Making in Landscape.
Time, Geometry, Observation and Transitory Objects.
From Methods of Inquiry to Instruments for Design

A Masters of Architecture (Industrial Design)
By Project

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Declaration

I certify that excerpt where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; and, any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged.
In the Australian country environment there is a tradition of looking out across the open land, with time to spare and usually from a verandah. In the distance, an isolated building or structure with its human geometry can be discovered, sometimes by surprise amongst the complexity of farmland and native bush, while we wait for the weather to change.

Partly because of remoteness and open space close to home we have materials and objects lying around "at hand" (i.e. old implements etc.). These are for the possibility of being used to make something to solve a problem. It is acceptable that the manner in which these objects are useful may not be predictable. One day, the material may offer itself as a solution, if we are open and responsive, and have the motivation. It is in this tradition that I grew up, predominantly solving problems, usually of a mechanical nature, by selecting and putting available materials in my hands in situ. This is a tradition that I continued in industrial design and has been deliberately a premise of this project. However, it is widened to include the tactility of the open landscape and the weather. Through practice this has led to using time itself as a material "at hand". In a similar way I have also tended to have ideas and words lying around, for future use.

Acknowledging that material itself may offer up an insight, given patience and frame of mind, lies into the experience of suddenly seeing anew, in the open landscape, experiencing a shift of vision, particularly in a familiar scene. "My perception of the landscape changed radically as when one sees the second image in an ambiguous drawing" (Ramond Gaia, Romulus my father).

This experience, of a shift in perception, usually a strange surprise, comes more often with time and calmness rather than intense seeking. My experience with hunting has given me cases where prolonged, still observation led me to suddenly pull out the image of, for example, a rabbit, from the environment although it had been in my field of view for some time, yet I did not see it! Usually they were betrayed by their own movement but sometimes by my patience leading to a shift in my perception. When it did, the obvious could not have been more immediate and obvious! Had the information coming to me changed or just my way of construing it? It is part of my developing creativity to hopefully be sensitive to the conditions that allow such perceptual surprises to take place.

This Masters By Project is about being motivated by being in landscape, physical activity and hands-on making with material as an intelligent method. It is about balancing these with thinking and reflection over time as a valid creative strategy for research, discovery and design.

It is a system of the observer/maker, constructing or selecting objects, spaces and geometry; placing them in landscape, as a method for learning and assisting observation and reflection. This is done with the suspicion that something will be learnt that may be applied to design.

It is also about the observer being instrumental within the system and bringing apparently arbitrary predispositions of ideas and reflective practice (In this case illustrated in "The Past Works") to the landscape and modulating those through and onto this practice.

As a consequence of the above conditions the project is predominantly concerned with....

* The generation of particular three dimensional moments that arise from the systematic interaction between observer, landscape, natural phenomena and introduced elements within specific geometry and time.*

"The indefinable moment out on the land" - John Ralston Saul.
Each work usually involved the pleasure in something that intrigued or puzzled my sensibility and was not fully explainable to myself. This in itself is enough cause to do something. At the time I was attracted to the idea of not creating specific end things but rather creating "beginnings" with no preconceptions of what would develop. This was in contrast and a needed balance to, designing at this time, where I was making specific things for a particular preconceived task. My method is in itself that process. The past work was a body of work separate and outside my commercial work as a designer, fabricator, sculptor, and product designer, also, it has a number of parallel and re-occurring themes. This work was usually executed as a method of inquiry and a record of intuitively selected preoccupations with no conclusive connections between works, nor clear premises for executing a particular work, other than the suspicion that, by a method of doing and recording, a sensibility could be developed and explored. I considered it valid to proceed in this way and that ultimately I would integrate these ideas into an understanding of my practice.

