

# Shelter and



# Survival

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## ABSTRACT

The disparities of life's experiences find meaning and expression through the inter-relatedness of art. Upon drawing on the range of experience prior to beginning art school, I can create vital works using non-art materials and techniques. In using these skills I have created large scale environmental and installation art works, that look towards shelters and cocoons for their source of inspiration.

Shelters and cocoons act as a metaphor for a place of relative warm and safety, where one can grow and be nourished. When viewed in this manner shelters are a haven for coping with survival pressures. The objective of the work was then to create site specific environmental art works that respond to these pressures. In addition to this I have also created smaller installation works that focus on the distinction of space as it applies to shelters, that being internal and external space.

Overall I have been very happy with my body of work this year. Although there are certain aspects that I would have liked a longer time period to explore more thoroughly. Due to the time restrictions placed on an honours year, however, this has not been possible.

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# Chapter 1

## RATIONALE

Of my work prior to this year, the ones which has felt the most vital are those which were aligned with who I am, how I have developed and with my passions and influences. Having a relatively diverse background prior to heading into art, I have had to battle with questions of who I am and how I could use the differing facets of my experience in a manner that would satisfy me. Long having suffered from bouts of depression, art has at times provided me with a cathartic release. On occasion it has also left me struggling amidst a spiralling torrent of emotion. I have learnt through experience that if I attempt to focus my attention too much in any one area then the other aspects of my personality become unbalanced. This instability quickly deteriorates into episodes of depression. I therefore needed to find a way of working that allowed me to feel that I was using all aspects of myself.

Working on environmental installations allows me a greater sense of completeness within myself. The sites chosen for these locations are relevant to me personally as each of them has held a connection for me during the past. The means by which I view a site is through the eyes of my life's past experiences. The way I interpret an environment therefore becomes a combination of the elements of my past, reading and reacting to those surrounds. The inspiration for the works that is drawn

from these surrounds cannot help but be influenced by my own background. In terms of the process of construction it allows for painstaking physical labour that harkens back to my memories of farm life and my interest in physical pursuits. Mathematical and basic engineering concerns in the construction phase bring my science-based background to the fore. The methods of construction have relied on other areas of interest, such as rock-climbing, camping and occasionally sewing. Therefore the life of the work, from concept to fruition, draws on the range of my interests, knowledge and experiences.

This type of '*fusion of disciplines*'<sup>1</sup> allows for works that are developed from a broader base of understanding. By drawing on the non-art aspects of my experience I can not only push a work further (while still maintaining some personal honesty), but this process also opens up the non-art related aspects of my life to be considered for their relationship to art. As my preoccupation with the final product has decreased, the process of production has grown in importance. The relationship that now exists between what I would have previously considered to be non-art related aspects of my life's experience and my recent work lies not only in the concepts, but more fundamentally in the processes of production.

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<sup>1</sup> Latham, John. "Statement" In Decadent, edited by Harding, D and Büchler, Glasgow: Foulis Press, 1997, p.21. The term 'fusion of disciplines' relates to the thinking in the late 1990's regarding the bringing together of fields of thought more commonly seen in isolation. By combining areas such as art and science we can seek new solutions, not only from a broader base of understanding but also produce work of potentially greater relevance to a wider section of the population.

## Chapter 2

### SIGNIFICANCE OF PLACE AND LANDSCAPE

I see a personal truth reflected when Lucy Lippard writes, “*I fall for (or into) places faster and less conditionally than I do for people*”.<sup>2</sup> Landscape has long been very significant to me, as more than a place to exist, but rather a place to belong. The combination of growing up on a farm and pursuing outdoor interests has seen a growth in my association and attachment towards the environment.

The sites that I have chosen to work in this year are significant for their sense of place. Place is more than just an area, it is “*a layered location replete with human histories and memories, place has width and depth*”.<sup>3</sup> Inherent in our reading of place is our connection to that place, be it real or imagined, hoped for or all ready lived. The destinations for my travels throughout this year were originally intended to be a revisiting of places of personal significance. Connections that have already been established with these locations allow for an honest and more rapid response to these environments. These connections have been formed through some understanding or experience, which then acts as a beginning point for the works.

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<sup>2</sup> Lippard, Lucy R. The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society. New York: The New Press, (1997). pg. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Lippard, Lucy R. op.cit., pg. 7.



Growing up with an interest in adventure sports has ensured that I have spent a great deal of time outdoors immersed in the countryside. My sense of aesthetic has grown out of, and in response to these environments that have been read from an adrenalised survival based perspective. These spaces “*can be life-negating in severity and yet inspiring – over poweringly beautiful or sublime*”<sup>4</sup>. Quite often the thrill of the activity can influence the reading of beauty in the environment. As our senses become heightened in response to the potentially life threatening activity this may then cause us to become more aware of our surrounds. In this manner the process of the activity is linked to the reading of the location.

In keeping with this experiential basis that underpins the works, I have partaken in other environmental artistic opportunities as they have developed throughout the year. Working within the confines of my honours year, while still making the most of these opportunities as they have arisen has brought me to new and unfamiliar sites. In undertaking projects in these sites I have been forced to reflect upon areas of which I have had no previous experience. Interestingly some of the works that I consider to be my strongest were done in an environment that I had no prior knowledge of.

By combining an artist’s residence in western New South Wales with my honours year I could travel to an environment that I had not previously seen. Although I expected this lack of prior experience to be a concern, I actually found greater freedom due to a lack of preconceived notions. The lack of first hand experience could be overcome in this case as I was given a lot of environmental scientific information during the residency. I think that it was the combination of a

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<sup>4</sup> Tuan, Yi-Fu. “Desert and Ice Ambivalent Aesthetics” In Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts,

lack of preconceived ideas and the fusion of science ideas with aesthetic concern that made these works so vital<sup>5</sup>.

If I wished to continue to use environments that I had no previous experience of, I could use randomly selected sites. This unpredictability in terms of site selection could allow for more spontaneous responses. In generating that degree of randomness I could either use a scientific model or look to another artist's method, such as that of Mark Boyle<sup>6</sup>.

