaneously as either an extremely intimate site or would create an illusion of overwhelming space and infinite distance.

Trail of Water – Riverine Lakes
In addition to some examination into the macrocosmic sense of the geological and historic formations of watercourses and water paths, my research included viewing a number of microcosmic studies of water, a number of these showed a range of water plant growths, several types of bacteria and algae that were present in the Murray waters. Several aspects of these studies became the starting point for my exploration of imagery in the series. Part of my reference was to utilise some visual documentation of my aerial photographs taken a little earlier in the research. Previously I had travelled and photographed the land from a small aircraft as it flew above the Mallee and the northern parts of Victoria, recording a section of the meandering path of the Murray and the pattern of dams through the region. The assembly of these images into a workable structure was an essential part of my image search and they enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of the water path, with a greater sense of its true position within our landscape.

These images were pivotal in the ongoing development of this particular series. They became a conceptual key, something that was able to free my vision and at the same time gave me a degree of objectivity. This approach allowed me to create a quite different sense of perspective of site and space, one in which I was able to simultaneously consider and work with aspects of both the macrocosm and microcosm in this series of water trails or water poems. At the beginning of my exploratory studies for this series after collecting a number of

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6 ‘River thoughts’ 2004 Colleen Morris
small and medium Petrie dishes from a science equipment supplier, I had envisaged using these dishes purely in the initial trial stages. For each individual small work, the method or process began by mixing coloured pigments and making colour patches, relating them to aspects of water and land that I had explored, and working on them systematically.

Each individual dish can be read as a discrete work, with its own particular presence. As each dish was produced it became the container of a landscape essence, and held the characteristics of a water path, making it a virtual landscape environment within. While continuing to make these exploratory works, I made extremely simple photographic records of each of these dishes as they were created. The individual containers read as either a microscopic vision within a small portion of a water landscape or appear to reveal some characteristics of the planet’s surface.

   Photo: Tim Gresham

These mini waterscapes/landscapes presented some interesting visual ideas, for multiple interpretations in which to read the broader, water landscape. The initial reading enabled me to envisage the beauty and poetry within the environment. At the next stage I realised it was possible to gain a sense of greater involvement in a closer investigation of the surfaces and relating them to ecological issues within a particular environment. This shift of focus and relocation of viewpoint also significantly altered their spatial relationship.

I continued my exploration, creating ‘mini scapes’\(^7\) in the dishes, and in the process I became increasingly aware of possible further exploration, and development of a more extensive

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\(^7\) Mini scapes – a term I use to describe a miniature landscape configuration
concept. During the documentation of these individual small works I realised that it was feasible to make many different configurations. Grouping them initially as a series of random placements, I then experimented with several more formal spatial arrangements and photographed them at each stage. From this development, the decision was made to take the processing further and produce digital prints.

**Lunettes and Waters**

Realising the greater photographic potential of these dishes, I became much more interested in pursuing this direction as part of the continuing series. In the production of the multiple printed images, by using a much larger scale format and during the process of this enlargement, a slightly distorted image was created, altering one’s perception and generating visual ambiguity. It seemed to suggest a search for the reality of the original subject – thus the works acted as a symbol, allowing the viewer a number of different readings of the riverine landscape. The large format of these prints presented the appearance of both an overview, or sense of place in the landscape, while also creating a microscopic vision of the landscape structure.

![Image](image_url)

Digital Print 100 x 350 cm

At this point the investigation lead me to consider the addition of different methods of presenting these digital works. I envisaged a series of images that would be projected onto a muslin/transparent fabric and allow them to also be viewed on a wall or be projected and overlaid onto the ‘Open Channel’ works on canvas. The creation continued of the many multiples of ‘dish’ works, building a large body of small-scale pieces. They form part of a series that is constructed to interact within a small space. The dishes or mini scapes continued to multiply, and became an integral part of the three dimensional installation of ‘samples’ or imagined microscopic views of riverine and water environments.
There was ongoing development of the digital prints. I viewed this particular investigation as a major section within my studio research, and utilised the large format, and its accompanying distortion of image. It created a sense of environment that was reminiscent of both infinity and intimacy. It was an environment that reflected ecological degradation and beauty. It also reflected a poetic and mysterious environment, one that engendered contemplation and awareness. From this perspective the images are seen to relate to either an objective or subjective space, therefore creating a spatial shift.

