

MICHAEL SHIELL

TRACE | Exploring Select Recent Documents



Michael J. Shiell

with contribution from
Danielle Smelter

MICHAEL SHIELL

TRACE | Exploring Recent Documents

left **Figure 1.** *Salt Lake Stack, 2009.*

Stacked Stones on Salt Lake edge, Nanya - New South Wales

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PREFACE

Sites of ExChange

"As opposed to landscape based art of earlier times [environmental] art was not a depiction or representation of land, it was an interaction with space"

– Michael Shiell

For environmental artist Michael Shiell art has increasingly become a celebration of process in which site and material are inseparable. Persuaded that the experience of art can be both fleeting and private, a surrender of notions of audience and permanence has been the basis for a flourishing art practice. When understood as a profound exchange between the artist and their environment Shiell's installations invite our participation within that interaction.

Shiell's process of construction is highly personal, and customarily begins with a demarcation of space through a circling exploration of site. The materials used in the constructions are reflective of the site and are preferentially drawn from within the demarcated space. As the materials harnessed to build Shiell's structures return to the environment from which they were sourced their changing form allows the work to evolve into something different and beyond the artist's control. The artist is interested in the "continual

evolution of society's connectedness to that space through the work."¹

Environmental art was born largely out of a reaction to the products of modernism in which audiences and artists began to feel disconnected from contemporary forms of art and sought a human element as a point of entry to the artistic dialogue. In discussing environmental artists Shiell explains that, "although the expression is individual, the method of interaction with the environment harkens back to ruddy, earthy cultures for which community was central. In this sense, environmental art offers a hopeful connection to a socially disjointed, individually centred population."²

Academic and writer Tony Birch has explored the need of Western settlers to affirm their presence by erecting permanent structures within the landscape for the purpose of memorialising . Birch's work, which references monuments including those of the Major Mitchell trail, explores disparities between this Western mode of marking occupation with less tangible, yet enduring, indigenous interactions with place that exist, generally without physical monument. Shiell's work engages audiences through ephemeral monuments which, through their devolution, produce something more akin to indigenous modes of connecting



significance to place.

A key element of Shiell's practice is documentation which he utilises as a mode of sharing meaning generated through the process of installation. Rather than seeking to monumentalise the structure Shiell seeks to "transform people's perception of space into place."³ The conceptual endurance of these installations is intended to extend beyond their material existence through their continuing impact upon audience and space. The duality of this interaction is pivotal to the creation of place.

In response to an earlier work Shiell has commented on the role of oral history in not only memorialising one of his installations but in continuing the process of evolution. Just like the ephemeral nature of these works, oral history lacks a fixed form, by its nature it continues to change and evolve to suit the needs of the community within which it exists. "The work itself is born out of a living process, therefore a living record such as oral history and story telling would also be relevant."⁴

Several key forms are recurrent throughout his practice. To the artist the web motif appears as a symbol of fragility and beauty within nature. A fleeting existence to be glimpsed before its threads are broken the spider web, however, possesses other elements that can equally operate within these built structures.

More powerful characteristics of webs include the arresting qualities that serve the predatory nature of the web's maker. For someone seeking to highlight and enhance experience

of environment the web operates within this capacity to capture and hopefully arrest the viewer's attention in an enduring dialogue between artist, installation, viewer and the environment in which the form operates.

The tension that exists between the possibility of a private encounter with space and the communal element of environmental art is one that Shiell now exploits with precision. The organic materials and forms he takes from nature invite our emotional participation on a base level. A series of built forms exploring the notion of shelter and survival are naturally inviting in their materiality and form, making the project doubly successful at engaging audiences.

In the context of this community arts festival Shiell's work invites us all to become active agents in the art making process by building community understandings of place that hinge on the continuing evolution of this work.

Danielle Smelter is the Curator of the Horsham Regional Art Gallery. This essay is reproduced from her catalogue essay for Michael's work in the *Times 4* exhibition for *Art is ... elemental*.

previous page **Figure 2.** *Platanus Acerfolia* - Woven Nest (detail), 2011.
Charcoal drawing on paper

right **Figure 3.** *Platanus Acerfolia* - Woven Nest, 2010.
Woven willow in English Plain tree





Figure 4. Snowy River Shelter, 2003.

Sticks and Stones Found onsite. Created on an artist's residency with Monash University's Sacred and Social Ecology Unit.

This shelter was an ephemeral form as well as a functional shelter. One aspect of the time spent onsite included a 24-hour Vision Quest. This quest was time spent in isolation without food or water in the land. My experience of this quest was both challenging and profound. It was inside this shelter that I spent most of that period.

FOREWORD

In 2003 I was involved in an artist's residency that included an extended camping trip along the Snowy River in eastern Victoria. Nestled near a bend in river I created an onsite work using found natural materials of the site. Following my established process of interaction, I spent a length of time at the site, not only to familiarise myself with the location but also to allow me a period in which to slow down and find a sense of synchronicity with the rhythms of nature. Thereafter the frenetic urgency of modern living seemed to no longer apply. In relation to this slowing of pace, my level of attention to the immediate surrounds increased. I felt a greater sense of connection to the land around me. It was from within this place of attunement to nature that my environmental interaction took place.¹

Works that I have created while feeling this sense of attuned visceral connection to the site tend to function better as interrelated interactions with space rather than forceful aesthetic impositions. The physical process of the creative interaction relied on my own bodily efforts, and was therefore, known at a very base, visceral level. Through this intimate exchange there is a further deepening of the sense of connection. The degree of connection begins to feel reminiscent of a pre-industrial way of understanding and being.

Once my physical endeavours had ceased, I engaged in the standard process of recording the created form. This occurred through the most frequently used method for documenting Ephemeral Environmental Artworks, that of still photography. In the process of creating this record I felt a level of discomfort in using photography as the sole means of documentation. This discomfort was due to the vastly different processes required in the creation of the onsite work and the nature of the documentary record. While the interaction developed through a physical intimately known process, the documentary technique of photography relied on a mechanised process, which while being cerebrally understood in terms of its function, was not intimately comprehended at a visceral level.

In this respect, photography can be viewed as very much a part of the modern world. Modern technology means that we can go about our daily activities without ever really comprehending the items we use. While we may drive a car or use a computer, how many of us really know these items beyond how to make them function. I could not create one of these things anew. Rather I exist, having grown reliant on these conveniences without the same degree of connected understanding as shared with an item that I have created. In the case of using the camera as a tool for documentation, I

felt that I was forfeiting some degree of connection that was central to the creation of the original work. Along with that loss of intimacy I felt a loss of authenticity and the personal truth that pervaded the onsite work. I had lost a degree of connection through the process of documenting the work.

After careful consideration, other concerns regarding the use of photography as the sole documentary method have become apparent; however, it was this initial loss of connection that provided the genesis for my doctoral research into alternative forms of documentation.

In regard to the selection of image making techniques to be explored as part of the doctoral process I specifically focused on relatively straightforward techniques. The rationale behind selectively limiting the techniques to 'knowable' processes evolved out of the purposeful use of non-technical processes in the onsite works. The documentary processes that were explored as part of the practical investigations were drawing, printmaking, painting and various combinations of these three approaches. There was also an additional exploration of the potential for some works to create documentary results directly from the works process of interaction and the subsequent retrogression of the form.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book has been produced to accompany my examination exhibition for my Doctorate of Philosophy. In regard to this I would like to take the time to acknowledge the many people who have generously shared their time and expertise to assist, inspire and support me along the PHD journey.

In relation to their help with the PHD process I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisors; Associate Professor Alan Mann and Associate Professor James Sillitoe for their support and advice during the initial phase of the study. I would also like to thank my recent supervisors Dr Loris Button and Dr Jennifer Jones-O'Neill for their hard work and encouragement that has been of vital assistance in the completion of my research. Their wonderful support has been extremely generous and it is difficult to imagine the research process without their input.

Beyond the scholarly process of the PHD I have received a great amount of support from numerous organisations in the realization of some of the larger scale works. To begin, I wish to thank Regional Arts Victoria (RAV) and specifically Verity Higgins and Jo Grant for their assistance in the works *Wy-char-arng* and *Celtic Knotwork* respectively. In relation to the geoglyph *Wy-char-arng* I would like to acknowledge the support of both the Ballarat

and District Aboriginal Cooperative, Billy Blackall and the Ballarat City Council. I would also like to acknowledge the Horsham Art Gallery and the Art is ... festival for their support in the production of the work *Platanus Acerfolia - Woven Nest*.

I have also received consistent support from the Environmental Management Program through the School of Science and Engineering at the University of Ballarat through their Artist-in-Residence program to the research station, Nanya, in western New South Wales.

Additionally I would also like to acknowledge the indirect support of Arts Victoria through the Artist-in-Schools program. This program gave me the opportunity to work with middle years students at Lavers Hill P-12 College and year 9 and 10 students at Dimboola Memorial Secondary College.

On a more personal level I would also like to thank my friends and family for their ongoing support. In particular I would like to acknowledge Dan Cooling for his assistance in helping me to realise some of my larger projects. I would like to express my thanks to my family John, Gillian, Mark, Katherine, Kerrie and Tim. Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my partner Kerrie for her ongoing support and patience.

DOCUMENTATION

In art terms, documentation is the process of creating a record of an original work of art. This process most often requires a secondary, often mediated image making process. Documentarians generally rely on the use of still photography for the creation of the documentary image. The rationale for the use of this technique is quite imaginable. As an image making process photography allows for an immediate, realistic picture that is closely related to its subject. Indeed, this closeness of relationship is the basis for the broad public perception of photography as possessing a measure of truth.

When compared to other imaging techniques the lack of mediation in the process of creating the photograph lends itself to this notion of truth. By limiting the intervention of the author some people would argue that photography becomes a tool of objectivity. An objective eye that records the visual realm as a form of evidentiary proof. This viewpoint however is highly debatable.¹ The active process of the photographer is not a solely objective process. The photograph is the outcome of a measured and considered creative process. Time of day, light conditions, viewing angle and cropping are all decisions made by the photographer that effect the documentary outcome. Other technical considerations such as film speed, aperture and

shutter speed can all differ the results considerably. Therefore, to assume that photography records the singular truth of an event exactly as it may have occurred discounts all these variables.

