COMMON GROUND

AN EXHIBITION OF VISUAL ART

FIELD STUDIES PROGRAM
ENVIRONMENT STUDIO, SCHOOL OF ART
THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
IN COLLABORATION WITH
THE MURRAY-DARLING BASIN COMMISSION

WEDNESDAY 13 - SUNDAY 17 OCTOBER 2004

CONADILLY STREET
AND
CIVIC THEATRE
GUNNEDAH NSW
Artists contributing to this exhibition and participants in Field Studies, Environment Studio, ANU School of Art, would like to acknowledge the support and generosity of the following organisations:

• Murray Darling Basin Commission
• Gunnedah Shire Council
• Red Chief Aboriginal Land Council
• Department Infrastructure Planning and Natural Resources
• Gunnedah Aero Club
• Gunnedah Creative Arts Gallery & Civic Cinema
• Two Rivers Festival
• ANU Photography / Printing

Artwork exhibited in Common Ground was inspired by field research conducted in Gunnedah and the Liverpool Plains during 14 to 20 April, and 30 June to 6 July, 2004. One artist worked in Gunnedah from 27 September to 2 October, 2004.

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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
• Photography and Drawing
• Photomedia • Ceramics • Art Theory

• Imagine your research proposal unfold- ing 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 environ- mental experts in the University’s own National Institute for Environment

• Contribute as an exhibiting visual artist to national agencies that are helping commu- nities move to a sustainable future

Information:

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Greg Hodge. Porthole (Detail) 2004 100.0x80.0 cm Oil on canvas
The Murray-Darling Basin is vital to all Australians. It means many things to many people and through its diverse landscapes invokes a variety of responses. These responses guide people in many ways; some to taking an active role in remediation, some to educate, others to share their experiences of life in the Basin.

The use of art to express a personal connection to a place has a long tradition. It is through the Field Studies Program coordinated by the Environment Studio, ANU School of Art, that artists are able to establish a connection with a location as a source of inspiration for making artwork. In this respect, the partnership of the Australian National University and the Murray-Darling Basin Commission is a demonstration of how two organisations can work together to encourage, create and communicate people’s responses to current issues within this great Australian icon.

This collection of work created for the Two Rivers Festival in Gunnedah is an excellent example of the use of the arts to visualise people’s passion and concern for our natural heritage and resources. I hope that Common Ground encourages more people to take a new look at the environment that sustains them.

John Reid
Coordinator, Environment Studio
ANU School of Art

Visual art informed by science, indigenous knowledge or local community wisdom and inspired by direct observation of the physical world can be powerful stuff. When applied in conservation strategies, aesthetic statements that stem from such research can help narrow the gap between knowing what to do and actually doing it. All 17 artists contributing to Common Ground are operating in that gap in various ways. This exhibition is dedicated to the people of Gunnedah and the Liverpool Plains.
Paula Sammut
Left  *Gunnedah Eucalyptus populnea* 2004
Right  *Gunnedah Eucalyptus* 2004

76.0x56.0 cm
Digital prints on rag paper

These botanical studies represent our past, present and future. The preciousness and fragility of the species portrayed vulnerable as well as to our interest. It is in our understanding and acknowledgment of environmental issues that the gift of responsibility reveals itself.

In Nature There Is Only Truth — The Choice Is Ours To Make.
The photograph of Bundok Creek is part of a larger series in the collection. I am photographing areas that have been classified by geomorphologists as being in ‘good’ condition. Geomorphologists are interested in the physical aspects of river systems as they change and evolve and in their specific characteristics. In a valley, Bundok Creek has been classified as a ‘lowland chain of ponds’, one of 49 different types of river systems. Lowland chains of ponds are characterized by their separated pools that are only connected by flow during rainfall events.
A G Stokes

Six Days in Gunnedah (Detail) 2004
80.0 x 120.0 cm
Mixed media on canvas

I am interested in the landscape, the effect on it of human habitation, and the different interpretations which result from a long or short acquaintance with a particular place.

The untitled work Six Days in Gunnedah reflects the impressions of a six-day visit, showing views of aspects of the Gunnedah district briefly glimpsed by the artist. The views are superimposed on horizontal bands which run across the panels to symbolise the physical structure and expanse of the country.
Bridget Nicholson

**Dependency** 2004
65.0x25.0x35.0 cm
Ceramic, steel

...Walls of silence,
quiet thinking,negating
forces seem to pull
Sculpture making an ac
by yourselves L apen
without sending off
.......told babbling pernanimy
Dan Scollay

Both - Philippe Altmann and Peter Beale 2004
Digital video still
Compositing by Richard Lambert

There is a history this country of colonial policing that production of imagery to suit the belated end and good therefore a degree of transformation engendered and various via policing and colonialist skinning. A foil to the labor forced and at the time dark-skinned, and the desire for a looser image to disguise the colonialist specter of indigenous people (male) the also malebly. The disfigured absence of indigenous bodies was recorded in these photographs. Mostly images were quite respectful by likely places. Edge borders, broadcasts and copies. Photographs, especially to have any kind of face. They were (shock) depicted with a silent voice, in a time when the culture was no longer be alive. I felt burdened by that in the production of this work. I sense the importance of a positive image of survival and indigenous people. Not to leave anything is, perhaps to deny the colonial project of existence. I hope the moving image creates a kind of living portrait of both subjects who are intertwined with the work, by their presence, and the shared focus of this story. Philippe's voice medieval and his open eye. Watching you the power of Peter's death taken you by surprise when you return to it and realize he has been watching you watch.
Nazanin Moradi

Dust from a Restless Soul 2004
90.0x75.0 cm
Gunnedah pigment and charcoal, ink on card

The dust of many crumbling cities
settles over us like a forgetful day,
but we are older than those cities
and always we have forgotten our
former states...
Matt Higgins  
*Cotton, Cattle Continent*  2004  
110.0x82.5 cm  1 of 2 prints  
Digital photographic print.