By choice we can construct a sensibility, choosing what to bring forward and what to push back. Even if what we choose initially appears to be unrelated or in contradiction, perhaps given the right circumstances and enough time the mind will make connections.
The pendulum system pictured opposite consisted of two pendulums approximately two metres in length and one metre apart. At their centres were universal joints enabling free swinging up to, and through 360°. This movement could be initiated by the slightest movement of air in the environment. Atop each pendulum was a small audio speaker; one acting as a microphone the other as a speaker (receiver and transmitter). These were connected to a valve audio amplifier in the base of the structure. An audio feedback signal was generated in this system that varied depending on the relationship between the two pendulums, their relationship with and the form of the surrounding environment and any sound that may occur in that environment. Even though this was a simple system I could not predict what it would produce when it was operating. It was not predictable. It was constructed as a piece of engineering rather than an aesthetically pleasing structure.

The first operating system was constructed without any clarity, into which discipline it might belong. It was made outside any notion of myself as a designer and I certainly did not consider myself an artist. It was constructed as a ‘method of inquiry’ which was a term I used at the time. I was aware of watching myself, the observer doing this work and that it was intriguing enough to follow without knowing what I was doing. However, I was prepared to forego these doubts and began fabrication from the desire for action with matter, vague ideas, and an intuition that in the physical activity with material it might lead somewhere and at the very least it would give me something to reflect on later and perhaps accumulate with other things I might do or think about, or draw, in future. Something that was a pleasurable puzzle with no preconceived end.

Ideas at the time had something to do with:

(a) Not making a particular preconceived thing or a static object for aesthetic appreciation or physical function.

(b) Not seeing myself as the significant maker of things. But rather as the instigator of beginnings that would grow beyond me. In fact, not need me!, functioning in my absence. The question then arose, was it important for me or anyone to experience this system? I liked the idea that it was merely intended to operate and not to be seen or heard. At the time I reluctantly exhibited this piece at Shepparton Art Gallery, on the insistence of my design teacher, although I knew I was uncomfortable with the idea that it had anything to do with the art. The construction and the operation was not for aesthetic appreciation visually nor as sound. It was a means, a part of a system for invisible 3D forms in a process. I concluded it was – a system to just operate, not necessarily to be seen or heard.

- That I had started something that would behave in ways unknown to me, develop away from my creativity.
- That I used simple technology, sound amplification and feedback.
- And introduced an attempt at unpredictability by using the movement of air in the landscape to change the relationship between speaker and microphone.
- That it was generating sound partly because of the geometry variations with the surrounding environment or forms that might come and go.
- It was continually making moving 3D form (compressing air) and it was not about pleasant sound. (prior to this I had experimented with electronic music).
- It picked up sound from the environment and fed it back out.

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A creative method
The practice that one sets in motion, a beginning of an operating, self-developing system rather than a static thing, like a building or sculpture. Therefore apply this to architecture and design. Self-developing objects and architecture.

Changing the responsibility of creation from the creator being totally responsible for a particular end project to being responsible for the starting conditions. The idea that what is existing at a particular time has grown independent of the original creation and is generated out of the created beginning system interacting with a moving environment. Also an architecture of design that begins, exists in one way but changes with the moving or repositioned observer and changing environment. Even in ways unexpected by the designer!
CONSTANT OBJECT = DIFFERENT ATTITUDE

DOUBT AND FALLING OBJECTS

FALLING SURE

MATTER IN MATTER

MATTER AS THREAT

ATTITUDES AS ACTION

MYSELF INSULATED IN MATTER

"TRANSCENDING PREOCCUPATIONS"

"AND CONNECTION TO THE WORLD"

"IMAGE OF CRACK AS AN OBJECT Existence"

CONSTANT OBJECT DIFFERENT ATTITUDE

CONSTANT ATTITUDE DIFFERENT OBJECT

CHAIR OF MY OWN MAKING

CHAIR OF MY OWN MAKING (which is mine)

RESULTS OF "MAKING ATTITUDE AND WHAT IS MAINLY"

[FROM PUZZLES AND PROBLEMS IN WHICH TO NOT CONSENT]

KNOW WHAT I AM DOING
Continuously isolating words and marks on paper for future stumbling upon, playing with combinations of unknown significance is a viable strategy. Reversing, cross combining ones that are intuitively intriguing is similar to, and feeds into, the creative process of juxtaposing things in the physical world. A word from years ago can complete an idea, fall into place while involved in physical effort or an observation despite the fact, that at the time of writing, no connection or even significance could be said.