When still photography is used as the means of recording performative and process based approaches to art it is even more problematic. Indeed, art critic Robert Morgan felt that:

Images used to document or represent performance art usually require additional information - a narrative text, a descriptive phrase or maybe a set of related images presented in some sort of sequence or graphic order. A photograph, if intended to be read as a performance document, rarely exists as an independent agent without a (con)textual referent.²

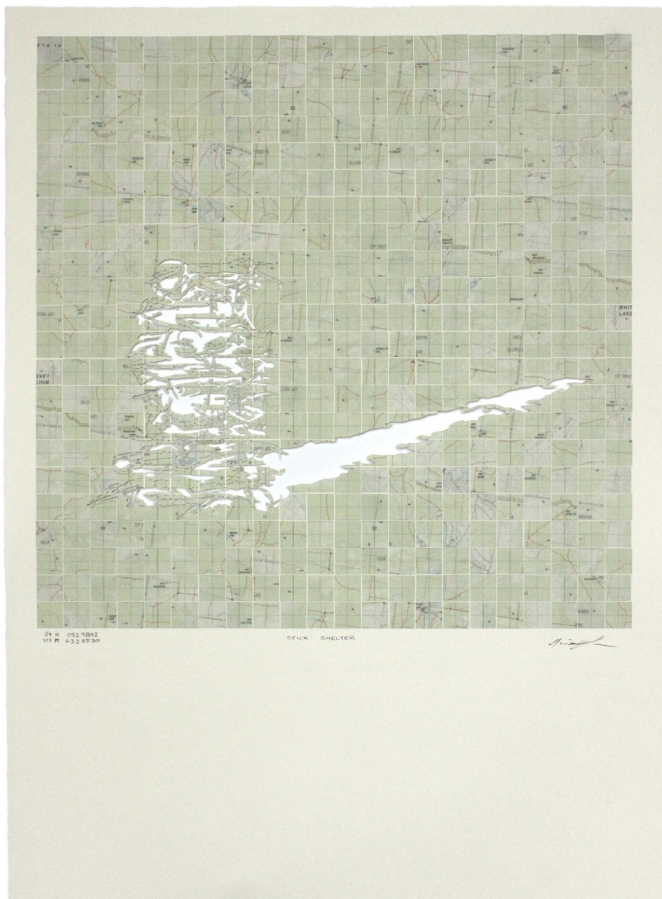
This concern arises primarily out of the instantaneous focus of photography to a specific moment in time. The refined view of the single image struggles to refer to a broader narrative over time. This concern is exacerbated in much contemporary art practice that views a contextual relationship between the work and the site. Therefore, not only should the document record the work over time, but it should also document the site as an integral aspect of the work.

While Environmental Art is not generally

categorised as a performative practice it could be accurately discussed in this manner. Unlike earlier landscape based approaches to art this approach is not concerned with representation but rather interaction with the land. Some of the more recent developments in Environmental Art incorporate the retrogression of the created form as an ongoing part of the overall interaction. In this way the artist interacts with the site and then steps back to allow the natural forces of the site to interact back with the form. Therefore, the created form

is intended to be an ephemeral component of the process. Due to this intimate relationship between the artist, the site and the interaction, it has lead some authors to describe this process as a collaboration with the land.

This form of artwork therefore could be viewed as a performative practice in which the process of interaction and the subsequent retrogression of the form constitute a performance. Documentation of that performance would, therefore, need to account for the extended



above **Figure 5.** Stick Shelter, 2001.

Stacked sunbleached sticks

left **Figure 6.** Stick Shelter, 2011.

Papercut, in digital print on paper

This papercut was created in documentary response to an ephemeral onsite form. The cairn-like shelter was made from the sun-bleached sticks found littered at the site. The location at which the work occurred was a research station known as Nanya in the arid zone of New South Wales.

narrative of the interaction. The presentation of a single photographic image as a record of these forms of artwork is therefore extremely limited.

In keeping with this thinking I decided to explore alternative means of documenting my ephemeral Environmental Artworks. In order to begin this exploration I needed to define some parameters for selecting what techniques I should explore and also to review what it was that these documents were trying to record.

As ephemerality and minimal environmental harm are central concerns in my onsite work I preferentially use indigenous natural materials of the site. In this way, as the work retrogresses with time no new chemical or biological elements are introduced. Another factor of this limitation is that I tend to use relatively straightforward methods of interacting with these materials. Weaving, stacking, imprinting and arranging are commonly used processes of interacting with the environment.

The benefit of this approach is twofold. Firstly, it allows the construction of form without the introduction of non-indigenous materials as described. Secondly, the purposeful use of such straightforward approaches allows me to share an intimate connection to the site and the work through the handling of the materials. As each stick has been woven by hand and each stone carefully balanced in place I have developed a grounded connection to the work.

I have tended to utilise straightforward means of image creation in the documentation of these works in order to maintain this sense of

visceral, bodily connection to the process. One objective of exploring these types of approaches is that, just as onsite works were a time consuming involved process, so to the documentary creation will require a degree of effort. The relatively straightforward knowable processes being explored were drawing, basic printmaking and painting. Each of these three techniques was constrained to some degree in order to preserve the straightforward nature of the technique. This concern for straightforward knowable techniques is referred to as knowability of process throughout this catalogue.

This exploration has been extended through the combination of these techniques to investigate mixed media and composite outcomes of these three techniques. The final documentary extension of this project considers the possibility of works to be self-documenting. This notion of self-documentation arises in works that create some residual mark or forms as a direct result of the process and interaction and the retrogression of the form.



DRAWING

The first technique explored for its documentary potential in the recording of Ephemeral Environmental Artwork is drawing. The motivation for beginning with this technique is due to the directness of the mark-making process, and therefore the degree of intimate connection that can be maintained through the process of recording. Initially I started this investigation with the materials of charcoal and paper. Therefore the process for making the image was both knowable and tonally restricted.

Due to my previous experience with photography in the recording of Ephemeral Environmental Art I concentrated my early use of drawing on a literal realistic depictions. In order to extend the drawn documentary record beyond the momentary focus of photography, drawing in series was also explored.

This series of drawings broaden the content being recorded by altering viewpoints and timelines to demonstrate the significance of change in the created form over the range of documentary images. The use of multiple images within a single record brings a storyboard aspect to the documentation, and the presentation of successive images generates a sense of narrative that alludes to the passing of time and the significance of change within the onsite work.

Platanus Acerfolia: Woven Nest

The documentary drawing *Platanus Acerfolia: Woven Nest*, is a multi-paneled record of an onsite work in central Horsham. This sequence of images depicts a large woven nest form created in an English plane tree (*Platanus Acerfolia*). The various panels show this form over a twelve-month period. Throughout this time the tree lost its leaves, which slowly filled the nest form. As the weather warmed, the tree's leaves grew back and the nest slowly lost its contents.

The multi-paneled approach provides a storyboard format that allows for a greater degree of reference to time and change. Change in both the tree and the nest form are evident. Additionally, the creation of the images from various angles, distances, and at different times of day helps to illustrate the fact that the created form is intended to be understood more broadly than just from a single perspective.

The motivation for using drawing to record this work may not be immediately evident. The weaving of the work, however, is directly related to drawing through its linearity, in that the form is created through the interlacing of sticks (lines) to produce the shape. In this regard the interaction is a three-dimensional linear construction, woven through the hands-on manipulation of material. Similarly, drawing creates a two-dimensional linear construction while maintaining a direct physical link with the material of creation.



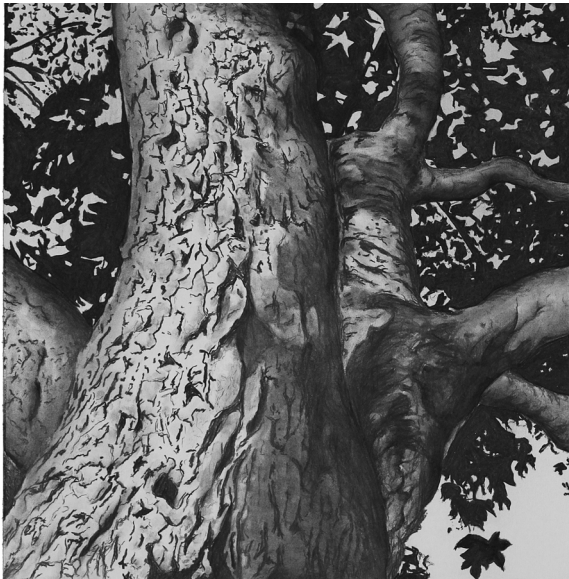
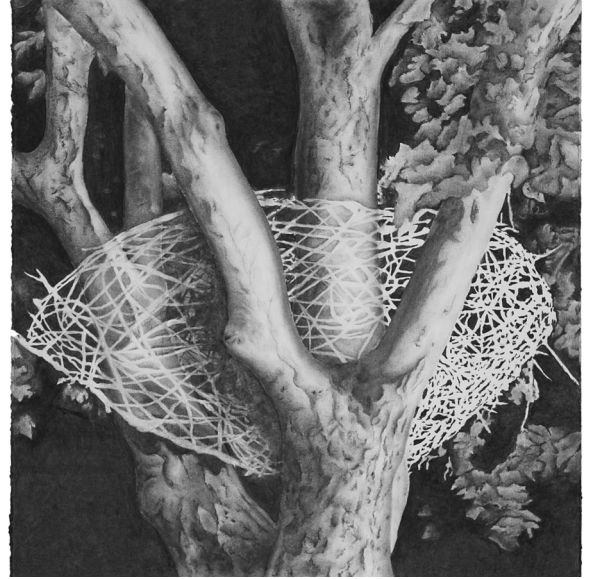
Figure 7. Platanus Acerfolia - Woven Nest, 2010.

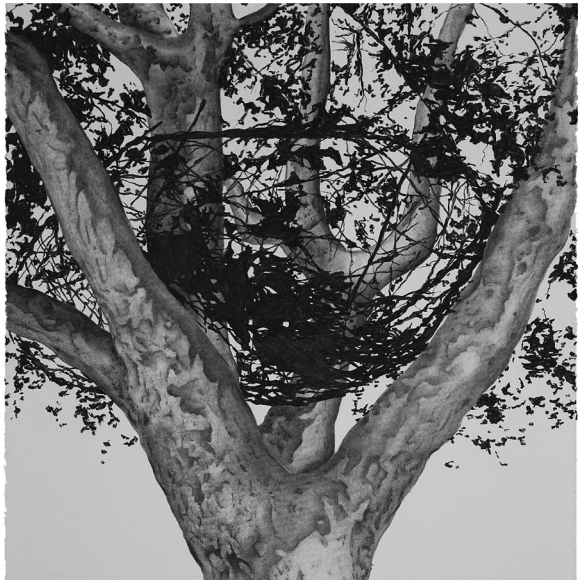
Woven Willow in English Plane Tree in Central Horsham Victoria.

This nest form was created for the annual *Art is ...* festival in Horsham, Victoria in 2010. The 2010 festival was themed *Art is elemental*. This work was one of a series of four commissioned for the festival under the title *Times 4*. the other three artists involved were Althony Pelchan, Jill Mcleod and Rosemary Kingsmill.

next page **Figure 8.** Platanus Acerfolia - Woven Nest, 2010.