Within my explorations of the most recent installation series – I encompassed a format that enabled the inclusion of a sound environment– the atmospheric sounds of water, created in environments as varied as rivers and creeks, thunder and rain storms. The water sounds and the related sounds of birds, insects etc within the water environment are an integral part of this installation –giving a voice, listening to the speech of the water environment. In a sense, these recorded sounds create a listening space, an invisible environment that evokes the site or place of waters and memories of the Murray River.


**Sounds – Water & Environment**

As written at the beginning of my research paper, in the Introduction, I believe that I have a special connection with the river sounds, it’s poetry and it’s voices, which are linked with memories of my birthplace and my childhood location. The Murray water voices have also been integral to my sense of ‘place’ or ‘belonging’, and to my identity.

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8 This piece was exhibited as part of the Palimpsest #5 exhibition, Mildura 2003.
My belief is that these river sounds, and my memories, form a remote link with some of the songs by the singer and performance artist, Ruby Hunter, who is a Ngarrindjeri Kukatha / Pitjantjatjara woman. Ruby Hunter was born in 1955, by a billabong on the Murray River in the South Australian Riverland region. She is a songwriter and singer, who lives in Melbourne, and performs in partnership with her husband, Archie Roach. Hunter has sung of her childhood experiences, and her ongoing connection to the Murray River. At the Adelaide Festival in 2004 for the presentation, ‘Ruby’s Story’, Hunter sang in Ngarrindjeri her Kura Tungar; ‘River Songs and Stories’, the songs and sounds of the Murray.

There is also a link between my water recordings and some aspects of Les Gilbert’s work, an Australian sound designer and acoustic ecologist. Gilbert brought the recorded sounds, the ‘spirits of nature’, from journeys into the wilderness into the zoo and museum environment, creating what is known as sonic eco-architecture:

Many composers and sound designers have become involved in this discipline. Some produce works for CD’s and performance, exploring the sounds of the wild from a musical perspective. Others, like Les Gilbert, find themselves in a more liminal space: an increasingly turbulent zone between art and nature. Gilbert’s computer-controlled interactive sound scapes, for instance, brought the sounds of the wild, and crucially a different sense of time. They effect grafts, the suture of virtual sounded flesh, bearer of presence, both onto and within the dynamic body of the listener who is immersed and at play in acoustic space.

During my exploration of recording various water sounds at specific locations I was initially confronted with some technical difficulties. To overcome these I sought professional advice related to sound recording, and began using microphone extensions to improve the recording quality. My choice to consult and work in collaboration with an expert in both sound recording and sound editing was to realise the potential of this additional medium. I viewed this as an excellent opportunity to engage in a distinctly different working environment, to experience a wide range of visual and sound opportunities to explore further in an extended series.

9 Ngarrindjeri Kukatha/Pitjantjara woman – Ruby Hunter has tribal links with these aboriginal groups
10 The CD of Ruby’s Story, recorded in Melbourne, December 2004 released in 2005 Refer to the Australian Art Orchestra address www.aao.com.au
11 Definition: Ngarrindjeri – of the river lands
The recorded water sounds were transferred to CD’s and edited, ready for their transformation. I continued to make additional recorded discs of water sounds in order to select the most appropriate for different sections of the installation – rain and thunder of storms, birds calling on water, the hum of insects and other water creatures among the river edges, streams in flood, river quietness, pumps, waterwheels, falling water from weirs and lochs, rushing and gurgling around overhanging branches and snags - creating a dialogue between ear and environment.

**Water Soundtracks  2005**

I began tracking the water sound recordings as follows, in order to assist the editing process for the completed CD’s

**CD 2 night rain – birds, water**

Approx 75mins

Begins with extraneous noise

I have timed and attempted to eliminate the machine sound - have noted in minutes:

2.14 - 2.40 rain sounds, dripping
3.14 - 3.50 ditto
4.02 – 4.47 includes bird
5.01 – 5.39 rain
5.49 – 6.30 rain
6.40 – 7.24
7.40 – 8.19
8.30 - 9.12 bird
9.20 – 10.05
10.13 – 10.58 birds
11.08 – 11.50
12.00 – 12.42 birds
12.54 – 16.16 rain (including machine sound)
16.25 – 17.10 heavy rain
17.18 – 18.02 birds
18.12 – 18.52
19.04 – 19.49
19.56 - 20.40 birds
20.51 – 21.36 birds
21.46 – 22.12 heavier rain/birds
22.37 – 23.22 birds
23.29 – 24.15 birds & car
24.20 – 25.09 ditto
25.16 - 26.2 birds
26.09 – 26.54 birds
27.03 – 27.48 birds
30.42 – 31.20 heavier rain
46.31 – 47.16 bird/ dog?
47.25 – 48.09 same?
71.45 – 75.10 heavy rain/birds