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edited by Kemal, S and Gaskell, I, New York: Cambridge University Press (1993), p 140.

<sup>5</sup> Latham, John. loc.cit.

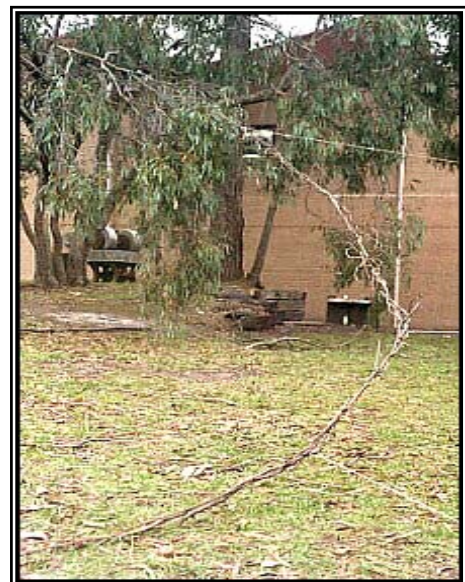
<sup>6</sup> Mark Boyle – who beginning in 1986 asked randomly selected people to help him create an artwork. Those who agreed were blindfolded in Boyle's studio and asked to throw a dart at a map of the world. In this manner Boyle collected 1,000 selected sites and has been traveling to them since, to create works.

## Chapter 3

### WHY CHOOSE THE FORM OF A LINE?

My land-based aesthetic sensitivity has grown out of my outdoor experiences. Primarily these experiences centered on adventure sports, such as bush-walking, rock-climbing and hang gliding. This experiential basis of my outdoor surrounds has led me to view the outdoors passionately and respectfully. The respect that I hold for these environments is not based solely out of aesthetic concern but also for the potentially savage forces that the natural elements possess. It is the respectful movement through an environment that is the basis for the idea of line, such as the walked line of a hiker as he seeks a place of refuge.

At the beginning I tended to see a line through an environment in terms of a passage of experience while passing through a site, as a walked line on a topographical map. This type of thinking has already shown its artistic merit through artists such as Richard Long<sup>7</sup>. Following



*Figure 1. Detail from 'Untitled'  
– University of Ballarat*

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<sup>7</sup> Richard Long – British Land Artist who uses the activity of walking as an integral element of art

this I sought naturally occurring lines to explore

and extend, such as in the work *'Untitled – University of Ballarat'*, as seen in figure 1. By working with a sympathetic use of line I respond to the pre-existing features of the site. Lines that are previously left their mark on a site prior to my arrival also influence my thinking, such as animal tracks, fence lines or the run of a watercourse.

As a line on a page can be considered as a succession of dots, so the line of a walk can be seen in terms of a succession of steps. One of the most common examples of this can be seen in most paddocks, as the livestock create walked lines as they pass through.



Figure 2. Sheep track lines

These types of lines are generally gentle as they meander around contours and weave their way to their destination. In contrast the lines within an environment most often associated with white habitation of Australia would be that of fences. The rigid linear demarcation of space most often associated with fence lines is indicative of an environmental interaction that does not respond to its site. Beyond the literal and physical manifestations of lines in an environment, I later became interested in the metaphoric qualities of what they suggested.

A line as it passes through an environment can act as a metaphor for travel, passage or movement along a continuum. Beyond just its physical manifestation the idea of a line as it relates to my work, can be seen to have ties with the passage of time over which an artwork exists and falls into decay and passes. As Andy Goldsworthy writes '*time and change are connected to place*'.<sup>8</sup> The linear passage of time at a given site therefore assists in binding the work further with its surrounds as the work changes with relation to the site and the passage of time.

As the idea of a line within my works has grown it still remains that the notion of the walked line is a vital part of the experiential process of the works. For both the viewer and the creator can only hope to understand both a work and a place when we experience '*the general kinaesthetic pleasures of moving in and through a space*'.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Goldsworthy, Andy. Time. London: Thames and Hudson, (2000). pg 7.

<sup>9</sup> Ross, Stephanie. "Gardens, Earthworks and Environmental Art" In Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts, edited by Kemal, S and Gaskell, I, New York: Cambridge University Press, (1993). Pg 159.

## Chapter 4

### WHY CHOOSE THE FORMS OF SHELTERS AND COCOON?

The motivation that began my working with environmental art was a moments inspiration in late 1998. Whilst away on a camping trip at Mt Arapilies I was taken by a most unexpected and stunningly beautiful site. I awoke one morning to find the mist had risen but had left droplets of dew amidst the grass. Intertwined between the blades were dew soaked cobwebs. The simplicity and fragility of these natural forms was the inspiration that initiated my working in environmental and installation art.

In giving consideration to shelters and cocoons as a motif for the environmental and installation works, I began by contemplating the physical process of construction. When looking at a cocoon or nest we behold an object that has required a physical, first hand effort in its production. We also find an openness towards material selection that is to a large extent determined by the site. Along with the concern for the construction or production process lays the indivisible link between the shelter and its site selection. Not only does the constructed shelter respond to its site, through both intention and materials but also through its choice of locale. Additionally when that shelter is viewed in relation to the passing of time we find it deteriorates to loose its functionality. Eventually the environment that it was

constructed in response to, will reclaim it. The physical appearance of the shelter or cocoon is only the beginning point in terms of its consideration for a work.

While Chris Drury writes of the shelter as a '*universal, cultural landmark*'<sup>10</sup>, I am more interested in the metaphoric qualities of the shelter. Shelters and cocoons are spaces of relative warmth and safety in which animal life can grow and develop. I am not attempting to replicate the home spaces created by animals but rather use them as a loose contextual framework that is suggestive of warmth and growth within a potentially harsh environment. In addition to its qualities as a place of respite and relief, shelters are objects of distinct spaces. As Drury suggests, '*shelter has interior and exterior*'.<sup>11</sup> Most often this interior space is a protective response to the external environment. The survival pressures applied in that location often determine the manner in which these different spaces respond to their site.