Charcoal on paper





One concern with this realistic drawing approach is the degree of separation between the subject being depicted and the final drawing. While photography can allow for a similar degree of author intervention (particularly with the advent of digital photography and photo editing software) it has the perception of less mediation due to the directness of relationship between the image and the subject. With this concern in mind I decided to vary my approach to drawing to allow for a stronger connection between subject and documentary image.

The second exploration into drawing as a

documentary alternative specifically focuses on the fleeting shadows cast by the onsite forms. These shadow drawings are not intended to function as an exacting pictorial representation of the form like in the earlier work. These drawings are created through a highly direct and comparatively straightforward method. As a consequence, this process preferentially weights the connection between the work and the record more highly.

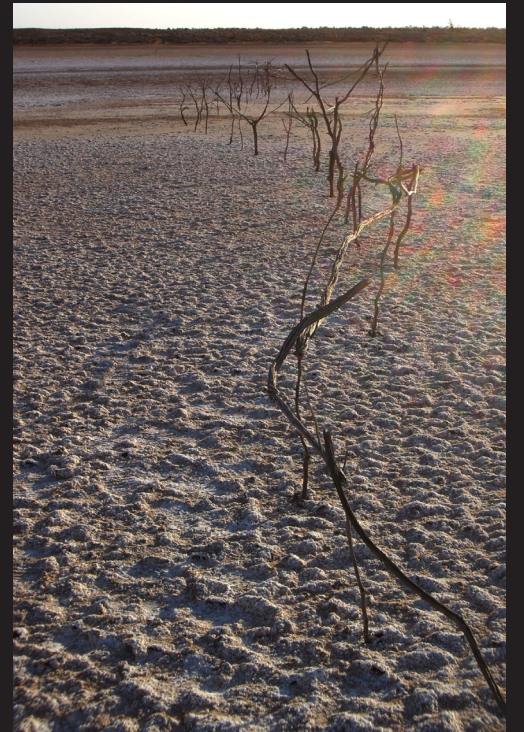
The relative simplicity of their process is also relevant to the previously mentioned concern for knowability. Paper is placed beside or directly underneath the form of



the interaction. The shadow cast by the sunlight onto the paper surface is then quickly rendered with charcoal to create a lasting record. These flat drawings, do not strive for any measure of depth. Their reference to space is limited by the directness of the drawing process. The outcomes created with this shadow drawing technique produced highly variable results. While some images were recognizable in relation to the form of the interaction, others appeared considerably more abstracted.

The reading of time in these documentary outcomes is also difficult to perceive, its

effect however, is ever-present. The passing of time is referenced through the movement of the sun during the period of the drawings' creation. Interestingly, the directness of the relationship between these documents and the onsite works ensures a high level of connection, although this connection does not necessarily translate to the accepted documentary norm of visual literality. In fact, the more abstracted shadow drawings work to challenge the expectation that documentation will simply present a realistic representation of the form.





The initial use this shadow drawing technique focused attention on specific sections of cast shadow. Therefore the documentarian was still heavily involved in the mediation of the work through the documentary process. By purposefully selecting specific section of shadow the documentarian can emphasize certain aspects of the onsite work. This is of particular concern when the intention behind the use of this technique was to limit the intervention of the individual creating the record. This sectional concern is addressed to some extent in the shadow drawing for the work *Fences and Chains*.

previous page **Figure 9 - 13.** *Fences and Chains*, 2007.

5 views of onsite work created from sticks at salt lake in western New South Wales

left top **Figure 14.** *Untitled I - Shadow Drawing*, n.d.

Charcoal on paper

left middle **Figure 15.** *Untitled II - Shadow Drawing*, n.d.

Charcoal on paper

left bottom **Figure 16.** *Bone Circle - Shadow Drawing*, n.d.

Charcoal on paper

Fences and Chains

Fences and Chains, attempts to overcome the focus on sections at the expense of the whole by recording the full length of an onsite work. The onsite work was created on a dry salt lake in western New South Wales. Historical attempts to open this land for agricultural use incorporated a process known as chaining. This involved a massive length of chain being stretched between two vehicles and then dragged through the landscape. The process destroyed native vegetation and led to massive environmental degradation through erosion and the loss of topsoil. The impact on this fragile landscape is still evident many decades on. Utilising wood felled by chaining, a fragile fence-like construction was carefully created in the barren expanse of the salt lake. This work was intended as a reference to the agricultural objectives held for this land. The fragile and fleeting construction alludes to the futility of imposing such foreign agricultural processes onto this arid land.

The shadow drawing recording this lengthy work was created by progressively moving down the page as each section of shadow was rendered. This approach has been successful in recording the full length of the interaction, however, it also serves to deconstruct the fragile continuous linearity of the onsite work. Reconstruction of the line requires the active engagement of the audience with the documentation. The intent is that, with guidance, the audience will mentally reconstruct the linearity of the onsite work. This level of audience engagement seems particularly apt when considering the active

process used for producing the onsite work. Just as the interaction requires an active engagement with the site, documentation that elevates the audience from passive viewer to active participant seems conceptually appropriate.

below **Figure 17** Fences and Chains , 2007.

Sticks on salt lakebed

next page **Figure 18** Fences and Chains - Shadow Drawing, 2007.

Charcoal on paper





PRINTMAKING

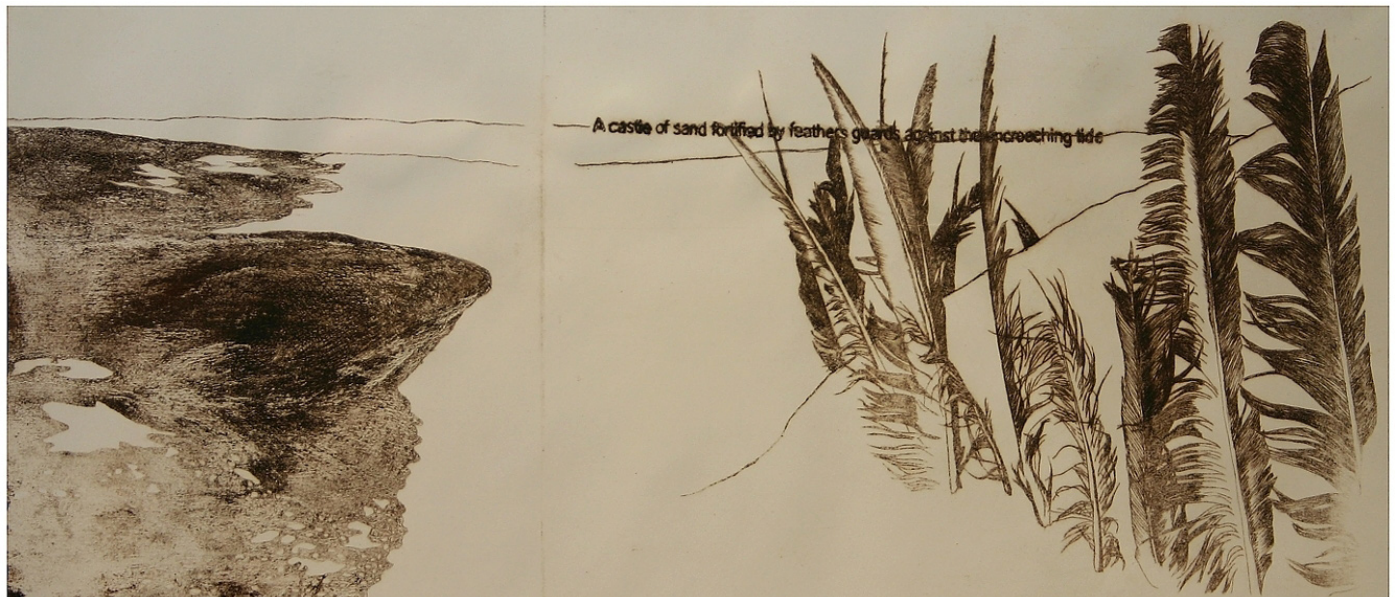


The creative processes of scratching, carving and cutting that characterize printmaking, form the image-making basis for the next technique to be explored. In keeping with the desire to utilise readily knowable documentary processes, the relatively straightforward techniques of drypoint, linocut and stencil printing have been considered. The exploration of these techniques and their material limitations began with drypoint, in which fine lines are scratched into an acetate plate. The rationale for following on from drawing with drypoint may be found in its close association with the quality of the drawn line.

The fine linearity of drypoint lends itself to the creation of both pictorial and textual records. The intent behind the incorporation of these textual references is found in their ability to allude to the broader process of interaction, including the retrogression of the form. Text,

which is poetical in nature, has been incorporated due to its richness of allusion beyond the literal, such as in *Sand Castle*. *Sandcastle*, presents a textual reference within the realistic depiction of a moment in the life of an interaction. This documentary print records a coastal Ephemeral Environmental Artwork, made at Johanna Beach in Victoria. The onsite work was created using sand and seagull feathers found on the beach. Purposefully constructed in the tidal zone, it was very soon to be destroyed by the coming water.

To some extent the time consuming nature of rendering detailed and tonal work through this technique could be considered as conceptually appropriate, as it relates to the time consuming process of creating the onsite work by hand. Unfortunately, it could also be considered as somewhat problematic in instances when the creation of the image





significantly outweighs the longevity of the onsite work. As a process of image creation its use could therefore be considered more appropriate to onsite works that are purposefully austere or alternatively, possess a greater degree of longevity.

In contrast to the fine linear basis of drypoint, linocut printing is used because of its capacity to produce dense weights and strong contrast. The limitation of the palette to black in the early explorations of this technique provides for powerful contrasts that concentrate attention on the role of light and shadow in the interaction. Like many of these alternative techniques for creating documentary images, the handcrafted aspect of the document is important as it is indicative of the valuation of the artist's direct action.

Once again beginning with realism as a starting point the exploration of this technique quickly turned to the incorporation of multiple images into a single storyboard format. Unlike the single images, the storyboard prints are indicative of a period of time in the life of the interaction. Although this form of linocut is not an attempt to record the entire life from genesis to complete retrogression, such imagery aims to suggest the significance of change through the

opposite **Figure 19.** Sandcastle, 2007.