**CD 1 – river, birds and associated sounds**
A lot of wind interference on this recording
Approx 45mins – Selected segments
0.28 – 1.03 birds
1.14 – 1.56 fly
2.06 – 2.50 fly/birds/wind
3.00 – 3.45 birds and wind
3.55 – 4.39 birds/wind
4.48 – 5.32 birds
5.41 – 6.13 crows/wind 6.17 – 6.26 birds
8.26 - 9.10 crow/parrots
10.12 – 10.56 birds
14.10 – 14.29 bird
14.40 – 15.20 bird
15.32 – 16.06 parrots
16.24 – 17.08 kookaburra (approximately 16.50)
33.20 – 33.57 birds/flies

**CD 4 – thunderstorm, rain**
Selected only small segments of thunder & rain from second track
2.08 – 2.35
3.50 – 4.38
4.48 – 5.31
5.50 – 6.20
6.56 – 7.14 with some machine sound
9.30 9.50
11.01 11.33
12.42 – 13.29 car/thunder/rain
13.40 14.2

**CD 3 – flooded rushing creek**
Sounds are loud, with little interference.
Approx 45 minutes recording time.
Throughout the development of these works, I envisaged the water and water-related recordings becoming incorporated in installations of paintings, digital prints and projected images. I made several recordings of water paths in a variety of locations. The sound tracks were of natural environments that used natural sources such as rain, storm, rivers and creeks while some were also recorded along constructed urban water channels. At each location I listened carefully to the waters’ voices, and became more aware of their variety and richness of sound.

During the editing process of the recorded waters, the visualisation of the sound tracks that display both the waveform and the changes in volume as graphic images on the Pro Tools sound edit system appeared to be closely related to the marks in many of my water drawings in the Shoalhaven series. The graphic displays tracking the sounds seemed like different type of brush marks, simulating their movement across the paper in both the small ink water studies and drawings and to a degree in the large paintings.


In the Pro Tools environment whatever is displayed in a track can be edited. The waveform display represents the amplitude of the sound across time. This does not change. The sound can be softer or lower in the overall mix. The dotted line represents the volume of that soundmix. In the image one track is set to display the waveform and the other displays the change in volume.
Installation possibilities

A series of projected water images or petrie mini scapes, utilising multi-layered transparencies with images projected onto and through a plastic or fabric screen, a symbolic image transfer within a space, or a simple installation of large digital prints of the petrie configurations hanging like large scrolls, with the inclusion of a sound system and suspended headphones for viewers to listen to the layered recordings of water.

Continuation of activities

As the nature of my studio practice is an ongoing process, I continue to attend seminars and conferences that have an environment / water path focus. Through my membership of The Royal Society, relevant Environment and Land & Water websites and email links, my knowledge of this field is continually updated. My affiliation with these networks enables me to be aware of new developments related to the environment and water issues, such as the reading of current strategies employed by the Murray – Darling Rivers Commission, to restore and maintain the rivers and to continue my participation in field trips to areas that are relevant to my research.
In May 2005 I made an additional field trip, visiting the lower Murray region in South Australia. The primary focus of the trip was to visit the mouth of the Murray River where it enters the sea, and to view the surrounding district. I wished to experience the area at first hand. While there I noted both the beauty of that estuarine environment within the Coorong area\textsuperscript{14}, and also viewed at close hand some of the serious effects to the river mouth, caused by a reduced flow of the Murray’s waters as they enter the sea at Goolwa.

In July 2005, I attended a weekend conference on environmental issues related to sustainability and connectivity within the Barmah – Millewa Forest. The conference presenters were mainly scientists from a range of government bodies, such as the Murray – Darling Freshwater Research Centre, the Department of Sustainability and Environment, and representatives from similar sectors within several universities - University of Melbourne, Latrobe University, Charles Sturt University and Monash University. The series of talks focussed on the forest, and effects of changing hydrology, floodplain ecology, environmental implications of grazing, increase of environmental flows and catchment management.

As part of my continuing commitment and involvement in the Palimpsest expositions at Mildura since 1999, I expect to participate again in early September 2006. The Murray Darling Palimpsest #6/ Mungo Festival & Symposium,\textsuperscript{15} will be linked with a number of host organizations across the four states and territories linked with the Murray – Darling Basin and River System, such as the Mildura Arts Centre, Latrobe University Mildura, Horsham Regional Art Gallery, Australian National University Art School, Moree Shire Council and others.