Different environments possess varying features that would potentially threaten an organism's ability to survive. Works that respond to this ideal would therefore differ while still using the idea of shelter as a loose contextual framework. While some environments might dictate that a shelter provide warmth against the cold, others might change the prerogative to finding shade against the heat. Under this survival concern the fundamental aspect may change. For instance, '*fire and shelter and warmth and food*' are all '*of major importance*'<sup>12</sup>, yet in differing works any one may provide the impetus for creation.

If we look at the literal physical manifestation of a cocoon or shelter we find an interaction that is purposeful, functional and understands and responds to its

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<sup>10</sup> Drury, Chris. *Silent Spaces*. London: Thames and Hudson, (1998). pg 20

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

specific site. It is a home space that allows for growth, safety and warmth through which is found development and nourishment. As a venue for survival it accounts for an environment's weather conditions, yet is delicate enough not to leave any lasting scars within that environment. In viewing a shelter in this manner it seems like an environmental ready-made, a naturally occurring piece that references Marcel Duchamp's '*Fountain*'.<sup>13</sup>



Figure 3. 'Fountain' – Marcel Duchamp<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> 'Fountain' by Marcel Duchamp (1917) was the first ready-made piece to be put forward as art.

<sup>14</sup> Francesco Morante. '*Fontana*'.



## Chapter 5

### RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LINE AND SHELTER

The environmental artworks that I have done prior to this year dealt with the idea of fragility in nature as seen through a web like structure. This then led to the basis of looking at shelters and cocoons. In doing research on other people working in environmental art I have come across the work of Richard Long. His comments regarding concepts such as '*a journey is a meandering line*'<sup>15</sup> and '*a walk is a line of footsteps*'<sup>16</sup>, allowed me to draw connections between the shelters and my own experiences of hiking.

If a bushwalker were hiking for more than one day then it is most likely that he would seek shelter for the night. Physical exertion and recovery are intrinsically linked, for without recovery continued physical exertion is not possible. Therefore there is an inherent relationship between '*shelter as a basic human need*'<sup>17</sup> and physical activity, in this case walking. Indeed, if a walk is the linear movement through a space, then shelter '*is a dwelling place within the movement of a walk*'.<sup>18</sup> By viewing them in this manner they appear to be complimentary. Although Richard

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<sup>15</sup> '*Stones and Flies: Richard Long in the Desert*'. [video cassette]

A Methodact Ltd Production, Arts Council of Great Britain in association with Channel 4, HPS Films Berlin and Centre Pompidou, 1988.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Drury, C. *loc.cit.*

<sup>18</sup> Drury, C. *loc.cit.*

Long's work does not deal with the concepts of shelters or cocoons there are some similarities in the thinking. In the video titled '*Stones and Flies: Richard Long in the Desert*' he discusses his works as sculptures that operate '*as stopping places along a journey*'.<sup>19</sup> I also give consideration to the places of rest along a walk, however I view them from the perspective of survival and recovery, and therefore places of shelter.

The process of production also holds secondary ties between shelter and the line of a walk as the '*creation of the shelter through painstaking, mindnumbing labour allows for periods of introspection – looking inward, as does the activity of walking*'.<sup>20</sup> These walked moments are vital to the production of a work as they allow for a familiarisation process with the site. This time can then bring insight and inspiration from the environment for the works. Similarly during the process of production, the mindset that is established through this form of labour can allow for insights which can then be incorporated into the works.

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<sup>19</sup> '*Stones and Flies: Richard Long in the desert*'. loc.cit.

<sup>20</sup> Drury, C. op.cit., p 21.

## Chapter 6

### IN PASSING

Although land and environmental art saw its beginnings in the 1960's with artist's such as Michael Heizer, Robert Smithson and Walter De Maria, I have found later artists to be of greater influence. Artists such as Richard Long, Chris Drury, Andy Goldsworthy and Nils-Udo whose works are intended to be '*gestures that acquiesce in and compliment the landscape*'<sup>21</sup> have more truth to me. Beyond just the artistic influence, I have found the philosophies that drive Andy Goldsworthy's life as well as his art to be complimentary to a lot of my own thinking. Andy Goldsworthy's philosophies show the inter-relatedness between the process of art creation, ephemeral environmental work, and the alignment of one's life within an environment.

The method behind my works is driven more by a concern for process than solely product. As the works draw on the process of nature for their inspiration, so the process of the works becomes important in the presentation. This process begins with the choice of site, through the selection and collection of materials, the construction of the work, the documentation of the product and ultimately the decay of the product as it is overcome by natural elements. Similarly to the work of Nils-Udo, in my work

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<sup>21</sup> Ross, Stephanie. "Gardens, Earthworks and Environmental Art" In Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts, edited by Kemal, S and Gaskell, I, 171, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

*'Nature becomes a platform on which the artist layers a discourse of human intervention in relation to the scale and dimensionality of landscape as well as the life forms therein'.<sup>22</sup>*

For the collection of materials I would generally use a loose demarcation of space around the site. This is done through a visual process rather than using a hard edged measured approach. I then collect the materials for the work within this space, similar to the collection of firewood by a camper. By working in this manner I find that *'material and site are inseparable'*.<sup>23</sup> Although I collect and utilise natural materials in the work this is not because of any strong aversion to man made materials. Additionally I find that the natural materials are more appropriate for the intention of the works. When using the materials I try to be sensitive to the properties of them, such as their texture, density, lustre and flexibility. In this respect I enjoy the works of David Nash<sup>24</sup> and Michele Oka Doner<sup>25</sup>.

Beyond just the physical manifestations of a site there are other concerns that require consideration. Working within the confines of a place means that you are also working within its context. Many factors contribute to the context of a site, such as history, land usage, cultural, religious or sporting significance. An area may also serve a range of different purposes for different publics it may therefore span a range of contexts. A work can then be either a singular or multi-dimensional response to context. Context is inherently linked with a work's site specificity.

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<sup>22</sup> Grande, John K. "Nils-Udo: Nature Works." *Sculpture* v.18 no.7 (September 1999): 19.