Drypoint ink on paper

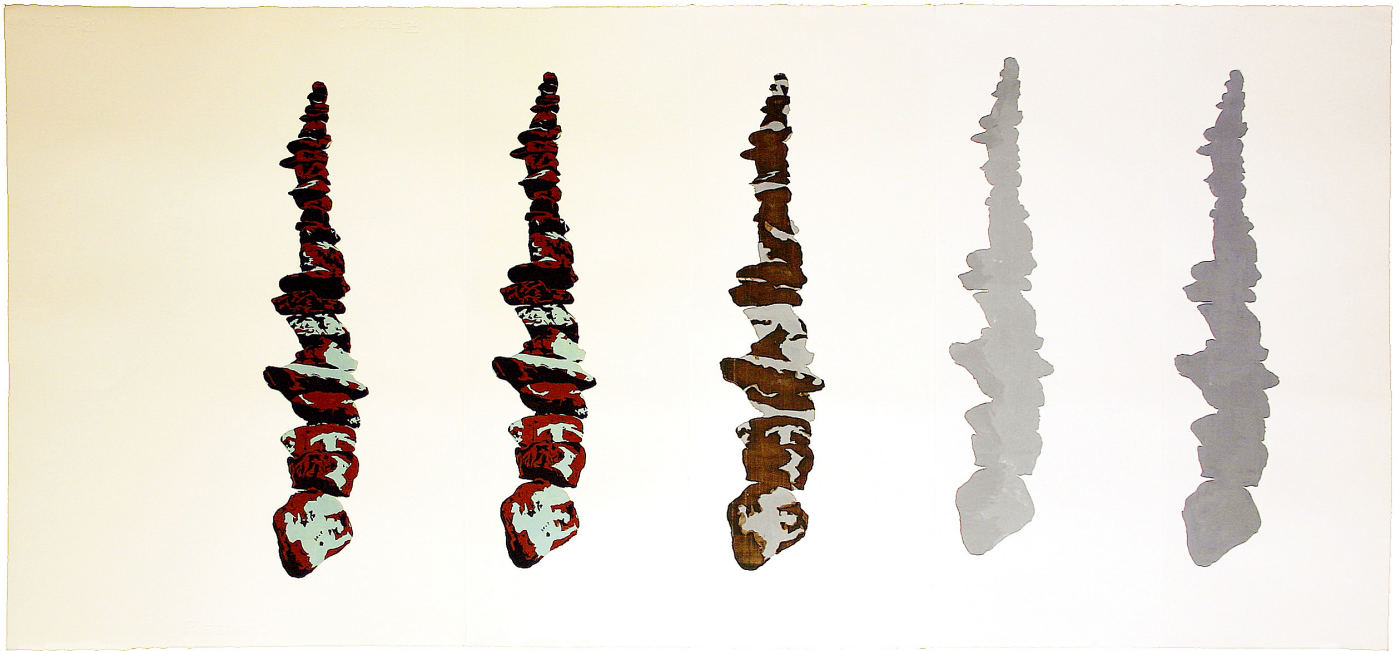
above **Figure 20.** Cave Fire, 2008.

Linocut ink on paper

developing narrative. *Cave Fire* is an example of this type of storyboard print, as can be seen above.

Cave Fire

The concept behind *Cave Fire* involves contemplation of interior space, particularly in relation to shelter within the environment. The site of this interaction was a small cave located in the northern Grampians in western Victoria. To provide a degree of division between interior and exterior space, the opening of the cave was obscured by a series of upright sticks. By carefully flexing the sticks, they held themselves in place between the floor and the roof of the cave. Although this loose structure created a sense of boundary, it remained relatively open and permeable. This permeability allowed the presence and effects of nature into the cave, thereby not excluding the site. The visual effect of this permeability was evident in the



interaction through the contrast of light and shadow. During the day, light passed through the wall structure to cast shadows on the floor of the cave. At night a fire was lit within the cave that illuminated the edges of the interior and cast light through the boundary wall to the world beyond.

Stencilling is the third readily knowable printmaking process to be explored as part of this investigation. This technique uses either an acetate or paper sheet as the basis for a plate. This plate then has sections cut out to allow for the laying down of ink during the printing process. The uncut sections of the sheet act as a mask that blocks the laying down of ink. When compared with the solidity of a linoleum plate, this technique is partially constrained by my preferred technique that uses

connection (bridges) between the uncut sections of the plate. While the attachment of the uncut sections is not a requirement, it does assist in alignment of the component parts (islands) and gives the plate a measure of strength. Images resulting from this technique are often bold with strong contrasting sections. Beyond the aesthetics of the outcome, this image making technique is also interesting because of its relationship to the paper-based ephemera of the media, and also its use in street art.

The stencilled image is part of our consumerist culture. It appears in the daily ephemera of posters, flyers and newsprint, only to be experienced, discarded and destroyed. Similarly graffiti artists have employed the use of this technique to mark the living spaces of

opposite **Figure 21.** Spine, 2009.
Stencilled acrylic paint on paper

right **Figure 22.** Spine, 2011.
Drypoint ink on paper

right **Figure 23.** Spine, 2011.
Stacked stones, New South Wales

city walls. Like paper-based ephemera these painted works share a measure of impermanence. They are created in the knowledge that the works will eventually be overwritten and lost. This association of impermanence and loss ties in with the conceptual intent of ephemerality in the onsite interactions.

Spine

In contrast to the storyboard approach used in the linocut earlier, the stencilled spine work uses the replicability of printmaking to create the sense of narrative that alludes to the significance of change. The form created through the onsite interaction depicted in this document, is a tall, stacked stone work. Created near Murringo in New South Wales this piece was made using granite stones at the site. The purposefully fragile stack possesses the same number of stones as the human spine has vertebrae. The ephemerality of this interaction was also intended to reference the relative frailty and ephemerality of human existence. While this human element was significant to the onsite work, it is only referenced in the document through the title of the work. The







avoidance of visual allusions to this concept in the documentation is deliberate, as the title alone is considered to be suitably suggestive. When read from left to right this sequence



above **Figure 24.** *Leaf Fence*, 2010.

Papercut in digital print on paper

opposite top **Figure 25.** *Tree Circle*, 2011.

Balanced branches in Tree, Nanya - New South Wales

opposite bottom **Figure 26.** *Tree Circle*, 2010.

Papercut in digital print on paper

appears to suggest the passing of the form, or alternatively, if read from right to left it appears to reference the building of the form.

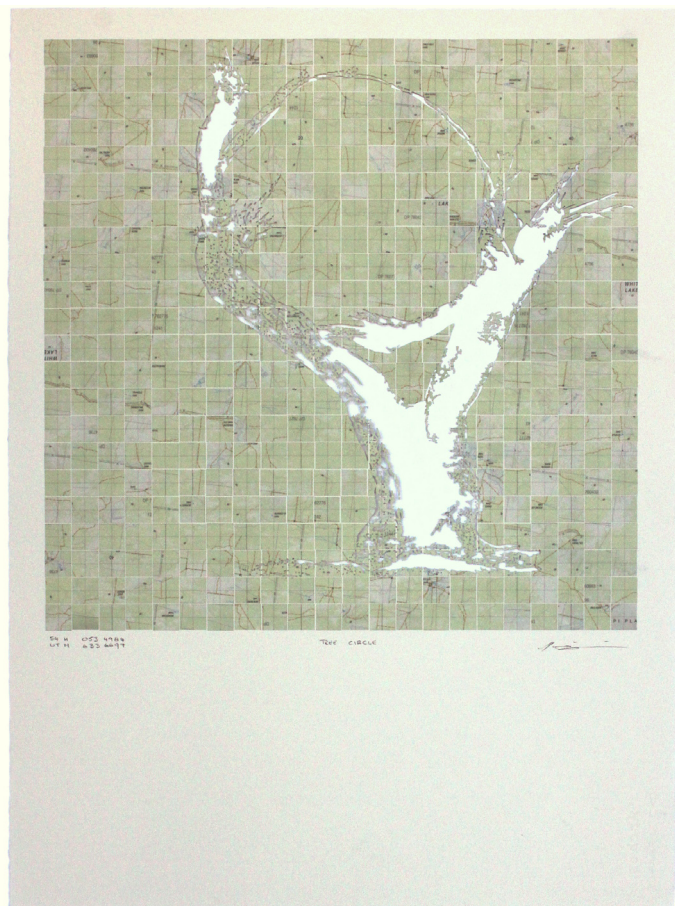
Following on from these initial explorations of stencilling, the plate itself is given further consideration. Even without being used to produce an image, the cut out plate can be considered as a document, because it depicts the form of the interaction. Interestingly, this pictorial reference to the form is created by the negative space in the plate. The plate, therefore, references what was created and subsequently allowed to retrogress through what is lost within the plate. This potential for the stencilling plate to be a document in its own right provides the next extension of this investigation. . The work *Leaf Fence*, directly uses this play on the negative space of the stencil to reference the ephemeral form.

The interaction documented in this papercut mask is a small-scale intimate work created in the arid zone of western New South Wales. Unlike the earlier *Fences* and *Chains*, this piece was not created in consideration of any historical attempt to impose western agricultural traditions into this harsh non-arable land. The impetus for the work specifically pertained to modern day usage of land at the site. At the present time this site operates as a university-based research station dealing with arid zone ecology. As a result of this use, it is not uncommon to stumble across fenced off exclusion plots. Although these plots are functional for scientific purposes, their presence in the land feels like an imposition that is overtly forceful. The denial of access in combination with the straightness of the fence lines leaves these plots seeming alien



within their organic surroundings. In response to this sense of alienation, the interaction was intended as a somewhat playful, lighter contemplation of the fence form within this site. The intimately scaled work utilised the vegetation of the site to create a gently curving ephemeral fence-like form.

The papercut presents an image of the form of the interaction created by the negative space of the mask. This use of empty space as a means of referencing form also allows for a reference to the ephemerality of that form. This stencil outcome also includes a number of other references to the interaction. The ground from which the stencil is cut is another significant feature of this document. As the site of the interaction is not a blank space devoid of meaning, so the ground for the stencil is not a blank piece of paper. This relationship of the interaction and the ground upon which it occurs, is made all the more apparent through the incorporation of the topographical map. As the use of this map has been intended as a visual reference to the site, rather than as a functional direction giver, it has been purposefully deconstructed, jumbled and then



reconstructed.

The titling information also circumvents the conventions of presentation. Through this information, the record appears to hint at a level of self-awareness regarding its own development as it adapts the title conventions of editioned prints. Although it is a unique object developed through the printmaking process of stencilling the title information still follows the standard format of signature on the right, title centrally located with the editioning information to the left. As a unique piece, editioning information is superfluous. This information is, therefore, replaced by another mapping reference regarding the location of the site. In contrast to the reconstructed map's loss of function, the GPS (Global Positioning System) coordinates, as listed in place of the editioning information, specifically locate the site at which the interaction occurred.

To date the documentary outcomes being discussed have all revolved around the production of imagery on paper. The flexibility of the plate and the printmaking technique

of stencilling, means that it can be applied to a broader range of surfaces. As a result, the ability to vary the ground can be explored as a referent to allude to either the site or the interaction.

Wy-Char-arng

The documentary image *Wy-char-arng* also reconsiders the ground upon which the image is created as a potential point of connection between the onsite work and its record. The interaction that this work documents is a large-scale ephemeral geoglyph created on the dry bed of Lake Wendouree in Ballarat. This artwork was produced as part of Regional Arts Victoria's (RAV) statewide fresh and salty project. It is also undoubtedly the largest work I have created to date. The onsite work was created in collaboration with the Ballarat and District Aboriginal Cooperative, this geoglyphic work references not only local fauna and the contested nature of water, but also highlights the lack of public acknowledgment of the indigenous significance of the site. Although



left **Figure 27.** *Wy-char-arng*, 2008.

