Robyn Base

Carving

122.0 x 102.0 cm

Oil on linen

2008

EcoForum

An Exhibition of Visual Art

Environment Studio, School of Art
The Australian National University
in collaboration with
EcoForum Limited
PO Box 632, Willoughby
NSW 2068 Australia

27-29 February 2008

The Pavilion
Conrad Jupiters
Gold Coast • Qld
EcoForum
An Exhibition of Visual Art
Participants in EcoForum An Exhibition of Visual Art would like to acknowledge the support and generosity of the following:

- EcoForum Limited
- Victorian College of the Arts University of Melbourne
- The Sydney Harbour Federation Trust

In particular we wish to thank (in order of appearance): Paul Horlett, David Bates, Janenne Eaton, Gary Bagwell, Margaret Bates, Nick Hollo, Damen Vincent @ ANU printing.

The artwork presented in this exhibition was inspired by briefings in Melbourne and fieldwork on Cockatoo Island, Sydney Harbour, NSW, in October and December, 2007.

Catalogue Design: John Reid

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Acknowledgements

The Environment Studio, ANU School of Art, provides academic supervision and logistic assistance for sustained field research on environmental issues in conjunction with any of the School's Workshops:

- Painting • Textiles • Sculpture
- Gold/Silversmithing • Wood • Glass
- Printmedia and Drawing
- Photography • Ceramics • Art Theory

- Imagine your research proposal unfolding beyond the studio in locations that are inspirational for your topic
- Mix field work with studio development and critical appraisal by practicing artists back in the School's Workshops
- Access internationally renowned environmental experts in the University's own Institute for Environment
- Contribute as an exhibiting visual artist to national agencies that are helping communities to live sustainably

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The Environment Studio

Art for Earth's Sake

Contents
Paul Howlett raised the prospect of an art exhibition for the 2008 EcoForum Conference in 2006 to address issues associated with contaminated land, air and water. Based on procedures developed in the Field Studies* program at the Australian National University (ANU) School of Art, artists in both Canberra and Melbourne were to be briefed on the subject by experts in the amelioration of contaminated sites and informed by visits to such locations.

Concerted efforts by Paul to arrange access to contaminated sites in the vicinity of Melbourne were frustrated by understandable sensitivities about such places being brought under scrutiny by a group of artists of unknown persuasion - all be they from the Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne.

The contingent of artists from the ANU School of Art fared better by virtue of public access being available to Cockatoo Island, Sydney Harbour. The Island is an almost fully restored contaminated sight that was heavily impacted by Europeans from convict days to last century’s ship building frenzy.

Eventually, all artists were briefed in varying degrees of detail and most supplemented this with their own research. Not everyone had the benefit of field experience. As artwork was produced and the exhibition came together, two categories of work emerged. One was art that responded to generic notions of contaminated environments and the other was art that referenced Cockatoo Island as a restored contaminated place where heritage values had influenced the investment in the restoration effort.

The inclusion of the exhibition at the EcoForum Conference advances the proposition that visual artists have a role to play in community communication strategies associated with the amelioration of contaminated sites.

Contributing specifically to the Conference stream concerned with the perception of risk and communication, the artwork will stand as aesthetic statements intended to inform, provoke emotional responses and to express values.

For a community making decisions about an identified risk the question may arise, ‘Is it worth the risk?’ If such a question is to be rigorously pursued, artists could make a significant contribution in reaching an answer.

There is no doubt that the scientific method of inquiry excels at the generation of knowledge. But such knowledge should be integrated with subscribed values before policy decisions are taken. Although all creative art forms have something to offer in the realisation of value, the visual arts may be particularly useful.

Contributing with visual statements informed by the issue in question, and statements that are also aesthetic and contemplative, communities may be assisted in the process of subscribing value – in determining worth. The capacity of the creative arts to elucidate cultural values is one of its greatest social assets.

John Reid
is Co-ordinator of the Environment Studio and Convenor of Field Studies, School of Art, The Australian National University

* For an outline of the Field Studies program see:-
http://www.anu.edu.au/ITA/CSA/environ mentstudio/index.html For more detail see:-
I am operating on the premise that the physical world is a layer of illusion. Things are not what they seem to be. Therefore I respond to the world rather than attempt to render it literally. My images are fused with points of reality and my own imagination. I am playing with the elements of space, illusion of surface and actual surface.