<sup>23</sup> *SILENT SPACES* – Chris Drury, Thames and Hudson, London (1998): 20.

<sup>24</sup> Sometimes called the platonic lumberjack of his generation, David Nash uses trees as a material for his works. Of interest is the very sympathetic manner in which he deals with his materials.

<sup>25</sup> Michele Oka Doner is an artist who used the natural process of accretion to create an artwork. By using this process of drawing calcium out of sea water she could create large sculptural works.

The degree to which a work is specific to its site can be seen as a point on a continuum. ‘*Work’s can be (1) site dominant, (2) site adjusted, (3) site specific, or (4) site conditioned and determined*’, with ‘*each more context-bound than the one preceding*’.<sup>26</sup> Using this form of categorisation as suggested by Stephanie Ross, my works waver between site specific and site conditioned and determined. As my works are bound to the site by inspiration, context, and the ‘*elements in a site – the colours, shapes, weight, luminescence, and durability of nature’s diverse elements, even the broader geological strata or lay of the land*’<sup>27</sup> all of which are integral to the completed work. In this way they are not only specific to the location as the intention of the work explores an element of that site, but they also give consideration to the physical properties found there.

The ephemeral quality of the on-site works is imperative as the inspiration for these works has developed out of concern for the dynamic and fleeting character of nature. These works enjoy a complete life within their relatively brief existence. Passing from a period of intellectual gestation through creation to establish a physical presence or life. As life is dynamic and therefore changes and passes so do the lives of these works. After which their being is only retained in our memories or through mementos and keepsakes of their existence. Since part of this process is to allow for the object to be ‘*erased by atmospheric conditions and time*’<sup>28</sup>, it can be difficult to define the boundaries within which the artwork exists. These works, however, are not intended to be viewed as a product or object that has definable bounds, but rather as a

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<sup>26</sup> Ross, Stephanie. “Gardens, Earthworks and Environmental Art” In Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts, edited by Kemal, S and Gaskell, I, 175, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

<sup>27</sup> Grande, John K. “Nils-Udo: Nature Works.” Sculpture v.18 no.7 (September 1999): 22.

<sup>28</sup> Chattopadhyay, C. “Andy Goldsworthy: Getty Research Institute.” Sculpture v.17 no. 10(December 1998): 54 – 55.

process, a sympathetic interaction with a site, which in return is then acted on by the site.

In having the work outdoors in the public view it is generally '*accessible to anyone who might chance upon it*'.<sup>29</sup> Working within a specific site can however mean that you are also working to a distinct audience. It then becomes possible to create an intimate site specific work for a relatively small audience. I am therefore, seeking out places that are not only significant to me personally but also moderately remote. Areas such as national parks and snow fields, that are generally used by people who travel there specifically for the environment are of great interest. It is not my intention to attract new audiences to an area, as the work is only short lived, but rather to create works for the people that are already there.

At a secondary level I have done some installation works this year as can be seen in figure 4. Although these works draw on the same inspiration as the on-site environmental work, that of shelter and

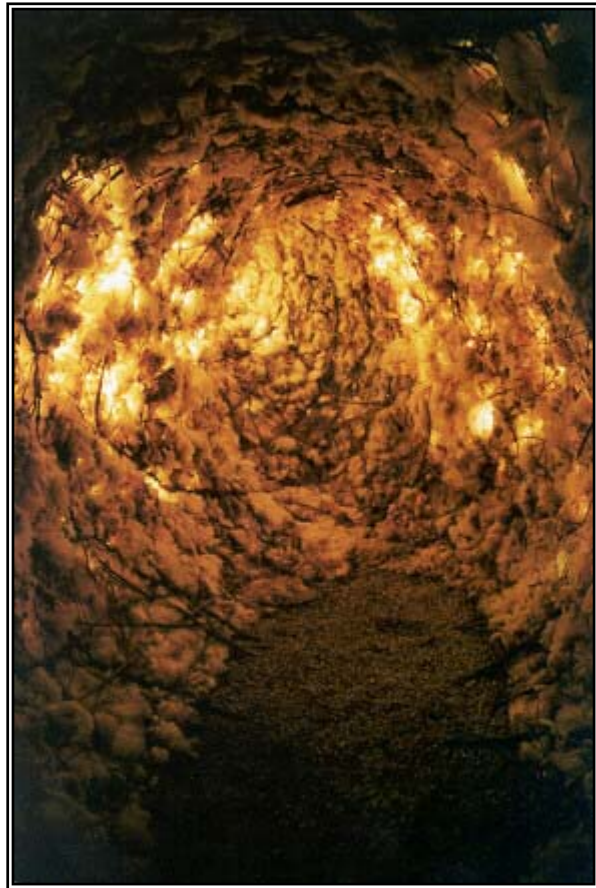


Figure 4. 'Wool Cocoon' Installation

survival, they differ in terms of their outcome as they are more of an exploration of internal space.

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<sup>29</sup> Chattopadhyay, C. "Andy Goldsworthy: Getty Research Institute." Sculpture v.17 no.10

As with other artists who work on-site it allows the audience to experience more of the work, '*instead of seeing a **fait accompli**, or a moment, we experience a process*'.<sup>30</sup> By allowing the process to be viewed by the audience it has the potential to demystify art and can more importantly allow the work to be read as a interaction with nature. The interaction itself, although potentially massive will in time break down and return to nature.

It is therefore imperative that the work be viewed within its intended context for the audiences reading and understanding of it. I agree with Chris Crickmay when he writes '*it can make a lot of sense to see an artwork in the circumstances that gave rise to it*'.<sup>31</sup> For example, the work '*Beckworth*' as seen in figure 5, would read completely differently if it was removed from this site and placed out of context in a gallery space. This concern is echoed by the Artists Placement Group when they formulated their maxim '*the context is half the work*'.<sup>32</sup> It would not be enough for the installation work to be a movement of the environmental work to another setting. So although the two may be complimentary in form and function, they remain distinct.