For Palimpsest #6 I have chosen to work with the Mungo Festival Inc and West Darling Arts as my host organization. The artworks will be installed between July – August, in preparation for the Mungo Festival, which runs from 2\textsuperscript{nd} - 17\textsuperscript{th} of September, and will coincide with the two day Art/Science Symposium at Latrobe University, Mildura on Saturday 2\textsuperscript{nd} - Sunday 3\textsuperscript{rd} of September. The theme for the 2006 Symposium is ‘After the Flood’, which will provide a forum for artists, scientists and others that will promote discussion and debate centred on one of the most pressing environmental and social issues; the future of the Murray Darling Basin.

\textsuperscript{14} Theile, Colin. COORONG, Rigby Limited, Melbourne 1972. p. 52. ‘coorong’ is from the Aboriginal word Karangh, meaning a neck or narrow lagoon.

\textsuperscript{15} Known as the Mildura Palimpsest & Art/Science Symposium since 1998.
Some objectives of the Murray Darling Palimpsest and the Symposium are to:

*Encourage communities, organizations and individuals throughout the basin to participate in a collaborative manner.*

*Develop valuable partnerships with regional galleries and other hosts locally, nationally and internationally.*

*Provide a ‘meeting place’ to debate common issues and share creative ideas.*

Within the synopsis for the 2006 Symposium, ‘After the Flood’, there is reference to the 1956 floods, to exemplify the capacity and effect of massive floods in the region, when both the Murray and the Darling broke their banks sending their floodwaters across vast expanses of the basin. In the regions that I was familiar with in childhood, such as between the townships of Wentworth and Swan Hill it took more than six months for the water to recede, leaving behind mud and destruction. I remember how the force of the floodwaters had altered rivers, landscapes and many people’s lives.

A healthy river requires maintenance of:

- The natural physical and biological processes
- The natural linkages – downstream, river-floodplain, and river-groundwater
- The natural diversity of habitats and plants and animals

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17 Reference to these floods in earlier section of the exegesis, Memory and Magic: The source. Floods, footnote 14

9. CONCLUSION:

In the latter stages of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty first century there has been an increased awareness and concern expressed by many artists and members of the scientific community regarding the state of the ecological health and sustainability of the landscape environment and its water paths. Creating a healthy environment is now viewed as one of the most important factors in maintaining a sense of wellbeing and harmony in the development of sustainable global communities. There has been a gradual shift of emphasis away from single issues towards a more holistic view, seeing the environment and the human, as inextricably linked in a binding and socially responsible relationship.

The philosophic approach towards creating an improved, sustainable environment is embraced by sections of the arts and sciences, both from practitioners and theorists. It attempts to create a broader understanding of the issues and an attitude of increased environmental awareness. There have been International conferences such as ‘Cultivating an Interdisciplinary Approach to Environmental Awareness’ Israel, 2002, and the World Water Conference, ‘Thinking Ecoart Through the 3rd World Water Forum’ Kyoto, Japan, 2003, and in Bologna, Italy, 2006 the ‘First International Conference on Sustainable Irrigation Management, Technologies and Policies’.¹

These forums are examples of a heightened global concern with deteriorating water quality and water supply across the planet. Projects and papers have linked aspects of this ecological awareness to public education, seeing value in the scientific message being transmitted by Eco/Environmental artists, working in an interdisciplinary framework with planners, landscape architects, environmental consultants and engineers. In this scenario, the role of artist and the artwork is envisaged as a means of raising public awareness in order to transform the way individuals think about their impact on the environment.

As the research progressed my perception grew in regard to the links existing between the work of several landscape architects and environmental scientists plus the work and philosophy of selected land artists. In understanding the effects of change on specific sites, the physicality of site and materials used, the artist is able to use this knowledge in either

collaboration with others, or to act as a conduit by creating artwork that may reclaim, regenerate and respond to the particular site or environment, such as Robert Smithson’s *Spiral Jetty* on a sand-mining site at the edge of the Great Lake in Utah.

In the artwork of several of the selected artists, there is embedded a sense of the importance of the collected history and culture of a specific people and/or place. Their work is sited within the locale/site or landscape, and more likely to be an integrated part of the land as in Richard Long’s series of documented *Walks*, or John Wolseley’s journeys into and across areas of land in Australia, Japan and South America, rather than involving possession of the land.

Both artists use journeys as the principal vehicle for their artwork. Wolseley’s works often culminate in series of ‘map paintings’ and ‘buried works’, collections of found objects and journal notes. Some of Wolseley’s works have been created by returning to the same site several years later, collecting the buried parts and adding them to the assembled artwork, by comparison, Long builds on his experience of a previous *Walk* but his intent in the new work will differ in method and location.