Hard bound, blank page, good quality note books have always been a strategy. Quality ensuring they do not drift off but are kept and opened at various times with various degrees of intent.

The books are for distinct, simple word and diagram objects (packages) kept at hand like steel, recorded when they come to mind or intuitively found from any source, for rummaging through or casual random opening and found to fit, at times in uncanny ways if urgency is kept capped.

They are a pleasant counterpoint to physical effort, and often stimulated by it: diagrams for showing direction, movement, relationships and alignment of moving things.

They are always ongoing and were integral to the Masters Project, primary for remembering. Put down not necessarily for their content but also for their pattern of interplay, reversed and repeated, changed and restated. They are selected because they hunt around, hook onto, or encapsulate an idea. Recombining in and out, lists on lists for hunting to progressively form a sensibility, a matter of attitude.

The delicate balance of words and marks, physical effort and matter.
Sound Cube

This work was an attempt to bring together Euclidean geometry and process. At the time I ideally required the technology to synthesize 3D form in real space — failing that I decided to use sound spatially and directionally in a process based on the cube. The way the sound was directed through space and back to the centre of the cube followed a sequence that mapped out a cube. Initially I drew a 12 floor cube in black space using luminous tape. This diagram was marking the boundaries for this cubic space that had an operative function as distinct from the surrounding space. Any signal of sound that entered the volume and arrived at the centre of the cube was immediately taken into the system and immediately fed back into the centre from the centre of one plane of the cube. As this was happening, the initial signal was also carried to the next plane of the cube and then transmitted back to the centre and moving on to the next plane of the cube and subsequently moving around and transmitting back to the centre from every surface of the cube-sides, top and base. As each signal went back to the centre it was immediately sent around the cube again. The compression of air, its direction was cubic in space, layering cube on cube in a circular, spiral pattern. The delineation by drawing a real cube in space was the starting position, a Euclidean static diagram as a starting position for a cubic process. A cube for beginnings. An arbitrary sound may enter the space and arrive at the centre or (as I toyed with) particular sounds or sounds also carrying meaning was another direction I considered and deliberately inserted. However, applying the pendulum, earlier work, system, I arranged that when three free swinging pendulums, three luminous lines outside the cube lined up, perfectly parallel this would induce a feedback signal between the centre of the cube and the firm surface, so that the system did not need an outside signal to come into the space to set the process going. At the time I proposed tangential ideas i.e. a burial chamber that absorbed into its walls the last moments of dying to then be processed and after death. I also wrote proposals assuming the cross fertilizing of electronics and holography using such a process and did diagrams around the alignment of things entering an active, processing space. Experimentally I noticed at the time that one’s experience of being in space, particularly an unilluminated floating black space with the only reference being a 3D line drawing i.e. standing in a diagram was effected very strongly by the evolving patterns of sound as they moved around. The impression of depth was so strong that one was fearful of stepping out of the cube even though you were still experiencing a solid floor. I also noticed when the system was operating in my studio (I would leave it running for days) in full light that it augmented and focussed the experience of being in that particular space. I remember on one occasion hearing a dog bark in the distance down in a laneway away from my studio. Within a second it was coming back to me in the room and moving around the space and subtly changing, eventually evolving into complex patterns and rhythms of sound layer on layer spinning round the studio. At the time I also learnt that there seemed to be three possible processes and one could never be sure which way things would evolve.

1. A diminishing process - eventually dying out.
2. A level process - going on and on neither expanding or diminishing.
3. An expanding process raising in intensity until the system had to be switched off to avoid damage. However, I could never be sure which way the process was going when set on a level development. It could run for days apparently level only to start escalating or diminishing at any time. Subsequent diagrams, photographs and constructions may have meant this process when a cube was used, symbolic of the process.

The interplay between perceived space through sound and the sound meaning could be explored in architecture and sculpture etc.
Euclidean geometry could be seen as symbolic of western tradition so the question arises how appropriate is it to put it on the Australian landscape? And particularly if it is not seen as functional. Also why select those forms in design or architecture, when forms, more complex or organic are accessible.