*Figure 5. Detail from the work 'Beckworth'*

The common thread of intention that under-pinned both the on-site and installation works was to '*make works which reinterpret and broaden attitudes at the*

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(December 1998): 54 – 55.

<sup>30</sup> Deakin, R. "Zen and the Art of Andy Goldsworthy." *Modern Painters* v.10 (Spring 1997): 50-53.

<sup>31</sup> Crickmay, Chris. "The Ordinary and the Special: Four Student's Works" In *Decadent*, edited by Harding, D and Büchler, P, 72 – 83. Glasgow: Foulis Press, 1997.

<sup>32</sup> As cited by Harding, David. "Public Art: Contentious Term and Contended Practice" In *Decadent*, edited by Harding, D and Büchler, P, 9 – 19. Glasgow: Foulis Press, 1997.

*same time as it remains sensitive to the wishes and values of those who use the sites*<sup>33</sup>. While the work itself was a response to an environment, through the concept of shelter, part of the intended outcome was that it may speak to the audience in terms of the function of a place. Similarly Mags Harries says '*she thinks about perceptual changes that broaden the meaning and the function of the place*'<sup>34</sup>.

The continued existence of the work in the form of documentation then has the potential to act as a memory trigger for any perceptual changes. Ideally the form of the documentation would take its cue from the original source of inspiration. If it was possible to maintain this inter-relatedness of the documentation to the inspiration, it would then act as a more effective memory trigger.

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<sup>33</sup> Ainsle, Sam. "The Building as half the work" In *Decadent*, edited by Harding, D and Büchler, P, 60 – 71. Glasgow: Foulis Press, 1997.

<sup>34</sup> Carlock, M. "Hands on Awareness: Mags Harries." *Sculpture* v.19 no.8 (October 2000): 6 – 7.



## Chapter 7

### REVIEW OF SELECTED WORKS



*Figure 6.* 'Bone Shelter', Nanya – New South Wales

#### Bone Shelter

I participated in a residency opportunity that was run in conjunction with the University of Ballarat - School of Science to Nanya in western New South Wales. Although I had no previous experience of this site, there was quite a lot of scientific knowledge to help augment my understanding of this place. Beyond the historical perspective of the area since white settlement, I also learnt about relevant environmental and ecological issues.

This area had not received decent rainfall in approximately four years. The lack of precipitation coupled with the apparent effects of heat did appear to be the main survival pressures. These concerns then became a basis for the works.

Working with the idea of water in this environment, I selected my site. It was a shallow depression where ground water would have settled, had there been any. Following what has become almost a ritualised method I walked within a small area surrounding the site, (approximately 200 meters radius) and collected my materials.

The sun-bleached bones of animal skeletons seemed indicative of the harshness and aridity of this place. Using these materials I began to build a fragile column like structure that reached skyward. Beginning from the basic concept of the shelter I made the column hollow, which also meant that the work was more fragile and susceptible to environmental conditions. After a failure during the initial attempt, the column was completed, as can be seen in figure 7. The problem then was that the column seemed like a disparate element within the



*Figure 7.* 'Bone Shelter' in progress

space. Using the remaining bone material I encircled the base of the column to help ground it and tie it to the vast horizontalness of this environment.

The preferred viewing time for the work was during the night. As the moon was close to full during the residency, it was the light source that illuminated the work during the viewing. Under these conditions the sun-bleached surface of the work created an eerie glow that seemed to make the work resonate within the landscape.

Having created the works in a fragile, balanced manner ensured that the object of the work had a limited longevity. The natural effects of the environment did deconstruct the physical object of the work within three days of its creation. The deconstruction process was not gradual as the work toppled over until the form of the object was changed beyond recognition. As the works are intended as an interaction with nature this de-construction is as integral to the process and reading of the work as the object itself.

With each work I grow and develop. So although I was happy with this work as it stood I still had some concerns that I would attempt to rectify in later works. The main concern was regarding the materials. Although I felt the choice of bone was ideal for the site, I struggled to get past the persistent presence of death as it hung on these bones. This may not have been a problem, however, by basing the work around the concept of shelter I was seeking more of a quality of life affirmation.



Figure 8. 'Bone Circle', Nanya – New South Wales

### Bone Circle / Bone Fire

This work was created to further my understanding of Nanya and to address the concerns that I had identified from the previous work *'Bone Shelter'*. The challenge was to use bone material as the basis for the work, but to incorporate a further element suggestive of regeneration and life as it applied to this environment. As fire is vital to the regeneration and bio-diversity of plant species, which then support animal species in this area, I opted to include this as the additional element.

Using a similar method with a tighter demarcation of space I collected the materials for this work. I then swept the loose sand out of the depression, helping to illustrate the dryness of the environment, as the cracked clay was more evident (as seen in Figure 9).

I then arranged the bone material in a circular form within the depression. I worked

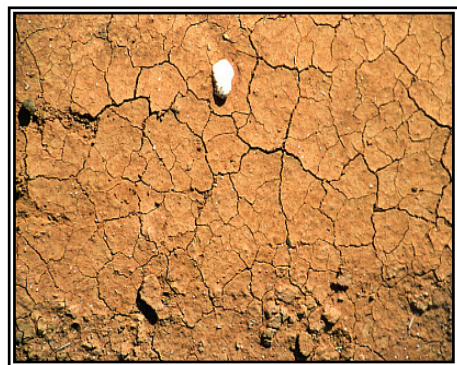


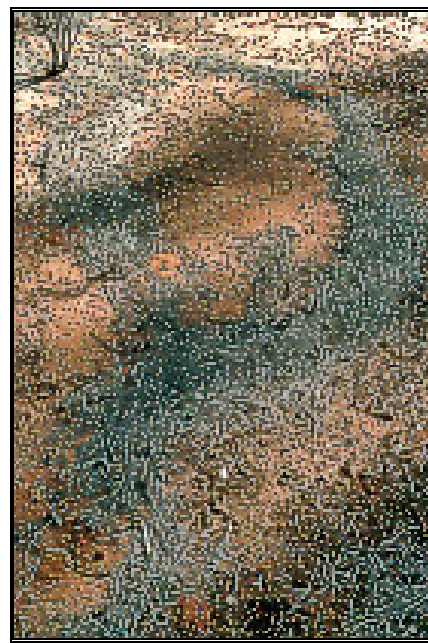
Figure 9. Cracked Earth from Nanya, New South Wales, 2001.



with this circular basis because of the manner that water moves materials as it flows. If water had been present then it would have brought leaf litter with it as it flowed into the depression. This material then sits at the edge of the water as it evaporates. Once the water is gone the materials are left in circles or lines depending on the nature of the flow. In effect this patterning operates like a tiny topographical map as the leaf litter settles at the edge of flows but doesn't reach higher than the water's edge. These types of natural lines can be seen in figure 10 and 11.