In addition, there is a metaphorical aspect to my work. I use the meeting place of water and wood to stand for a state of mind between dreaming and wakefulness. It is a kind of dreaming with eyes wide open, as though you are asleep and suddenly open your eyes to find a dream-like view transposed or layered upon what we consider the real world. It can be a state of mind that is fertile for premonition or intuitive visions.

I am interested in distilling the landscape to essence of place and to translate metaphor and mood into my work.
This work is manufactured by ‘marbling’, an anachronistic and rather simple method of floating paint on a size, where it spreads unpredictability before being picked up by the paper laid on top.

In my case, little deliberation is gone into this process; the result is something that is expressionless – reminiscent of Warhol having his assistants urinate on the etching plates! Yet the result is nevertheless visually compelling. They are pretty. Some will add, ‘prettybad’ perhaps, and that is what I call this work!

However, I consider this practice suits the theme of spills – for the very nature of this work is a spill, albeit a rather striking one; it has all the chaotic characteristics and unforgiving nature of an oil spill from a tanker say. In this case it is merely a little bitumen that has created such a tremendous effect; a substance at once useful and dangerous.

The viewer may seek meaning in the labyrinthine pattern and a possible subject matter is prompted by the title – ‘The examination and interrogation of the first extraterrestrial discovered in area 51 (post spill)’. But is this title so ludicrous, or does it, like the unpredictable nature of the work itself, encapsulate all the horrors held by the public for the overwhelming effects of large chemical spills that might impact on the whole environment including the air they breathe, their food, their genetic makeup?! Unless checked by prompt and efficacious action by the sort of work undertaken at EcoForum, I hope...

Peter Daverington

The painting shows a landscape in fragmentation and breakdown. Overwhelmed by over production, nature is abstracted into an object and commodified by the globalized marketplace.

Peter Daverington Dissolved Landscape 2007
152.0 x 152.0 cm
Oil and acrylic on canvas

Bill Sampson

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Bill Sampson The Examination and Interrogation of the First Extraterrestrial Discovered in Area 51 (post spill) 2007
230.0 x 150.0 cm
Bitumen and nefarious oils on paper
Naomie Sunner's performative photographs depict the artist portraying various characters within the one image. Through the use of digital technologies, she creates scenes where her characters interact and play out various bizarre scenes. Her works explore themes of gender, sexuality, power plays, genetic technologies, and the larger impact of our consumer lifestyle upon our local ecologies.

(Don’t) let them eat Yellow Cake! is a series of three photographic images created as a humorous yet serious response to the Australian Federal Government’s plan to build nuclear power plants in Australia, as well as the idea that Australia, as a mass exporter of uranium, should become the global dumping ground for nuclear waste. Her self created team of eco-avengers (created from her body, her sewing machines, her camera and her computer), enact various scenes questioning the government's plans and attempting to engage viewers in debate through humour and play.

Naomie Sunner

Naomie Sunner

| EcoForum | Naomie Sunner | (Don’t) let them eat Yellow Cake! | 2007 | 66.7 x 100.0 cm | Lambda print |
Sue Kesteven

Old buildings modified over time contain traces of the past and the uses to which they were put.

My elemental buildings contain traces of previous glass projects, scribbles left on glass, and sketches from Cockatoo Island. They are viewed through a surface haze, since the past cannot be completely realised.

Stephanie Haygarth

I took this photographic study during a visit to Cockatoo Island, in Sydney Harbour. I saw this wall as a kind of palimpsest, a stratified record or archive of some of the many industrial activities that have taken place on the island from early in Australia’s white settlement. While this wall is a poignant historical document, its rich tonal and linear qualities also make it a subject for a beautiful composition in various visual media.
This work is painted with an observational severity, depicting a silence and solitude experienced not only within the landscape genre but also as a portrait, or still life. Icebergs are ephemeral beings. Constantly being re-sculpted by the elements and like all things of nature, they are in a permanent state of change. Ironically, this permanence results in their impermanence. Mirroring the human condition, their transience means that they are never the same from one day to the next. There is a strange visceral quality, like teeth and bones, or a fleshy ‘meatiness’. Rather than negating the ephemeral qualities of ice, this observation highlights the parallels between the transience of both ice and flesh. The Body too, is subject to change and time-based transformations. It’s hard to tell whether the shapes are hovering in the air or on the water. Imbued with a temporal sense of waiting and watching, the iceberg seems poised as though at any given moment, it will vanish from sight.