The artist’s response and social engagement with water, water paths, environment and ecology issues, is an ongoing project. The environmental artist creates an awareness of the human position within the global framework. There is an understanding that a real interconnectivity should be established, by placing environmental conservation and sustainability between a personal responsibility and society’s ethical, community practice.

There are many international artists who form links with environmental and scientific community activities, and seek to work in collaboration, on projects that are region-specific. Artists such as Helen Mayer Harrison and Newton Harrison, were funded by the Scripps Institute of Oceanography, La Jolla, California, and working between the years 1974 – 1984, developing small water ecosystems to breed crabs. Earlier, they had completed a series of six projects during 1970 –1973, one of which is *Survival Piece #5, Portable Farm*, in the Museum of Contemporary Art, Houston, Texas:

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2 Helen Mayer Harrison, (b.1929, New York) & Newton Harrison, (b.1932, New York) are environmental artists who work collaboratively on projects with ecologists, landscape architects and engineers.
This project transformed exhibition galleries into viable fish farms, orchards and fields. The aim was to propagate new forms of self-sufficiency in the face of the continuing loss of orchards and farms, and environmental pollution.³

In light of the global concern with water issues, and the International Water Summits since 2000, my personal understanding and awareness has expanded. Throughout my research project, I have noted that there is a need for a much wider recognition of the water problems that will confront us in the near future. This has led me to envisage the establishment of groups with substantial mutual interest, environmental / ecoartists and like-minded artists linking with members of the land & water organisations, such as, the environmental sciences communities, to initiate and collaborate on projects of hydrology issues and Murray - Darling Basin Research initiatives. It is possible to imagine the development of a range of environmental sustainability projects that would engage artists working with riverine communities.⁴

The Australian artist Mandy Martin completed a series of paintings⁵ during trips in 1997 and 2001 to the area back of Bourke in far western New South Wales. Martin worked in collaboration with the pastoralist and environmental consultant Guy Fitzhardinge and the writer Tom Griffiths, a cultural and environmental historian and a Senior Fellow at the Australian University Canberra.

In the following excerpt Tom Griffiths describes Martin’s painting sketches as the embodiment of the particular environment and an incredibly interesting way to learn to read country:

*The land welcomes the water, it binds with it and draws strength from it, savouring its presence while it can. Water transforms the land, revealing the unobserved contours of the flat plain, just as the painter’s medium floods the canvas, making it luminous and viscous without fundamentally altering the structure of the underpainting.... Ecologists agree that ‘floods are the driving force of life in Australia’s outback.*⁶

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⁴ Refer Appendix 4.
⁵ Watersheds: The Paroo to the Warrego (Mandy Martin / Goanna Print, Canberra, 1999)
My passion and long term goal as an integral part of my professional practice is to raise the public profile and community awareness in projects that will assist the restoration and maintenance of the Murray – Darling River System as a whole, and in particular the Murray River. My intention is to continue to expand my engagement in conferences and environmental projects related to this river system and its ecology. As problems with water become an increasingly crucial global issue, I envisage becoming more involved in Ecoart projects to be developed, possibly relating to water purification, raising awareness of water as an element, and the significant role of rivers and waterways in our ecology and culture. My goal is for the research project to act as an exemplar or working background for the development of my future artworks, one that will form a significant link with other ecoartists and environmental scientists.

The following passage is from a seminar paper in Madrid 1995 dealing with the degradation of river landscapes, in particular, referencing two rivers, the Rio Olivenza and Rio Gabriel in Spain. It could apply equally to the ecological state of the Australian river landscapes and the proactive role artists could play in this process:

*Art in nature helps us to perceive the beauty of nature and to understand that time as a dimension is an aesthetic element in its development. We need artists to work on designing the restoration of landscapes and rivers that have been destroyed. Their work enriches the scientific view of things that explains how the ecological functions fit together. Working in a spirit of ecological aesthetics, artistic interventions integrate the changes that are at work with time, leaving it to natural processes and transformation.*

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10. APPENDIX

1. Seminars participated in and/or attended have included:

Science/Art Symposium and the SunRISE21 Project. April 1999
(Palimpsest #2, Mildura Regional Art Gallery)

Science/Art Symposium March 2000
(in conjunction with Palimpsest #3, Mildura)

Science/Art Symposium April 2001 - including field trips.
(in conjunction with Palimpsest #4, Irymple)

Science/Art Symposium April 2003
(in conjunction with Palimpsest #5, Mildura)


Of Drought and Flooding Plains Sustainable living Festival, Seminar at BMW Edge,
Federation Square in February 2006

* Science/Art Symposium. September 2006. Murray Darling Palimpsest#6, with the theme, ‘After the Flood’. I anticipate my attendance and participation at these events, which will include the construction of an external installation and internal wall display of digital artwork, beginning in July, through to September. They will be located within the Mungo National Park, in conjunction with the hosts, Mungo Festival Inc. and West Darling Arts.