Clay and exposed clay of the lakebed. Photograph taken in late January, 2008.

Created on the dry lakebed of Lake Wendouree in Ballarat.

Work remained visible for approximately 8 months until the lake began to refill late in the year. The purposeful use of non-introduced materials meant that the work's retrogression back into the environment caused no ill-effects.

the overall process for the piece took fifteen months, the onsite component of the interaction required only one month for completion. The form of the three platypus swimming westward towards an unmarked sacred men's site, was carefully carved into the dry bed of the lake. Throughout this period, rubbish embedded in the site was removed. While much of it was thrown away a series of empty bottles were kept. These collected bottles provide the ground upon which the documentary stencil is now sandblasted.

The bottles provide the site upon which the documentary image is produced. The transparency of the glass in conjunction with the sandblasted stencil, results in a document that requires a very specific relationship with the audience. When viewed from front-on, the sandblasted image appears as a singular outcome across all fourteen bottles. If the viewer moves either right or left the image is fractured, and the impression lost. This purposeful imposition of viewing position alludes to a similar concern in the onsite work. The overall size of the work on the lake meant that while it could be partially experienced at ground level, it required an aerial perspective to be fully comprehended.

My feeling when seeing the onsite work aerially for the first time was the three platypus appeared like sentinels standing in wait for the end of the drought and the return of the water.

right **Figure 28 -30.** Wy-char-arng, 2008.

Clay and exposed clay of the lakebed.
Aerial views





Figure 31. *Wy-char-arng*, 2010-2011.
Sandblasted glass (found objects).



PAINTING



Following on from the drawing and printmaking techniques that focused on line, weight and contrast, within a reduced palette, painting has been incorporated into this investigation for its fluidity and colour. In addition to bringing colour to the documentary image, the process of application can also be seen as significant for this investigation. The use of painting as a documentary technique for the recording of Ephemeral Environmental Artwork is not without precedent, as seen below. The medium of paint has been tightly controlled in this investigation in order to aid the knowability of process.

The intent in applying these constraining limitations is to maintain the sense of intimacy through the connection to the creative process. Acrylic paint is handled in a straightforward manner. It is applied directly to the painting surface without the use of any mediums to create effects or finishes. The paint is applied under heavy pressure using various

sized palette knives. This pressured application builds up a series of very thin layers of paint. Thus the layering of the paint surface is reminiscent of the sensibility utilised in the constructed process of many of the onsite interactions.

Minimal limitation is placed on the breadth of the colour palette, as this has been significant in the choice of this technique for documentation. Colour is limited to some extent however, as it is restricted to colours which are available within a commercial paint range. This means that no additional mixing of colours has taken place beyond that which occurred directly on the painting's surface. As previously mentioned, the intent in applying this restriction is aimed at maintaining knowability.

Unlike the earlier investigations into drawing and printmaking, the effect of the limitations placed on the painting process has confined the outcomes to less realistic results. In much

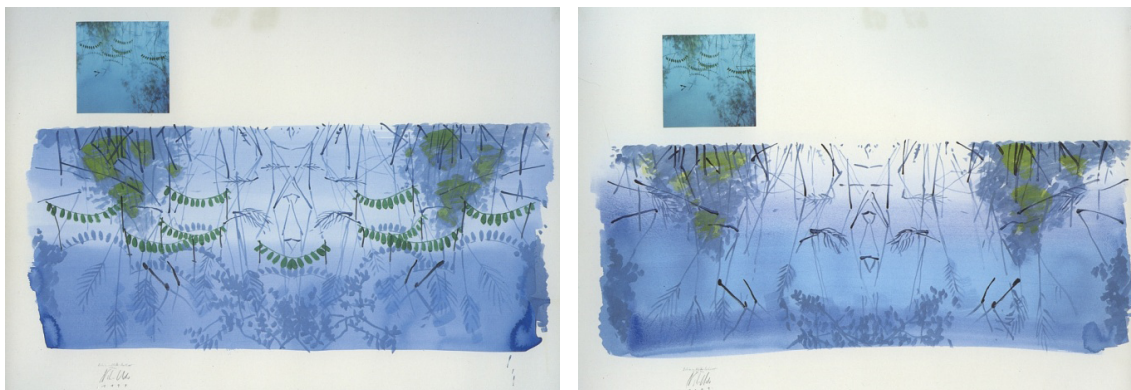
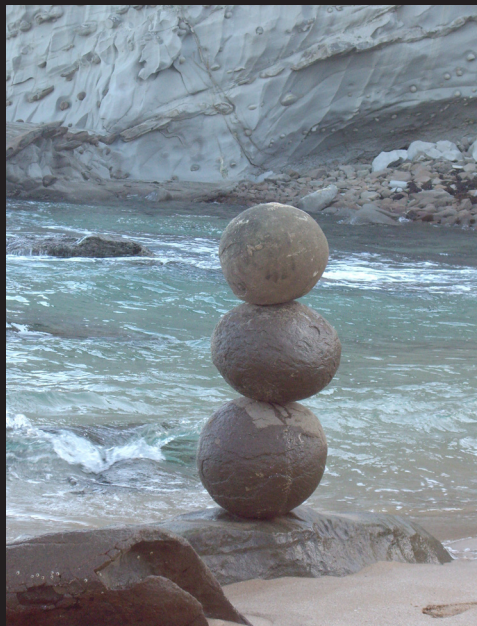


Figure 32. Nils-Udo
Robinia Leaf Swing ¹
1992 - 2000.



the same way that the shadow drawings challenge the necessity of realism in documentation, these painted results consider broader interpretations of allusion as potential points of reference to the onsite interaction.

The building of the painting through the process of layering involves the repeated application of opaque and translucent pigments. The multiplicity of layers creates a smooth finish while also allowing for the appearance of texture. This texture is achieved through two distinct processes. The first process utilises the nature of paint as a liquid material that dries to form a solid. As the wet media dries it forms a skin. This skin binds to both the surface of the painting, and any residual paint left on the palette knife. The continued working of this semi-solid skin allows the paint on the surface of the work to grip onto the drying paint on the

palette knife, thereby tearing or scumbling the picture surface and exposing the earlier layers. The remnant effect of this relatively unpredictable process is a surface that creates the illusion of being. In contrast, the second process for creating the appearance of texture is the progressive rubbing back of the painted surface with a damp cloth. This creates gentler gradations of colour as it does not scumble the paint or layer fresh unpredicted traces. The combination of these processes requires an approach to the overall painting that is relatively fluid, reactive and spontaneous. Therefore this deceptively simple approach to painting necessitates a degree of balance between the constructive and deconstructive processes within the production of the documentary image.

While not attempting to be an exacting



representation the painted work is intended to give a broader sense of what occurred. The descriptive quality of this painting technique centres on the form of the object. The combination of opaque and translucent layering also incorporates a degree of ambiguity into the image.

Balance - Cannonball Cove

This document records a stacked stone interaction that was created in the tidal zone of Cannonball Cove in Victoria. This cove's name is derived from the spherical stones that line the beach. Using these stones, a single stacked work was created by carefully balancing each stone atop the previous one. As an early exploration into painting, this onsite work appears well suited to the constructive process

of layering paint to build an image.

The painting *Balance – Cannonball Cove* depicts only two stones; one carefully balanced atop another. Therefore, in relation to the overall interaction, the painting does not record the form at the cessation of the artist's activity. By purposefully avoiding the depiction of the entire form, the intention is to undermine the notion that any single instant in the process of the interaction, might be of more significance than any other. To some extent this is successful as it does remove the emphasis on the moment at the cessation of the artist's activity

above **Figures 33 - 38.** *Balance - Cannonball Cove*, 2007.

Stacked stones at Cannonball Cove, Victoria.



The relative fragility and the sense of careful balance in the interaction are directly depicted in the painting. While the forms of the boulders appear massive, the contact between their surfaces seems almost weightless. Barely touching, they rest delicately poised, with the potential to overbalance and tumble at any moment. The subtle use of haloed light surrounding the smaller boulder reiterates this tenuous relationship as it reaches down towards the larger mass, holding the form of the interaction in a delicate glow of illumination; the haloed light appears to extend beyond the upper boundary of the page. Complimentary to this extension, another two lines appear to reach further still. Although not depicted due to the upper boundary of the page, these lines seem to suggest that some greater extension of the vertical form may yet exist. This sense of possibility beyond the depiction alludes to the changing nature of the form.

Looking further into the painting, the textural effects arising from the method of the paint's application reference the materials of the site and the interaction. The textural markings on the boulders have been created through the continued working of the wet paint as it dries. The resulting effect of this technique is the appearance of a rough textured surface on the boulders.

In contrast to the coarse effect of the torn paint, the fluid markings that reference the ocean at the site are created through the second reductive process of rubbing into the painting with a damp cloth. This process slowly reveals the fluid markings that were created in the initial layering of paint. The splash-like



left **Figure 39.** Balance - Cannonball Cove, 2007.

Acrylic paint on paper

right **Figure 40.** Balance - Cannonball Cove, 2010.

Stencil - acrylic paint on paper

markings revealed to the right of the larger stone are highly indicative of the waves crashing into the form. Whilst the combination of these technical effects is used to reference both the form and material of the interaction,

the final image, remains a relatively abstract document.

Clearly the avoidance of realism or the illusion of depth could be considered detrimental to audience comprehension of the direct relationship between the interaction and its documentation. The elimination of perspective also serves to remove the perception of spatial demarcation that can be read through documentation with a specific viewpoint. This move away from realism, towards abstraction, is developed further in the second documentary painting.

Cave Fire

Cave Fire is a painting relating to an onsite work from the Northern Grampians. This abstracted record relates to the site, the created form, and the use of light in the interaction. The composition of the resulting artwork also relates closely to the shadow drawings discussed earlier. The site in which the work took place is referenced through the pale coloured, tilted, elliptical form that appears recessed into the painting's surface. This shape is drawn from the mouth of the cave, illuminated by the fire within. The darkened bands that block the emanating light, are the silhouetted sticks that give rise to the created form, while the darkened border of the work references the night sky under which the fire was lit. The extension of the sense of light emanating beyond the confines of the cave at the top of the image, illustrates the potential for light to diffuse and extend the boundaries of the work

onsite.

As is the case in *Balance – Cannonball Cove*, the appearance of depth in *Cave Fire* has been deliberately undermined by avoiding the use of perspective. The process of layering the paint, has however allowed for some sense of foreground and background differentiation. The overlapping of opaque and translucent visual elements creates a relationship between elements, whilst their final location remains at an indeterminate depth.