Are Euclidean forms just culturally embedded and are we destined to move on or are they intrinsic or still important to our experience of being in space and the structures we make?

I have noticed I find the geometries attractive despite experiencing compound forms and this is particularly noticeable for the experience of internal or closed space. As mentioned I also struggled with the tension between static Euclidean form and my interest in fluid process and ephemeral events. For the purpose of this project I chose to initially limit research to the traditional geometry of western culture.

The flying mirror piece was the first piece in a selected landscape rather than any landscape. It was not an object but rather a short event in a particular place in daytime that existed as an idea between recorded image and actual event. The mirror is metalized plastic and is flown as a kite. One was also floated on water. This was also the intrigue in flying or suspended objects. I was also attracted to the idea that I was initiating something that only lasted for seconds and that was meant for inclusion in an ongoing process of my thinking and doing (action). Action with matter, recording and then informing further action and documenting.

Nevertheless at the same time I constructed in steel the pyramid frame and cube frame without any clear idea of their final use. There was always an intention to place them on a flat, perhaps gridded surface outdoors with some notion of movement and repositioning on the grid but the work never proceeded beyond making the frames. I was puzzled why I had bothered and felt uncomfortable with the thought of constructing a static arrangement so it continued no further. I have carried them and other geometric pieces for some time and they have been a continual irritation, constantly reminding me of the dichotomy between their solidity, timeless and the ethereal nature of systems processes and events. Also at this time diagrams and actions in landscape had to do with things aligning, passing and particular directions. The camera was part of the event not just a static observer but perhaps moving on a particular trajectory in relation to something in the landscape. A moving observer a static mirror, a moving mirror or even myself passing. I also recorded the effect of the moving camera passing my feet as I lay, looking in the landscape. The observer’s feet. It was at this time I discovered Duchamp which was the first insight into the possibility that what I was doing was perhaps even valid practice and had an historical precedent. I consequently sought out other contemporary work, subscribed to E.A.T. (experiments in art and technology), in New York, and continued with this work.

Selected
Landscape
Static Mirror
Moving Mirror
Moving observer
Aligning
Solidity
Action
Matter
Pyramid
Cube
Diagrams
Passing
Trajectory

By inserting things into the landscape for seconds or permanently and recording and striking various positions at various times, or returning to a curious image, diagram or note of a short event, insights might come.
Position of Indifference

ATTITUDE TO MATTIE
1978-79
Conscious thought, observation, reflection and physical effort are pleasurable activities

OBSERVATION OF OBSERVATION

Also in all the previous work it was becoming increasingly obvious to me that I was not a passive observer but complicit in all that was going on around me. That for me certain directions of action and thought were pleasurable and that certain environments, forms, things and events were curious to me and enhanced my dispositions and that I had a choice in these.

It was during this time that, using the chair as an armature, I acted upon (action) matter (chair) or materials that conveyed "chair" i.e. pastels in a drawing context. But, then I would record my observations of my observations including my disposition at the time of the action (i.e. drawing, colouring) i.e. my emotional state at the time of the action.

The blueprint drawings of the chair and the pastel drawings were executed on a strict conscious format and repeated. I would either comment on myself and the action at the time (in the case of the pastel drawings or with the bound blueprint diagrams of the chair, return to a fresh page when I felt inclined and do something or comment on the action or my attitude or emotional disposition at that time. Myself as an observer, my spatial position, orientation and attitudes at the time were all part of a system, a process, giving rise to the form of my being or world view at the time.

The repetitive use of the form, diagram, photograph or drawing of the archetypical basic chair was an attempt at this time to have something real in three dimensions that was essentially inert, so that rather than focusing on designing or making different objects each time, I could approach and use the same object each time in a multitude of ways. i.e. same object - different attitude. However, finding a real object in the real world that does not carry (for humans) meaning, I found impossible. Even a white sphere has meaning. So I did the next best thing. I chose an object that is often "at hand" (ubiquitous) and often used anyway to illustrate a point by others. e.g. in philosophy, "does the chair exist?". I acknowledged that it does have meanings but tried not to use those as I approached it in different ways and then observed and commented on those ways. The chair was for me as a "X" is in an equation to a mathematician. In this method the chair is an "X" in an aesthetic equation.