In my research I refer to a number of scientific and government studies that relate to water usage and sustainability within the Murray-Darling system. As part of my literature investigations I read a number of reports, articles and books related specifically to the Murray – Darling River System. These references gave me good background knowledge, and contributed to a fuller understanding of the region.

The Murray – Darling Basin Commission (MDBC) reports were mainly from the mid 1990s onwards, through to 2005. Discussion papers focussed on a range of issues relating to the Murray - Darling River system, and suggested strategies for improved water quality. Amongst these strategies are plans to engage community interest in the repair and ongoing maintenance

8 Reports, papers, books and journal articles commissioned by CSIRO, MDBC, including research by scientists, sociologists and historians.
of the river environment. Several collaborative projects have already been implemented, as is discussed in the following paragraph, with further projects still to be envisaged.

The Cooperative Research Centre for Freshwater Ecology (CRCFE) focuses on the Murray – Darling Basin and two important urban river systems. In 1994 it was part of a consortium of several groups, which included the Murray – Darling Basin Commission, CSIRO Riverlink Consortium, the First Mildura Irrigation Trust, Horticultural Consortium and the Salinity Management Consortium, who were engaged in the SunRISE 21 Industry Project. The overall project involved groups working across state borders to address similar regional development issues of concern, such as irrigator and industry driven matters relating to horticultural crops and markets. The five projects involved the collaboration of artists, scientists and farmers, exploring different views of the land, people and environment, and the connections between them, by promoting local issues and plans related to sustainable regional development.

3. The article ‘An Inauspicious Occasion’ written by Timothy Morrell discusses the public water sculpture, ‘On this Auspicious Occasion’ commissioned in 1998, installed in the Brisbane Mall 1999, by the Australian artist, Wendy Mills. Morrell notes some of the technical and procedural difficulties experienced during its construction, and how the site and design implementation were flawed, following through to its almost secret demise in May 2005. The following is an email from Wendy Mills to Timothy Morrell 22-5-05:

The work was the realisation of a dream to construct a work of light and water in a public place that brought pleasure, had irony and could suggest multiple interpretations to a broad range of people. Its success was that we, the combined team of my designers and contractors and the Council’s City Design team, achieved this. The failure may appear to be the technical problems that were causing the occasional closure of the work and creating additional costs, but the real failure was in the lack of passionate leadership. The vision was realised but it was technically flawed. Several different people took on the role of trying to solve the problems but the processes were either mismanaged or were unavoidably drawn out. In the end the

work has disappeared because no one spoke forcefully enough for the value of this work to the city.\textsuperscript{11}

4.

In the art world, sustainability is frequently only seen as an ‘environmental’ subject and not a cultural challenge. Culture is an element in society that extends beyond the arts and humanist education, to include symbolic and aesthetic creative practice by individuals and societies:

\textit{A constructive dialogue beneficial to art and to sustainability can take place only when it is accepted that art has, ever since the start of Modernism, increasingly become a form of knowledge. Far from restricting itself to designing surfaces, art is involved in designing values, and increasingly becoming a medium for exploration, cognition and for changing the world. One characteristic of art as a form of knowledge is that it brings not only ratio, but also aesthetic competence into the cognitive process – which makes it different from science and at the same time its equal.}\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{11} Artlink, \textit{Stirring Volume 25 No.3 2005} Mills email contained in the Morrell article p.45
\textsuperscript{12} Essay by Kurt, Hildegard. \textit{Aesthetics of Sustainability} p.239 in Prigann, Herman. \textit{Ecological Aesthetics} Birkhauser Basel 2004
THE RESEARCH PROGRAM: PROPOSAL

Title: Water paths and the Landscape

An investigation of the changing relationship of artists to the landscape

Brief Description:

The Murray River system is one example of wider ecological and social change occurring in other parts of Australia. I will cite this environment as an example of that wider change in relation to an increased awareness of land care issues. I will investigate the visual and social impact of the construction of the locks and channels, both on the land and within the settlements situated on the river.