I love my Country, but hate  
to see it destroyed by short  
term gain.
Rosemary von Behrens  *Chainsaw marks on felled Red Gum #1*  2004
57.2x76.2 cm
Mixed media on paper

Each of our lifetimes, a minute compared to the vast sweep of geological time. How do we ensure that the beautiful patches of earth for which we are more collectible will still be flourishing for future generations, if not the creatures living on and from it?

A species will die if the food on which it feeds is reduced. The human, for example, feeding on the stabled, farmed, oxygen no longer being generated? Chainsaw's represent accelerated destruction of the landscape.
Gabrielle Heywood  
*Plains of Plenty* 2004  
20.020.0x4.0 cm x3  
Float glass, enamels, epoxy adhesive

The waterpoop Plains are among the most productive agricultural soils in Australia. In July, a season of change, the farm is very much like a river valley, its landscape mirroring long dry years. Whether blown around by wind or the sprawling, amorphous landscape, patterns of water, and patterns, areirkless, transformed and patterned, remnants of water marks, existing and patterns of water marks, remaining to be hurried by summer rains. Our lives are inextricably linked to the weather. Precipitation, in a warming world, changes rainfall and weather, more droughts without results, and subtle changes, we no longer hear the creaking, chains. Signs of change are here for us to see.
Jeanette Grunow

Left  **Touching the Tree**  2004
19.0x25.0 cm
Digital photographic print

Right  **Tree Trunks** (Detail of installation)  2004
Dimensions variable
Ceramic

"In touch with Country... My project is exploring Country in two ways: through the camera lens and through experiences. For me the photographs in the landscape and the trees become very important. The photographs can evoke the trees in the landscape. The trees and the human body have a lot in common for me - we touch the trees in Country - careful and with admiration. The images I made are also about the trees in Country and about the need for Country. You can touch them and you can be CM - but is that all they ask for - they want to be touched - and anyone you can allow them to touch you too in some way?"
Ximena N Briceno  

**Eucalypt Finger Rings** 2004

Various sizes  
Anodised aluminium. Silver

My inspiration for the eucalypt finger rings is the gum nuts that I was making in the gum trees in the city of Melbourne. Gum nuts are a source of food, shelter, and protection for wildlife. In this collection, the concept of the gum nut is explored through the use of anodised aluminium and silver. The rings are designed to be worn on the fingers, and they are inspired by the eucalyptus tree, which is a symbol of strength and resilience.

The trip to Australia was my first time in the country. While there, I spent a lot of time observing the natural environment. The gum nuts, in particular, impressed me. I was struck by their texture, color, and the way they are used in traditional Australian art. The gum nuts are a symbol of the resilience and adaptability of the Australian people. They are a source of food and shelter, and they are used in traditional Australian medicine.

The gum nuts also represent the idea of the eucalyptus tree, which is a symbol of strength and resilience. The rings are made from anodised aluminium and silver, and they are designed to be worn on the fingers. They are a symbol of the strength and resilience of the Australian people, and they are a reminder of the importance of conservation and sustainability.

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I have created this triptych in response to my time spent at the Churchill Downs track.
I have responded to the sense of nostalgia associated with being in the National Historic Landmark and reliving days spent at the track as years pass by.

I have also created an abstract piece titled 'Racing Against Time' as a reflection of my love for the horses and the track. A personal feeling of racing against time, what is in motion, the horses, and the background, and which way is it going?
Greetings from Burnead. Wonderful place!

Photographically, so far it's this way: still, flat, green, fine.

Lucile, Sue, and Eunice - a few more to go. Hope to make the outback stage with some time.

Wild flowers, bee keeping will be made a Saturday.

Best wishes,

[Signature]
Niclas Dietrich

9 Moments of Gunnedah 2004
Digital Video still

Video screening at Civic Theatre, Gunnedah Saturday 16 October 5.30 – 6.00 pm
John Reid

*Breeza Plain from Porcupine Ridge* 2004
90.0 x 110.0 cm
Digital print from 8 x 10 inch colour negative
Greg Hodge  
*Porthole* 2004  
100.0x80.0 cm  
Oil on canvas
A cumulous cloud lasts between 2 and 40 minutes.

Heraclitus (an ancient Greek philosopher) is reputed to have said that you cannot step in the same river twice.

Looking at images of water and clouds is not just a matter of looking at images of transience; these images also resonate deep inside us and speak of the ceaseless process of the nature of Being. We know we share the same destiny as water and clouds. Sometimes one can just sense a falling away.
The National Environment Bank will operate a Branch at the Common Ground Exhibition. NEB banknotes will be exchanged, dollar for dollar, for Australian currency. Funds raised from the sale of NEB Two Rivers Festival $10 commemorative notes will be donated to a local river conservation initiative.