observer
environments, forms
events
enhanced
spatial position, orientation
being

The observer is the maker and is not detached from the object and is complicit and integral to it. The observer can choose and effect their predispositions.
Practice leading to insight

Method

SELECTION, POSITIONING AND DOING AS STARTING POINTS

I began working by selecting a landscape that was close and had a variety of aspects to it that I found interesting. It was within walking distance of my home so I spent many hours wandering there in a variety of weather and times of day. I collected maps and aerial photographs and made notes while on the landscape or later, in a process of familiarisation. I brought things and material to the landscape. The cube frame objects I already had and photographed them in situ. I brought a steel chair duplication to the site. I started photographing various views-mounting into large images and photocopying these to give me a non precious quantity of images-onto which I drew. These drawings were intuitive sketches or propositions with no particular promise other than they were inspired by the past work. I therefore drew and photomontaged diagrams pertaining to everything from box kites above the land to proposed architectural cubes as observatories to metal frames spanning between rocks. I proposed wandering buildings and chambers for meditation and referred to mining machinery. I was working on the strategy that if I allowed enough ideas to be proposed, enough diagrams intuitively drawn, enough words to be written while I continued to wander in the landscape that something may come of it.

It was obvious to me that I needed to immerse myself in the landscape more and perhaps live there rather than visit. I set about attempting to buy the land and ultimately purchased similar land about 1 kilometre away with an existing structure and power. This put me in a better position to pursue that research and construct or position things in the landscape at will. At the same time I was constantly reviewing words and notes, rewriting and discussing what I was trying to achieve or what it might be about. Often this involved writing the project again and again particularly after I had executed something out on the landscape. I had confine to use the style of knowing when, and what to do and record, at the various times, from my previous experience and slowly with each step I felt the work was going to come together. In the earlier work I used photography only as a document ing tool for short duration events and continue to do so here. However, still photography by its nature is the geometry of the particular positioned eye with a single line of sight, capturing an occurrence within a fraction of a second. I suspect that by the use of photography these elements have been reinforced within myself and inform my current practice. In the early work I also began to vary the relationships (geometry) between things i.e. camera, object and the field; moving camera, still object, moving object etc. This introduced the idea that the position or motion of the observer and all other elements are instrumental in the construction of an image. In relation to Euclidean geometry this project has been another attempt by me, suspecting I might be able to resolve the apparent contradiction within myself between static, long lasting geometry and transitory events or moving systems; not conceptually but experimentally in the classical world. (a stone is after all, an event by degree, as is a stone cube, but only in a subtle way in my experience.)

By living on the land as a strategy the project has been about me establishing a sympathetic relationship with the landscape which is also a complex, moving system, with ephemera, on the one hand and on the other hand reconciling this with the very human propensity for static, supposedly non-organic geometrical patterns and structures. These I want to bring into the landscape sympathetically and not as a rough inappropriate intrusion, but as part of the natural system and at the level of human experience. My strategy to begin with was to quietly and deliberately insert some geometric forms out on the land and wait and see if that gesture would give me insight. The simplicity of geometric shapes, cubes etc. being used as subjects in this way (objects for observation and prompting insight) was an attempt to begin with simplicity, not to complicate research too soon, or overload myself with complexity which may obscure vision.

The time and position of the observer could be as much a part of the form of the architecture or object as the static structure and environmental circumstances
My background is one of being out on Australian farmland and it was there, that, with the pleasure that it brought, I developed an interest in the notion of what do we do in the landscape, what is appropriate and relevant once the farming needs are satisfied? I suspect this interest came about because of the amount of space around me and the slow temporal pace and isolation that gives time to reflect.

The Australian spatial environment, open and ongoing, also concentrated awareness of being an introduced lone observer in this landscape and concentrates this, perhaps more so than being in a developed city environment. Questions such as what am I doing here? What do I do? And why? eventually arise.

My experience of the landscape is that it is good at raising such basic questions and that the city can reinforce unquestioning, ongoing activity.