Another outcome of the avoidance of perspective in *Cave Fire* has been the removal of the notion of a viewing angle. This work is not intended to give an immediate impression of a frontal or aerial view in particular. Indeed, the creation of this work has developed through multiple viewings and the depiction of numerous points of view within the single outcome. *Cave Fire* demonstrates the potential of the painting process described above to depict form, while also incorporating a degree of ambiguity. In much the same way as the created forms of onsite interactions, these painted elements can appear distinct, yet simultaneously fleeting and fragile.

right **Figure 41.** *Cave Fire*, 2006.

Acrylic paint on paper



MIXED-MEDIA AND COMPOSITE

in such a vast flat land how does one respond to the great horizontalness. the challenge remains how does one interact without imposing
is the key in understanding, in sympathy does sympathy imply a degree of separation from nature that is being overcome why
not just the cerebral, coloristic that is not a felt disembodied understanding, but rather the bodily, visceral understanding
the creative interaction is not then a theoretical thought one it is a felt one

This category of exploration concentrates on the combination of various processes in order to produce a single documentary outcome. Through the layering of a range of earlier image making techniques, mixed-media outcomes are produced as forms of documentation. The intention behind combining this array of techniques is to work with, and extend the various strengths of each image making process. The layering of one technique upon another to produce a single outcome may result in the complete loss of the documentary record if the second technique fails. Therefore, the layering of techniques requires a willingness to accept a degree of risk and unpredictability within the documentary process. This openness to the ongoing development of the record, including its potential for failure, closely associates it with the process used in the interaction onsite.

Printmaking and painting are explored through the use of drypoint. The linear qualities of the marks made through this technique particularly lend themselves to the documentation of austere forms, such as in *Nanya Reflections*.

Nanya Reflections Series

The use of prints in series provides a narrative quality that alludes to change. This series presents one image as the basis for the entire series. The variation between images which refers to the significance of change is provided through the later application of paint. Unlike the earlier applications of paint which reference the form of the interaction, its use



in this series is as a referent to the site, and to nature's reclamation of the ephemeral form. The retrogression of the form onsite can either be a slow, gentle process, or a forceful, rapid change affected by the environment. This variability in the nature of the retrogression is considered in the manner of paint application.

In this instance, the paint has purposefully been applied in a different manner to that prescribed earlier. In contrast to the heavy layering of thick undiluted paint, this work utilised thin washes of paint. Unlike the earlier use of this material, the paint is not intended to function as a visually depictive element. Rather, this fluid, loose application of paint serves as a reference to the agent of water that causes the retrogression of the form over time. This altered approach to the application of paint is conceptually significant. Thick paint would have heavily covered and quickly extinguished the print's reference to the interaction. The weight and rapidity of such a change would have been contrary to the intended reference to the slow breaking down of the form within the site. Therefore thin washes were generously applied to the page and allowed to wash down the paper surface thereby closely approximating the slow retrogression of the

previous page **Figures 42 - 51.** Nanya Reflections, 2004 - 2009.

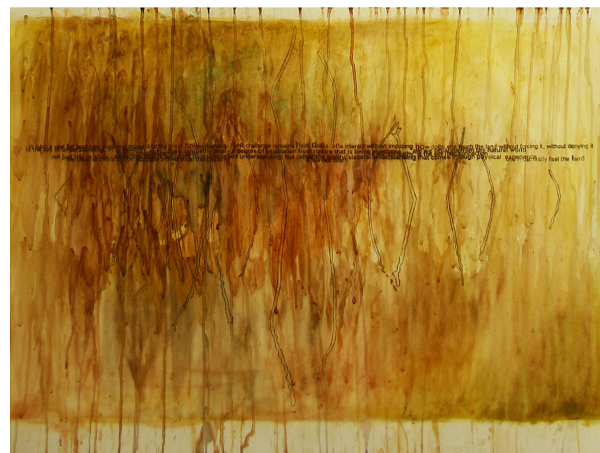
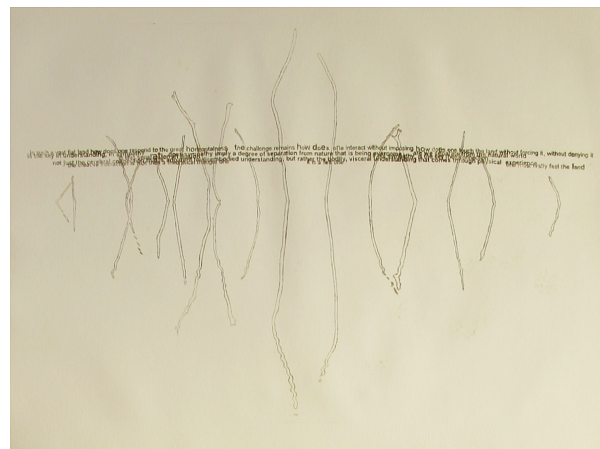
Clay coated sticks in salt lakebed, Nanya, New South Wales

right **Figure 52.** Nanya Reflections Series, 2005.

Drypoint ink and acrylic paint on paper

opposite **Figure 53.** Clay Tree, 2009.

Clay coated tree



form through gradual erosion.

The incorporation of water as an element relating to the retrogression of the form is relevant for two reasons. Water of course played a significant role in the onsite work by providing the reflective surface that mirrored the form of the interaction. Somewhat ironically, it was also the material that most significantly led to its retrogression. The presence of water softened the clay footing of the work, which then allowed the effects of wind and gravity to slowly bring about its demise. The inclusion of water with the paint as the reference to the retrogressive agent in the documentation is therefore very apt.

Colour choice, in relation to the washes of paint is also significant in that the selected colours directly relate to the colours of the site. The

growing presence of colour over the series is intended to indicate the increased presence of the site as it reclaims the form of the interaction. Therefore the final image in the *Nanya Reflection Series* depicts the interaction as almost completely reclaimed by the colours of the site. Nevertheless, the presence of the underlying image still remains as a ghostly imprint within the space.

Clay Tree

In much the same way that the mixed-media pieces allude to aspects of the onsite work, the combination of distinct documentary references within a single outcome may also be seen to reference the interaction more broadly. The composite work *Clay Tree* presents a two-dimensional document comprised of a





above **Figure 54.** Clay Tree , 2010.

Linocut ink on paper and color photographs and digital print.

The onsite work recorded in this print is a clay coated tree at Nanya in western New South Wales. Situated amongst a small section of belah woodland. This long dead tree possessed such an enigmatic shape that I knew I wanted to work with it. The vivid orange clay was collected from the site. The appearance of this on the tree appeared so out of context that the tree seemed to glow in the landscape.

right **Figures 55 - 58.** Woven Fire Mat, 2007.

Woven reeds, shells and fire floating on the Wimmera River

series of individual records. These documentary elements include a detailed linocut referencing site, mapping elements, as well as satellite imagery of the location, and a series of photographic images illustrating the artist's activity in the process of interaction. These varying documentary outcomes are combined, albeit discretely, to form a single documentary record.

The relative significance of the linocut in this record implies a different relationship between the interaction and the site. Linocut is used to create a bold image that appears to strengthen the relative position of the site within the overall document. Whilst previous records have referenced site through either

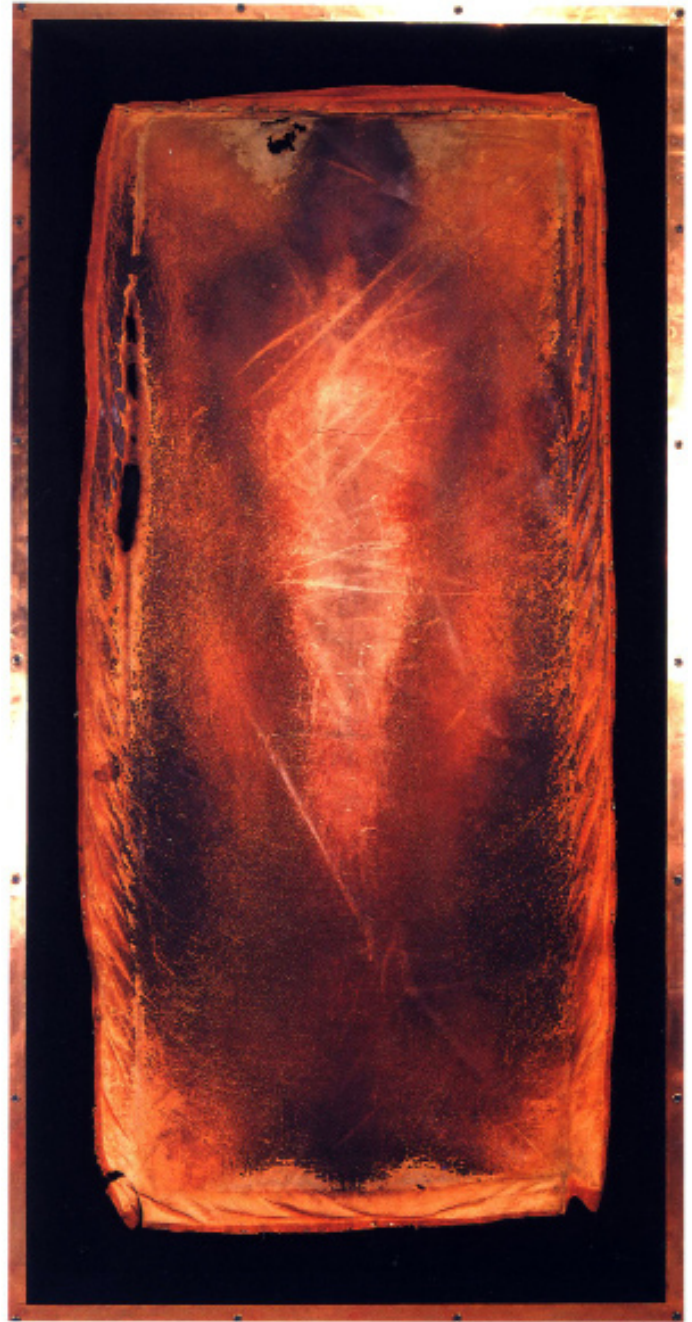
materiality or imagery, the references are largely either an indirect or a minor component within the overall document. The focus of the early works designates the interaction as being of primary importance within the documentation. In contrast, the scale and detail of the site-referencing linocut, elevates its significance in this composite record; thereby changing the relationship of the various documented components. Unlike the earlier works, the relative position of the reference to the interaction is not the primary focus. Therefore the visual components in this record seek a more balanced focus on both the interaction and the site, strengthening the position of the site within the document and elevating its significance within the onsite work.