My studio research will examine several Australian water paths, both natural and manmade within the landscape. Initially these projects will be sited in locations close to the Murray River, a major source for my artworks. I will examine human changes to the environmental structure of the land in these sites. I will make site responsive installations and assemblages examining beauty, the environment and the regeneration of the ecology.

Major objectives and aims:
I will explore the type and use of materials such as fabrics, nets, photographs and drawings for use in artworks that most effectively convey issues of change, beauty and ecology in the Murray River system.

Issues to be investigated:

- Social issues that have affected settlements near manmade water paths close to the Murray River.
- To compare and contrast the visual impact of the manmade locks and channels to the natural rivers, creeks and floodplains linked with the Murray River system.
- Explore the social impact of the damage to ecological systems by manmade construction of locks and channels.
- Explore the changing relationship of the visual artist to the landscape.
- Explore the altered and reformed landscape by examining horizontal configurations of multi-layered materials and exploring the placement of repeating elements referencing space and site.

I will make a number of field trips to sites along the Murray and other water paths, both natural and manmade, to gather relevant photographic source material that can be used in the creation of mixed media assemblages that explore the links between rivers and channels and
the beauty and devastation of the changing landscape. These artworks will also investigate the
manmade watercourses that travel through the settled landscape, and contrast it to the
‘informal’ water journey of the river.

The exegesis will complement my studio practice. It will include an examination of the work
of several contemporary visual artists who have responded to and interpreted landscape and
the environment, with particular reference to the Australian ecological landscape within the
Murray-Darling river system.

Within this framework I will reference my studio practice and note its links with the methods
and materials used to interpret aspects of site, spatial relationship and responses to landscape
changes by a number of visual artists; John Wolseley, who tracks the landscape recording
social and ecological change, Andy Goldsworthy, who explores aspects of time, site and
beauty within the landscape and Richard Long, who references the ephemeral links of nature,
place and presence of man. I include reference to the artists Bonita Ely and John Davis, whose
installations and related artworks contain elements of political comment. Their work explores
aspects of both history and feeling for specific place, referring to landscape change, and is
using repetition, grids and processes. I also examine the works and response of Janet
Laurence where the work references site, space and history within the landscape.

Research Questions

How have selected contemporary artists dealt with the multiple aspects of the environment
and water paths in the changing landscape?

How can I create artworks which reference natural and manmade waterways / water paths and
their relationship to the changes of sustainable land care?

How can my interpretations of water paths reflect the changing relationship of artists to the
landscape from beauty and reverie to ecological and social sensitivity?
Rationale for program:
This research is pertinent as water in Australia is an essential component for survival. An intrinsic characteristic of all the inland rivers in Australia is their ephemeral nature. The periodic connections between different parts of the river floodplain system are integral to the overall functioning and health of the river. Evaporation, tributary flow and groundwater are natural causes that create various degrees of salinity, but the introduction of irrigation has greatly increased the effect of these factors.

Changes to the river flow by the introduction of a lock system has resulted in over-control of river resources and reduced the seasonal flood periods, which were an essential ingredient in maintaining the ecology of the river. An increased awareness of the effects of these changes has lead to new approaches being investigated for improved land care and river health as part of a broader community responsibility.

The multitude of interpretations by visual artists whose artworks are related to nature, landscape and the environment, fall within the critical framework of contemporary art, and acknowledge how important water paths within the environmental landscape are to our continued presence here.

Visual responses are frequently polarised and may range from respect and wonder relating to the landforms, the colour and the space, through to environmental concerns relating to the history, impact of settlement on the land and the changes made to the natural landscape.

My work will extend the debate in these areas, exploring the changed relationship of the artist to the landscape, from the beauty and reverie that depicted pastoral vistas and the untamed bush, to ecological, social and cultural sensitivity and thereby raise awareness of environmental landscape issues.
Water Sound Recordings:

Mini Discs – Initial field recordings
1. Storm
2. River/Creek
3. Rain
4. Birds

Initial Edit CDs 2005
3. Creek / Storm.

First short version Edit CD 2006
Track 1: Rhythmic Rain / Storm.
Track 2: Creek / River / Nature.

Second short version Edit CD 2006
Track 1: Nature Creek
Track 2: Storm Rain

Final long versions - Completed Edit CDs 2006
CD 1: Nature/Creek
CD 2: Rainstorm
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VISUAL RECORD: Water paths and the Landscape.