*Figure 10.* Patterns left after water evaporates off salt lake, Nanya – New South Wales, 2001.



*Figure 11.* Leaf litter patterns after water flow evaporates, Nanya – New South Wales, 2001.

The work was left in this form until nightfall when the element of fire was to be added.

At night the process of the work could enter its next phase. I then created a column in the center of the circle. This column was built over a fire that had been built but not lit. Once the column was complete it glowed under the moonlight. I then lit the fire, as can be seen below in figure 12. The fire added a further dimension, as it

flickered and burnt, the cast shadows danced around the ground, creating new energy and movement.



Figure 12. ‘Bone Fire’, Nanya – New South Wales

Eventually the warmth and light of the fire died, leaving only the structure. This structure was intact for the remainder of the residency.

## Chapter 8

### FURTHER AREAS OF STUDY

The practice of art is not about a search for definitive final resolutions, but rather, a journey of exploration. Contrary to this year's studies being a conclusion they are but a brief span of time along a practice's continuum. The potential for further growth in the understanding of ideas that underpin the work is paramount to a continued healthy practice. Due to the confined nature of the honours year it leaves room for further research that extends beyond the scope of the single year.

One such possibility for further exploration could be the consideration of the audiences' sensibilities. By combining site specificity with careful selection of the place in which to work, we are manipulating the size and composition of the audience. Through purposefully working to this small audience and not attempting to bring new people to the site, we may have the potential to work to this specific audiences' sensitivities. By working with these assumptions it may be possible to presume to predict what they may glean from a given work. If so we could then come part way to having the audience leave with a more uniform understanding of the work and the artist's intentions.

Another area of study regarding audience response to works that are exhibited in public space could be regarding the audiences' valuation of the site. In the publication *Decadent*, Malcolm Jamieson's temporary work, *'The Sacred*

*Molendinar'* is an example of a community, from a grim housing estate, drawing pride in their surrounds as a result of an artwork that added to their sense of belonging.<sup>35</sup> One role of public art within a community is that it can add to a community's culture and sense of self.<sup>36</sup> To further research this idea one could compare the difference in community response to a site between works that are intended as permanent works as opposed to temporary site works. In doing this, one could potentially research the "novelty value" of some on site works.

Another possible track down which to further this study could be to explore survival and environment from more of an inside perspective. Rather than merely giving consideration to basic survival needs in an environment as a basis for inspiration, one could thrust oneself into a position where these basic concerns become an issue of daily importance. This may bring the reflection of these needs into the work in a more honest and understood, (through personal experience), manner. So although these concerns are presently influencing the work, only some of the later works themselves are beginning to be created whilst in a survival mode. This raises other questions regarding artistic productivity whilst being primarily concerned with issues of survival.

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<sup>35</sup> Harding, D., '*Speaking at Ballarat Art Forum*'. *Public Art*, September, (1998).

<sup>36</sup> Harding, D., *Decadent*. Glasgow: Foulis Press, (1997).



## Chapter 9

### CONCLUSION

The concern for survival, and the form of shelter combine to create a basis of natural action and reaction. This basis allows for diverse site specific responses as the pressing survival concern changes from one location to the next.

Contrary to my initial belief the work has not benefited from a prior experience of the location. The works that I regard as the strongest have been done in an environment which was experientially unfamiliar, yet well supported by additional information. I have found that previous experience brings with it not only prior knowledge but also prior assumptions.

Within my work I have found that the sympathetic and sensitive approach to the inspiration has ensured an artwork that is complimentary and not divergent from its source. The link between the time-related process from which the inspiration was drawn, and the process driven nature of the work is of vital importance to the outcome. As nature is in a constant state of flux and change, therefore the work is also dynamic and evanescent.

Finally I have found great satisfaction as the preciousness of the product has diminished. For as that degree of importance moves away from the art object, the work becomes more a celebration of the process.

## APPENDICES



*Figure 13.* Detail of 'Untitled – University of Ballarat' in progress



*Figure 14.* Detail of 'Untitled – University of Ballarat'



*Figure 15.* Detail of 'Untitled – University of Ballarat'





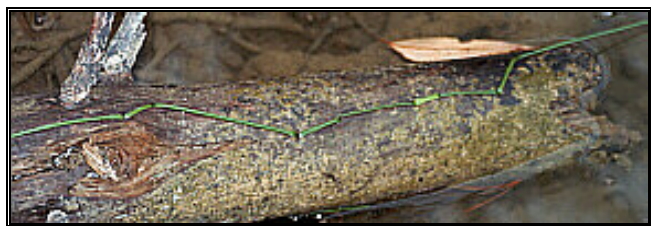
*Figure 16.* 'Leaf Lines'



*Figure 17.* 'Leaf Lines'