Robyn Base

Thaw’s Hammer
2007  485.0 x 300.0 cm  Oil in linen

Suzanne Poutu

Corrosion (Assemblage detail) 2008
112.0 x 105.0 cm  Oil, acrylic, wax, salt, alcohol

My work focuses on the visual effects of time and the breakdown of matter.
I experiment with computer music, computer graphics and animation. Most of my work involves computer programming. Starting with compilers and interpreters, I build the tools as I go along. Many of the works are specialised programs whose only function is to produce one artwork: the animation on the screen and sound through the speakers. The languages I currently use are: C, Perl and Tcl.

John Mills

Doug Spowart and Victoria Cooper are both working towards our PhD at James Cook University and were Visiting Artists in the Environment Studio in 2007.

Doug’s work is derived from a connection with the Australian landscape while Victoria is working in the microscopic landscape of water. This image is a collaborative work that forms part of a series of projections overlaying the landscape created from an Artist in Residence at Arthur Boyd’s Bundanon in 2007.

Both Cooper and Spowart found Porter and Boyd’s collaborative works an important influence in how they interpreted the issues confronting the contemporary Australian landscape.

Peter Porter
From the poem Dies Irae in the collaborative book with Arthur Boyd MARS

Now the life of every creature
Shall appear on God’s computer,
Terror shall be each one’s future

John Mills
Futurism. Working Images 2008
Digital files from computer animation

Doug Spowart
God’s Computer (Detail) 2007 91.7 x 123.6 cm x 2
Pigment lines on imagent paper
Tony Adams

A recent return plane trip from Melbourne to the Gold Coast cost me an extra $2.52 to offset my carbon emissions from the flights incurred. I happily paid this excise and I remember thinking just how cheap it was – What a bargain!!!

journal entry xmas 2007

The work for the EcoForum Conference is a new installation called - greenwashstand. It is a site-specific interactive work that continues to explore the artist’s interest in ideas surrounding the recent ‘green’ revolution.

Tony Adams

Greenhouse Effect 2005 50.0 x 30.0 x 50.0 cm
Found plastics, wood, rope

Judith Fuller

The digital images are a series based on a metaphorical idea of life cycles - in this case the creation of an abstract ink drawing on paper. The various stages of the development of the drawing have been photographed so as to document the drawing cycle as if it were a life cycle from birth through numerous organic changes to death or completion. The final product is the collection of images of the process of change and creation rather than the final drawing which is merely a product determined when the process is stopped by the artist. The art work depicts transformation and change especially with respect to the land and sea and depicts essential elements for life including air, light, water and earth.

Judith Fuller

Creation Series (Detail) 2007 21.0 x 29.0 cm x 20 Ink on paper

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The National Heritage Trust is a fine art work. It is a not-for-profit trust established to raise and distribute funds to artists to assist in the production of artwork inspired by places of heritage value.

The Trust is a contribution to the 2008 EcoForum Conference art exhibition. Its establishment is marked by the release of commemorative share certificates in a range of denominations. These fine art documents are exhibited, and available for purchase, in the Conference gallery space.

The photographic imagery on this inaugural denomination set is from Cockatoo Island, Sydney Harbour, NSW.

Healing damaged earth, covering wounds, bandage.

Marzena Wasikowska
Green Cross 2008
30.0 x 45.0 cm  Digital print
Primarily I am a modernist painter and as such I make work that is not just a social critique but must take the spectator forward. The art then is not just an historical representation but is also a dream of the future. As an artist I am not dissimilar to a scientist. The subject or object of the art is evaluated through a series of drawings and photographs and then placed into a space that will encourage the audience to contemplate a way forward and the art becomes the teacher of beauty and truth.  

Modernism has afforded society with the technology to improve, but history teaches society that best practice is an unknown. Tomorrow will always offer different solutions and art must work with science to discover a way to that future. The artist and scientist must lead the way. The art must take the audience on a journey of contemplation. The artist does not look for quiescence but observes and studies life to find the way forward.