The Australian farm with its archetypal windmill, tank stand and lone hay shed really brings home the awareness of the isolated object or structure set out and apart, that is also there for a function, placed by human beings. I have the motivation to do the same but to perhaps enhance the pondering pleasure and insight? This architecture and engineering in the landscape I suspect also highlights the awareness of, I’m here and something introduced is cut out there and all the expectations and questions that may go with that. A land with enough openness to sight, over a distance, and space to wander freely.

Also it is an environment that allows the pace of activity that I find most productive. Questions arise around the previous human occupants of this land. How does whatever I do here, on this selected land, fit with the Aboriginal activity in this land? And does it need to? How am I different in what I do compared to the Aborigines and where are the similarities?

On this land there are holes in some of the rock surfaces which are claimed to have been formed Approximately 60 acres one and a half hours drive from Melbourne on the edge of the "Nuggety Hills" at Maldon near Bendigo in Victoria. Cleared grazing land with large outcrops and plates of granite, it has also been degraded through a European history in mining, particularly gold. The country is littered with decaying machines and area names usually formed around discovery or discontent i.e. Agitation Hill, Pennyweight Flat etc.

It was chosen also because it was easy to move on to and stay permanently via some basic negotiations and financial agreements.

I knew I must begin from some essential sure plateau of basic needs to encourage the research. Some basic emotionally felt, sure positive conditions that enhance creativity in me as learnt from all the previous work. I reasoned that if I had these conditions, that although I could not see the outcome of the future work, such conditions would sustain me. Landscape was essential for this.

The conditions were:

The pleasure of being in landscape - its tactility and weather. The desire to work in landscape The pleasure of working physically The pleasure of constructing out on the land The associations with the recognition of previous work The desire to develop and affirm all of these together and perhaps apply to design and further work.

Added to this is the need for a collection of materials and objects "at hand" (generally I have this material) and or a workshop on site to make or modify objects and structures in; or the ability to move out onto the land and make directly or scatter particular objects about as I see fit. These things are allowed to be around, available for even a passing glance in the hope that a part of the jigsaw may click into place at some time perhaps when conditions within myself and the environment are aligned. This is in fact what has happened with this project as there have been unexpected insights with potential for further development. A shift in perception occurs even though you may have been patiently observing the same scene for months.

Re Method
- Preconditions chosen by intuitive pleasure learnt from past experience can be used for a variety of directions.
- Desired outcomes need not dominate selecting.
- Preconditions will mould creativity but not necessarily lock into one path or solution.
- History and its language can be chosen to be influential.
by Aborigines for water. This opens up the whole consideration - do I cut or mark the landscape as well?
There is also the intensity of light and sharpness of shadow which enhance the crispness of vision.
It was interesting that after the first insight, seeing the new base for the pyramid frame, I noticed some months later that I had a photograph of this structure above my desk.

This photograph was taken 20 years before and I had kept it because I found it interesting, but unable to know why. I had never noticed the shadows in the photograph as significant (they were on the reverse side). Nevertheless I now have realized the seeds of the insight were present in that photograph 20 years before - but I did not see it. In this work I intuitively chose to be interested in particular things, phenomena and ideas and hold on to them by choice. I accepted that I may not be able to understand why I find them interesting, but the practice in this masters project, I believe, illustrated how the prepared mind can ultimately see anew no matter how long it takes.

A moment of sudden insight, when a jigsaw suddenly fell into place, happened when I was not working, when I was occupied with other concerns. However it happened to be in the right place, looking in the right direction, in the right frame of mind, at the right time, for an effect, when nature and one of the Euclidean frames, (arbitrarily resting in the landscape) formed into a new structure. I documented this occurrence. At the time, I did not realize the extent this phenomena connected with the previous work, however, I began a process of reconstructing, experimenting and photographing. Over time more connections have become apparent, where I initially thought there were none and this continued, I have not explored all permutations yet.

The following series of photographs are documentation of initial experiments to reproduce the phenomena, explore variations and begin to measure and ascertain geometries.

- Be prepared even if you don't know where you're going.
- The manner in which the mind can be prepared can be a matter of choice.
- Selected predispositions will ultimately yield results.