*Figure 18.* 'Line', Blue Waters



*Figure 19.* 'Line', Blue Waters



*Figure 20.* 'Ripple', Blue Waters



*Figure 21.* 'Ripple', Blue Waters

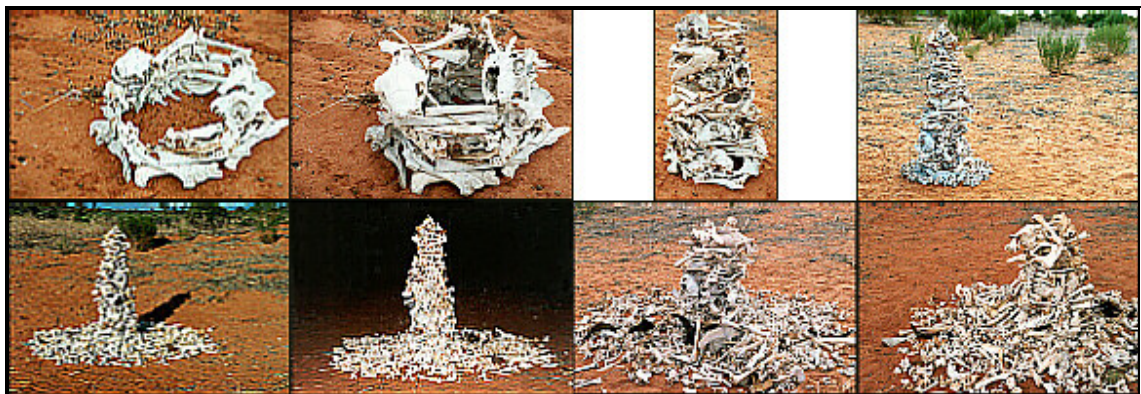




*Figure 22.* 'Ripple', Blue Waters



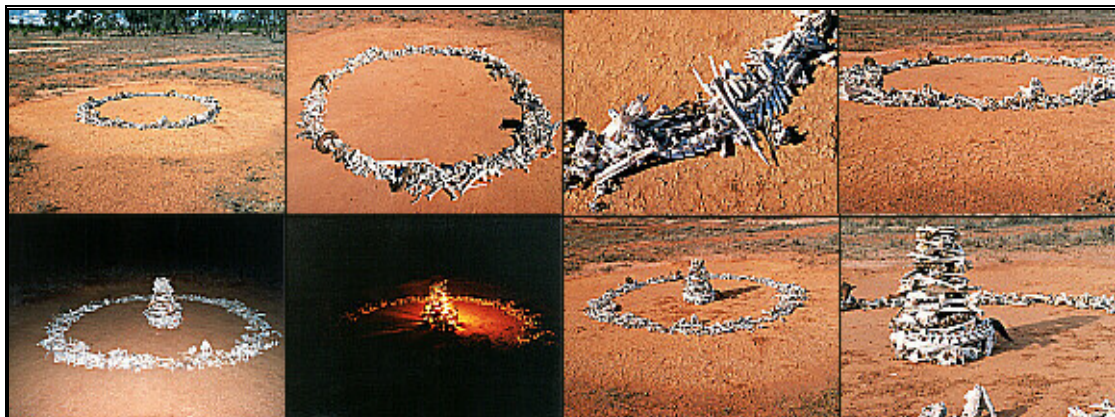
*Figure 23.* 'Bone Shelter'



*Figure 24.* The construction and de-construction of 'Bone Shelter'



*Figure 25.* 'Bone Fire'

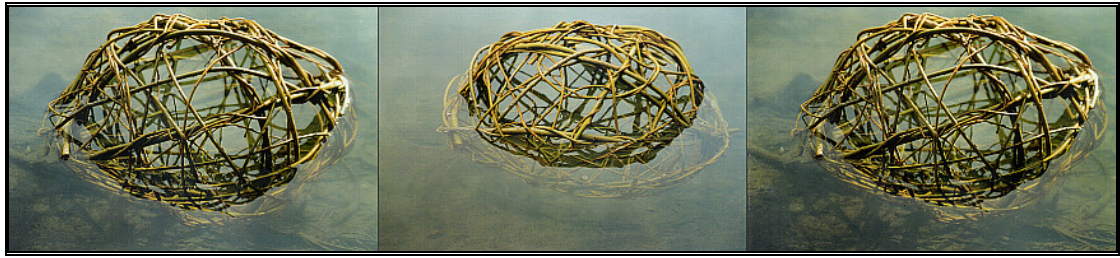


*Figure 26.* Production process behind 'Bone Circle / Bone Fire'