SELF-DOCUMENTING

The conceptual basis for this field known as self-documentation developed from a rather amazing work of art I saw many years ago. At the *Beyond Belief: Modern Art and the Religious Imagination* exhibition held at the National Gallery of Art in Melbourne I came across a work that affected me greatly. Entitled *Icarian II / Incline* the work is an old piece of leather that has been nearly completely destroyed. Discoloured by sweat and worn down to the point of being threadbare this leather was rescued from an incline bench at a gymnasium in Venice Beach, California. Through the process of the sweat and blood of countless hard bodies being absorbed into the leather it has created a ghostly imprint. A soiled and stained figurative impression worn into the animal hide remains. Apart from the immediate aesthetic quality of the work it is also a document of the exertion of the men who created it. This remnant element of the leather feels somehow charged with a degree of energy from its earlier life.

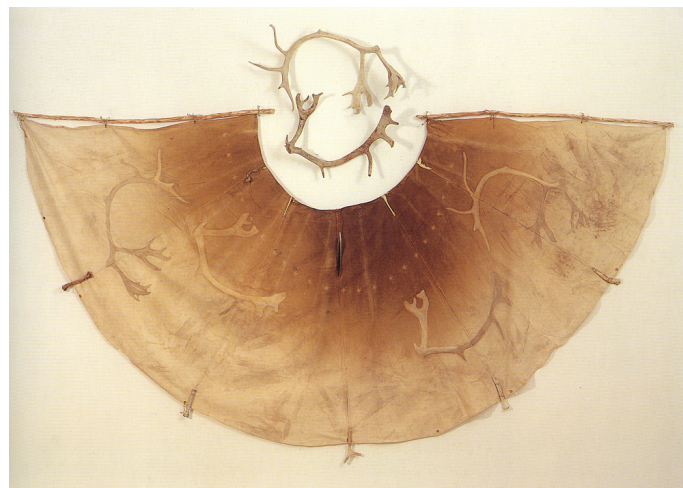
This energy not only references the efforts of these athletic men but also, when felt in conjunction with the artwork it acts as a conduit to their lives. This work however is more than just a record of machismo struggle. When the site and timeframe are taken into account the work quickly begins to allude to the gay community during the initial outbreak of aids. Amongst the hysteria surrounding the virus that was cruelly known colloquially as the gay plague venues such as the gymnasiums of Venice Beach, which catered primarily to a gay male clientele, lost not only business but also friends and companions. From this perspective the leather of the incline bench



documents the physical exertion and the struggle of a population while also alluding to AIDS and HIV.

Since then I have also considered the possibility of documentation as something that emerges directly from the interaction rather than through a secondary mediated image making process. While other artists who have created Ephemeral Environmental Art do not discuss any lasting remnants on onsite works in these terms, both Andy Goldsworthy and Chris Drury have pieces that could be considered in this light.

Chris Drury's *Canvas Lavo* and Andy Goldsworthy's *Snow Drawings*³ are both pieces that remain as direct residual traces created by changes during the process of interaction. The directness with which the visual remnants come into creation, alleviates the concern of authenticity that is incumbent in the use of secondary imaging processes for documentation. In contrast to the present use of photography, this form of documentation produces considerably more abstracted results.



previous page **Figure 59. Daniel Goldstein**

Icarian II / Incline, 1993.¹

Leather, sweat, wood, copper, felt, plexiglass

right top **Figure 60. Chris Drury**

Canvas Lavo, 1988.²

Canvas, antlers, feathers, bones, soot, sticks

right bottom **Figure 61. Andy Goldsworthy**

Snowball Drawing – Lowther Peak, 1991.³

As documentation, these abstracted records are suggestive of process, rather than being literal visual indicators of form. Therefore it could be argued that these evocative records challenge the accepted position of visual literacy within documentation.

Of the five documentary categories examined this one is by far the most unpredictable and fraught with conceptual concern. As the occurrence of this form of documentary record often appears of their own accord, this unpredictability presents a dilemma in terms of the artist's intention. While the intent with Ephemeral Environmental Art is to interact with a specific site and create an ephemeral form that is then documented, it would be possible to contrive an interaction for the purpose of producing a remnant outcome as a form of documentation. This contrivance, however, raises questions regarding objective and execution. A process developed with the intention of producing a remnant outcome, appears to diminish the significance of the interaction and the artist's connection to the site that produces the ephemeral form. Having the intended documentary outcome as the primary goal, re-weights the greater process back towards an object-oriented intention. Indeed, it could be argued that this perspective relegates the process of interaction to merely an elaborate creative technique.

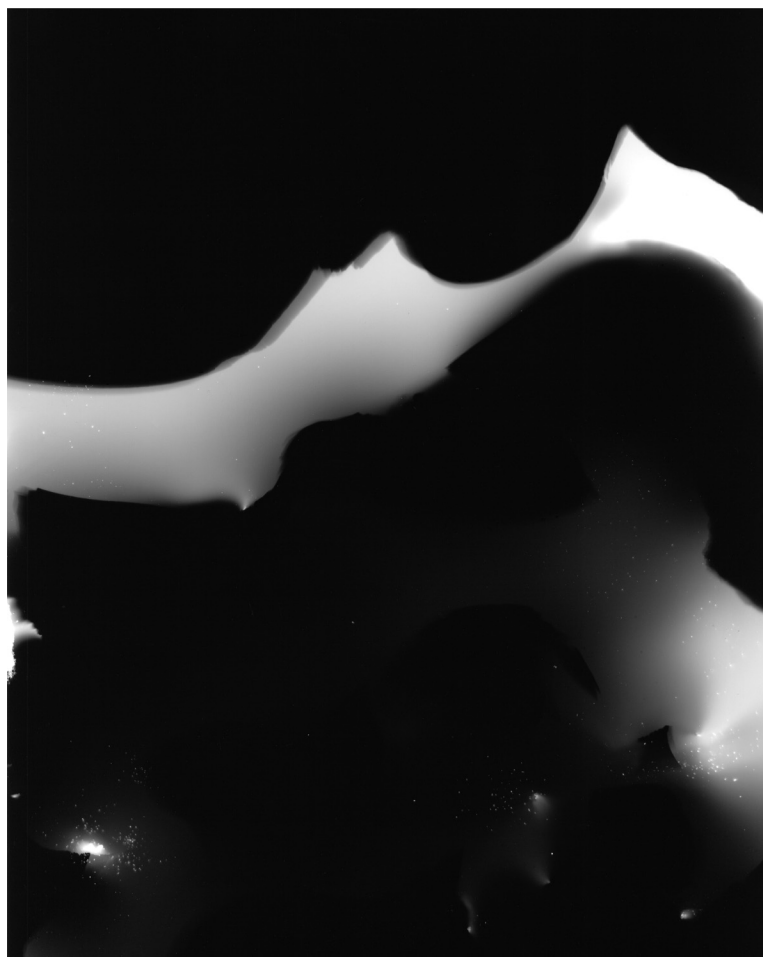
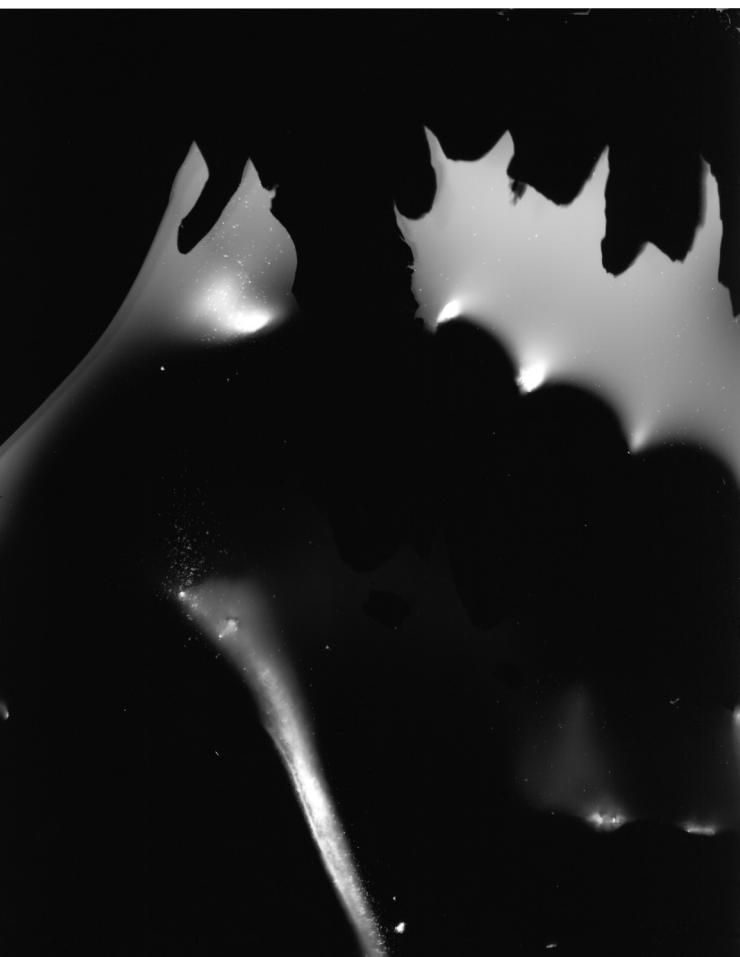
So as not to diminish the significance of the interaction, documentation and specifically the possibility of self-documentation is considered once the interaction has begun to take shape. In this way, the documentary concern does not impact prematurely on the process of