SLIDE LIST

Sheet A:
Slides 1 – 20
Size approximately 10cm x 50cm

Sheet B:
Slides 1 – 10
Shoalhaven series – inks and acrylic works on paper 2000
Size: 76cm x 54cm
‘Land Water Nuances’ Bundanon Studio Residency, New South Wales

Slides 11 – 20
Shoalhaven series – inks and acrylic works on paper 2000
Size: 76cm x 54cm
‘Land Nuances Water Nuances’ Bundanon Studio Residency, New South Wales

Sheet C:
Works on paper – collage, mixed media and print (completed 2000-2004)

Slides:
1. ‘Water tracks’ 22cm x 31cm Ink on art text
2. ‘Water tracks’ 22cm x 31cm Ink on art text
3. ‘Water tracks’ 60cm x 170cm (grid) Ink and paint on art text
4. Water tracks’ 150cm x 165cm (grid) Ink on art text
5. ‘T-Bar’ 56cm x 76cm Mixed media/Collage
6. ‘Land Language’ 56cm x 76cm
7. ‘Land Language’ 76cm x 54cm
8. ‘Land/Water Language’ 54cm x 76cm
9. ‘Land Language’ 54cm x 76cm
10. ‘Land Language’ 54cm x 76cm
11. ‘Land Sand Dust’ 76cm x 54cm
12. ‘Land Language’ 54cm x 76cm
13. ‘Land Language’ 76cm x 54cm
14. ‘Land/Water language’ 54cm x 76cm
15. ‘Water marks’ 15cm x 40cm Ink/Acrylic
16. ‘Water marks’ 15cm x 40cm Ink/Acrylic
17. ‘Water tracks/Channels’ 155cm x 168cm (grid)
18. ‘Current’ 29cm x 42cm Etching
19. ‘Waterwars’ 29cm x 42cm Etching
20. ‘Cyanobacteria’ 42cm x 29cm Lithograph
Sheet D:

Paintings – acrylic works on canvas & board (completed 2000 – 2004)

Slides:

1. ‘River Water Land 1’ 115cm x 130cm
2. ‘River Water Land 2’ 115cm x 120cm
3. ‘Water path in land’ 155cm x 120cm 2002/03
4. ‘Water channels’ 155cm x 127cm 2002/03
5. ‘Water tracks 1’ 155cm x 105cm 2003
6. ‘Water tracks 2’ 155cm x 105cm 2002
7. ‘Water flow’ 182cm x 145cm 2003/04
8. ‘Open channel 182cm x 130cm 2002/03/04
9. ‘Water tracks 3’ 155cm x 105cm 2003/04
10. Installation of acrylic on board ‘Water studies – Water path’ approx 400cm x 60cm

Sheet E:

Petrie Miniscapes and Digital Prints Series 2004 -2005

Slides 1 – 10
‘Lunettes and Lakes’
‘Petrie miniscape doubles’ actual size of each dish: 9cm diameter.
Containers hold various quantities of mixed pigment, paint, inks and earth

Slides 11 – 13
‘Poetry of water – Riverine lakes’ 100cm x 350cm
Large digital prints of paint formations on transparent sheets

Slides 14 – 15
‘Trail of water – Riverine lakes’ Large digital prints of petrie configurations

Slide 16
‘Lakes - Land’ Large digital print of petrie configurations
Sheet F:

Installations and Related Studies – mixed media, photographs, fabric

All installations sited at locations in or near Mildura - linked with Palimpsest events

Slides:

1. Proposal sketch for ‘Water transparency’
2. ‘Water transparency’ installation in progress
3. ‘Water transparency’ installation in progress
4. Completed ‘Water transparency’ size variable, approx 168cm x 168cm Mildura
5. Proposal sketch for ‘Mapping of luncheons – Dining on site’
6. ‘Mapping…’ in progress
7. ‘Mapping…’ in progress
8. ‘Mapping…’ in progress
9. Completed ‘Mapping…’ installation at warehouse site, Mildura approx 300cmx200cm
10. Initial rough concept – not developed
11. Proposal sketch for ‘Water Drawings’
12. ‘Water drawings’ in progress
13. ‘Water drawings’ in progress
14. ‘Water drawings’ in progress
15. Completed installation ‘Water drawings’ Irymple size approx 250 x 400 x 100cm
16. Completed installation ‘Water drawings’ Irymple
17. Aurora Irymple Packing Cooperative
18. Signage at packing cooperative
19. Completed ‘Trail of water – Riverine lakes’ Mildura Showgrounds 100cm x 350cm
VISUAL RECORD: Water paths and the Landscape.

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Size approximately 10cm x 50cm
VISUAL RECORD: Water paths and the Landscape.

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