*Figure 27.* 'Stick Cairn', Nanya – New South Wales

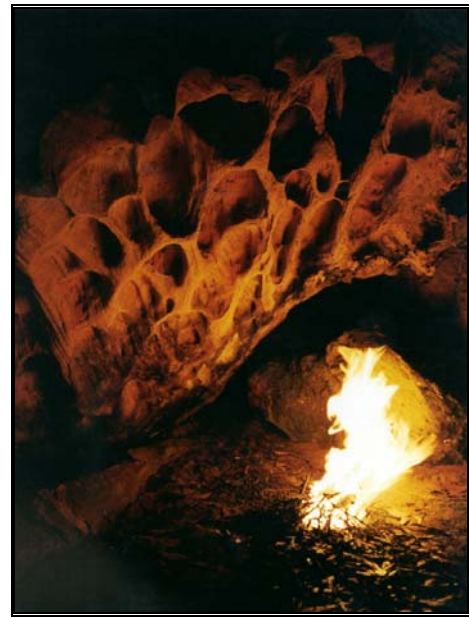




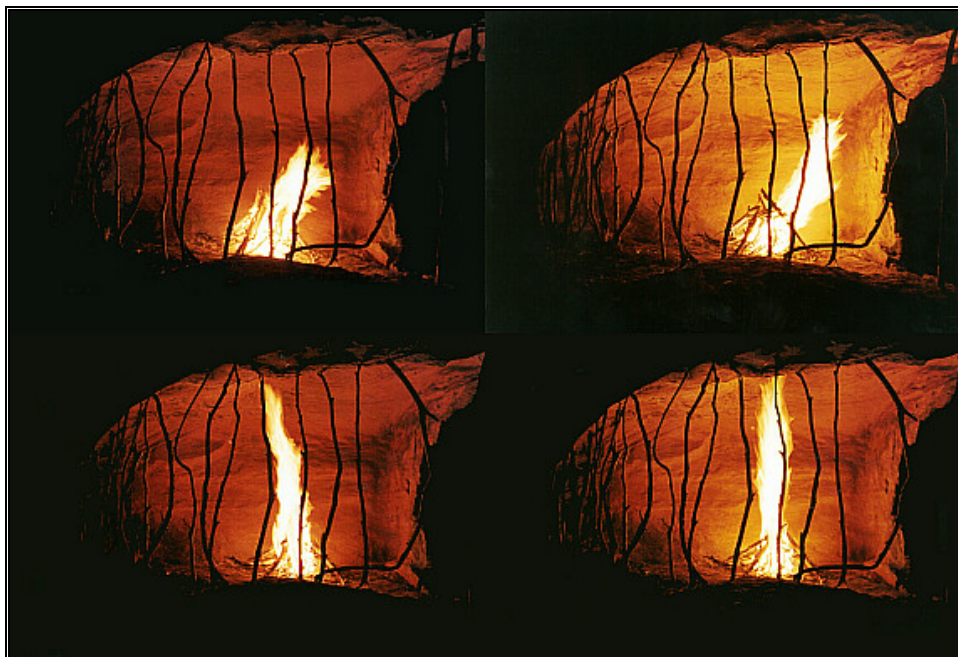
*Figure 28.* 'Water Ball', Blue Waters



*Figure 29.* 'Burnt Circle', Northern Grampians

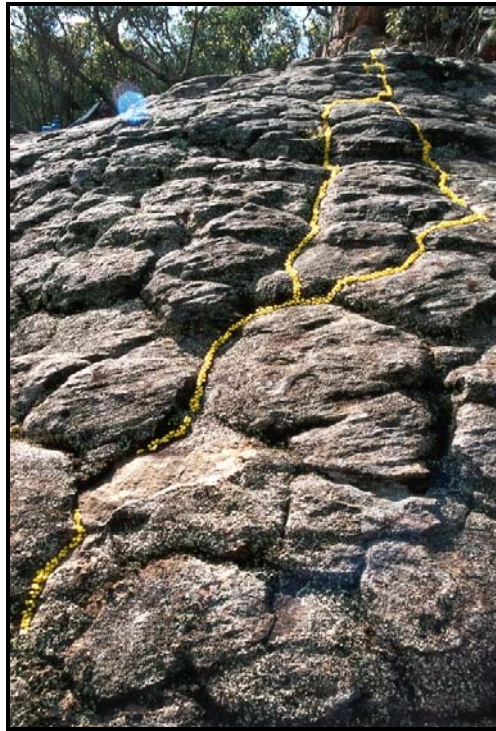


*Figure 30.* 'Cave Fire', Grampians

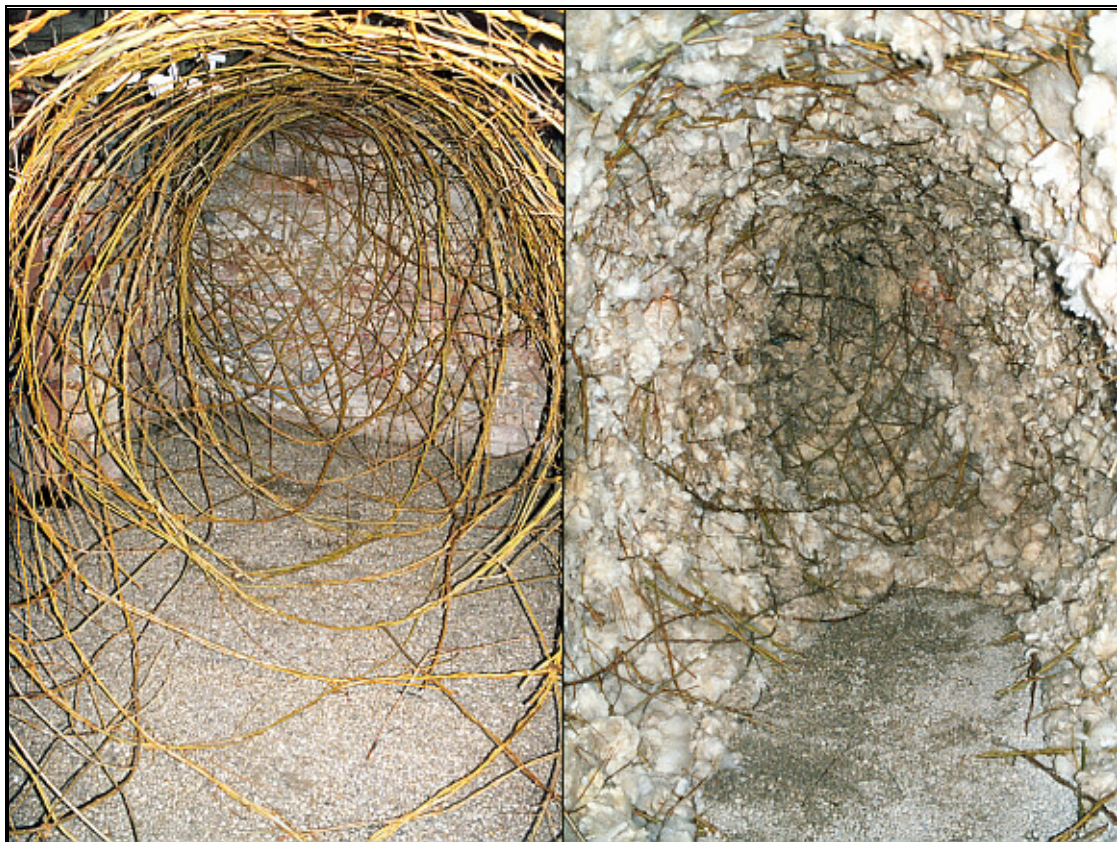


*Figure 31.* Images of 'Cave Fire', Northern Grampians





*Figure 32.* ‘Spring – Wattle’



*Figure 33.* Interior of ‘Wool Cocoon’ during construction



*Figure 34.* Light through wool fibres, during the dismantling of ‘Wool Cocoon’



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