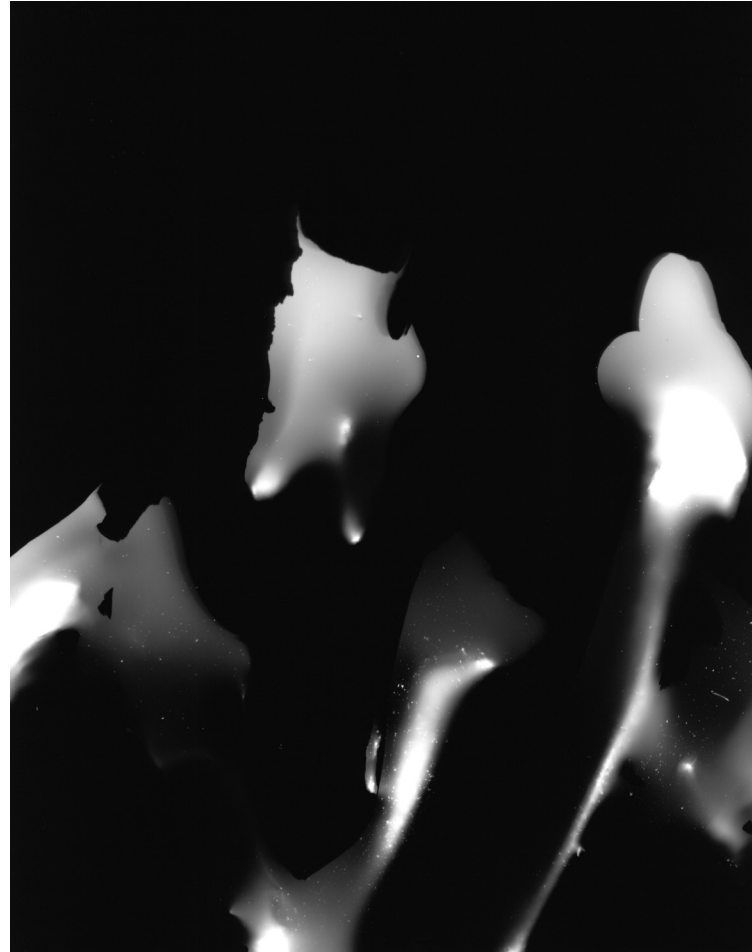
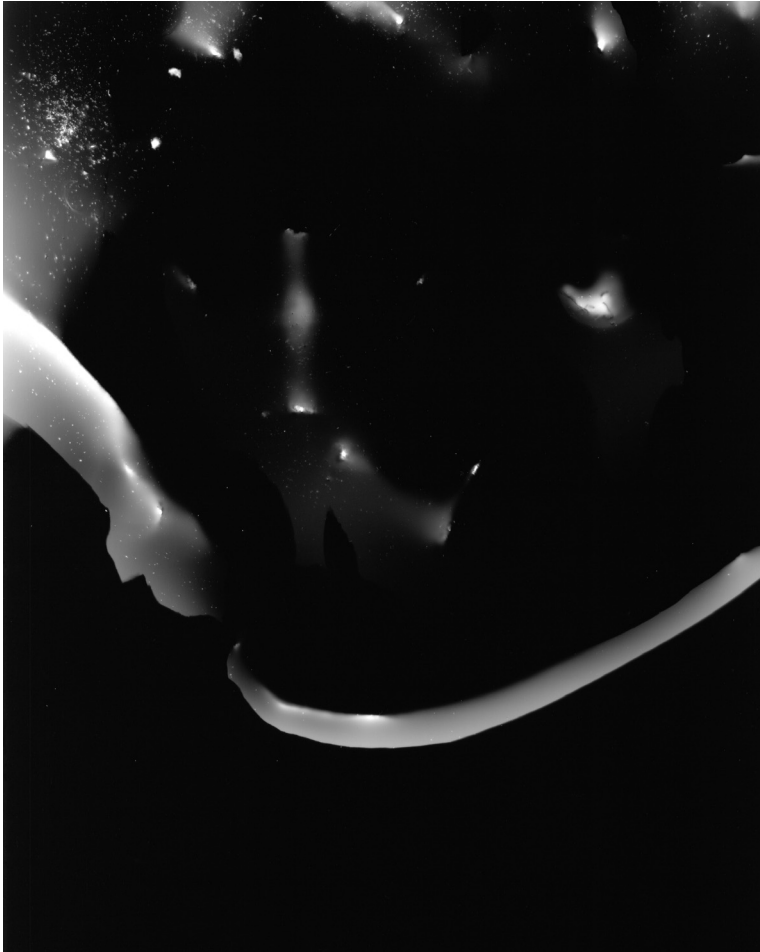
environmental interaction. While this restriction maintains the process-basis of the interaction, it also maintains the relative unpredictability of this form of documentation occurring. With these concerns in mind self-documenting has been very specifically applied in this research.

Onsite works which incorporate fire as part of the process of interaction have been considered as particularly applicable to this type of documentation. Fire is a significant aspect of these interactions and has not been introduced for the purpose of creating a remnant record. The light that is produced during the interaction also provides the source material to create the documentary photograms.

Bone Stump Fire

Bone Stump Fire (overleaf) provides an example of one of these outcomes. The onsite work that produced this photogram was an interaction in the arid zone of western New South Wales. At the time of the interaction this landscape had been ravaged by the natural phenomenon of drought and the man-made process of chaining. In response to these phenomena, animal bones were collected from within a small radius of the site. This material was then arranged in a circle around the stump of a tree that had been torn down during the chaining of the land. At night a fire was lit within the tree stump thereby illuminating the surrounding bones. Prior to the lighting of the fire, unexposed photographic paper was placed under the bones at the





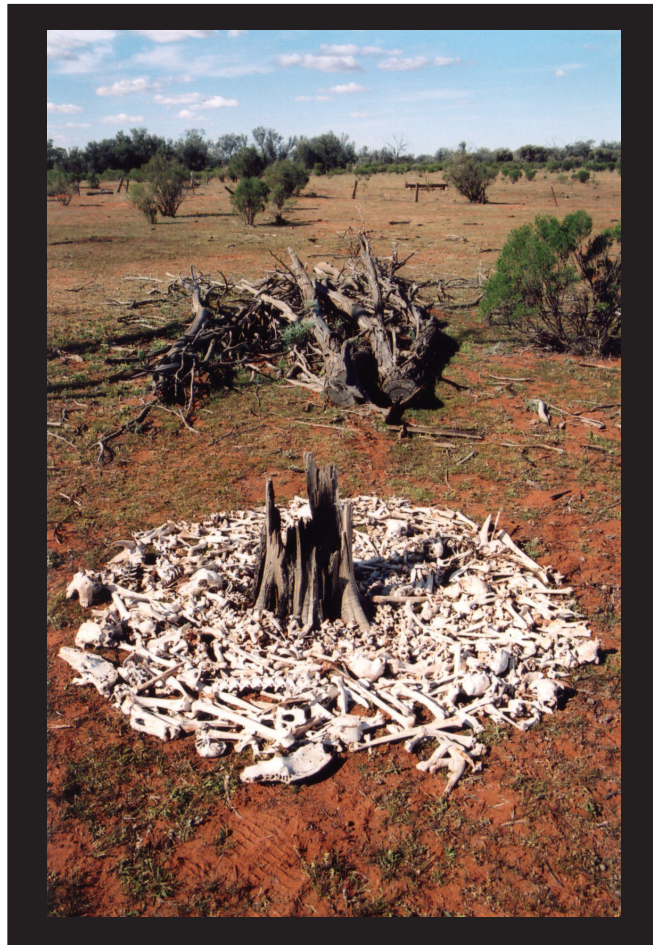
previous page **Figure 62.** Bone Stump Fire, 2004.

Photogram

below and right **Figure 63 - 65.** Bone Stump Fire, 2004 - 2009.

Stump, bone, fire at Nanya - New South Wales.

four cardinal points of the circle. Once lit, the fire then directly exposed these bones onto the emulsion of the paper.



The resulting document is a hauntingly beautiful photogram that shows the bone material as a ghostly presence. In some sections of the document, the flickering nature of the light source can be perceived by the doubling of exposure at the bone edges. The irregularity of the bones is also evident both through their ghostly shapes, and the brighter points at which they contacted the paper.

The strength of this process is the degree of connection between the form of the onsite interaction and the record; it is extremely direct and the intervention of the documentarian considerably reduced.





FINAL COMMENTS

Overall, I have found that alternative forms of documentation for the recording of Ephemeral Environmental Artwork can address the issues integral to the work in a better, more sensitive manner than photography alone. The success has extended well beyond solely creating realistic depictions of the form of the interaction at a specific moment in time. This enhancement has included stronger references to site, time and the retrogression of the form as an ongoing element of the interaction. Additionally, the alternative approaches have allowed the artist documentarian to maintain an improved sense of connection to the site throughout the documentary process.

Much like the use of photography each of the alternative techniques explored had both positive and negative qualities regarding their use. Drawing allowed for an immediate and onsite response to the created form. The significance of touch in the process of image creation also ensured the relationship with the site was sustained. By varying the materials and approaches to drawing, stronger connection could also be maintained with the conceptual basis for the onsite work. The use of this technique is particularly suitable to onsite works that incorporate drawn processes within their means of interaction.

The three printmaking processes of drypoint, linocut and stencilling all provided valid alternative outcomes that could be read as forms of documentation. The aesthetic qualities of each of the techniques meant that in their varied application some results were stronger or more effective than others. The fine linear basis of drypoint appears particularly apposite for the austere or predominantly linear works. On the other hand the boldness of linocut and its strength of form made it better suited to works that incorporated strong contrasts. The scratching and cutting of the plates to create the image meant that these techniques could also be applied to onsite works where similar scratching and cutting processes are used. One limitation of drypoint and linocut is their method of printing. This concern could be overcome within the stencilling process.

Stencilling was found to be especially strong as an alternate documentary technique due to its associations with printed media and street art. The flexibility of the printing process meant that the ground on which the image was created could also be varied to form a connection to the site, thereby enriching the documentary outcome. The papercut mask itself was also found to be an interesting documentary outcome in that the role of the negative space

alluded to the ephemeral nature of the onsite work.

Within this investigation the use of painting was constrained by a series of guiding limitations. These limitations were intended to restrict the technique to a more immediate and readily knowable process. Due to these restrictions the resultant documents tended to be more abstracted. This measure of abstraction appears to create more intellectual space for the reading of allusion and reference beyond the literal.

The use of mixed-media and composite techniques in this investigation have allowed for the broadest range of references and allusions to be incorporated within a single record. The multiplicity of allusion has been provided through the breadth of processes and materials included in the single outcome. The strength of combining techniques is clearly demonstrated in the artist's books. The audience is required to be actively engaged in a way that is not required by the other media. This active engagement was varied to also imply a measure of viewer responsibility in the handling and ongoing use of the record, thereby alluding to the sense of environmental responsibility in the process of interacting onsite.

Of the range of techniques explored the concept of self-documented works appeared to show the most potential as documentation, but were also the most problematic in terms of the artist's intention. The documentary outcomes of this form were found to possess the strongest connection to the onsite works. As their production was directly linked to the

process of onsite interaction, documentation was not an afterthought, but rather an extension of the process. In relation to this, self-documenting works were considered to have a stronger correlation to the veracity of onsite occurrence than all the other techniques.

This research into the modes of documenting Ephemeral Environmental Artworks and testing their appropriateness and applicability has generally been both challenging and rewarding. No single technique can be proposed to supplant the use of photography. Rather, this investigation has identified that numerous techniques are possible for creating documentary records. The artist's selection of which technique is most appropriate for a given onsite work requires a mindful consideration of the salient conceptual concerns of each Ephemeral Environmental Artwork.

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ENDNOTES

Preface

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Foreword

1. Attunement, specifically ecological attunement is discussed by S. Gablik, *The Reenchantment of Art*, (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1998). Roger Deakin also refers to this form of environmental sensibility in his earlier article, however he does not apply this specific term. R. Deakin "Zen and the art of Andy Goldsworthy" *Modern Painters*, 10, 1 (1997), 50-54.

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2. R. Morgan, *Half-Truth: Performance and the Photograph, Action/Performance and the Photograph*, (California: Gardner Lithograph, 1993).

Painting

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Self - Documenting

1. Daniel Goldstein, *Icarian II / Incline*, 1993.
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3. Andy Goldsworthy, *Snowball Drawing – Lowther Peak*, 1991
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