tumut.
Acknowledgements

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Tumut: An Exhibition of Visual Art

The Tumut Field Study consisted of three 5-day field trips in March, April and May this year undertaken by artists from the School of Art, Australian National University, to the Tumut Shire and its communities in Tumut, Brungle, Adelong, Bredbo and along the Groobarragandra River valley.

The Field Study program provides academic and logistic assistance for artists at the School to seek inspiration for art making beyond the studio. The program has been offered continuously for more than a decade and has developed pedagogic features that distinguish it from other forms of field-based research common in tertiary art educational institutions.

Central to the ANU’s Field Study program is its emphasis on community engagement as an important part of the research process. Local scientists, indigenous leaders, shire officials, landholders, community activists and artists are invited in the initial phases of the program to consult with participating artists and to help them interpret what they see. The Tumut Field Study was no exception.

Artists from the School were briefed by and about the Tumut River; about changes in horticultural practice in an orchard; about wetland development in a developing wetland; about plantation management in a fire ravaged pine forest; about ecological challenges while traversing wild country; about the power of water, the power of community and the power of indigenous heritage. There were many other explorations that resulted from personal acquaintances between visiting artist and resident forged by a common passion. Many of the artists completed their overview of the Shire in an ultra-light aircraft pointing their cameras without rational concern into the abyss. They returned with smiles set on their faces by the wind.

Multiple field trips to the same research location allow for a developing interplay between the field experience and studio development. Although ideas are conceived and tried in the field much of the tangible production for the works in the Field Study exhibition was undertaken in the discipline-based Workshops at the School of Art with their expert staff.

The Tumut Field Study focused on environmental issues consistent with a series of programs that have been based in the Murray Darling Basin in partnership with the Murray-Darling Basin Commission since 2002. In 2007 this partnership was formalised by an Australian Research Council Linkage grant titled ‘Engaging Visions’. The research supported by the grant seeks to determine the best procedure for bringing visual artists and Basin catchment communities together to help communities manage their natural resources and to provide innovative creative opportunities for artists. From 2007 through to 2009, the Engaging Visions research team are evaluating Field Study artist engagement with Murray Darling Basin communities in four catchments. The Tumut Shire is one of these.

Three local artists, Sue McDonald, Janet French and Duncan Watt interacted creatively with the Field Study group and have kindly accepted an invitation to exhibit with us. Also, Sue McDonald’s TAFE art class has undertaken a project that also responds to environmental issues so as to present a companion exhibition. We are honoured, and delighted that both shows will run concurrently.

On behalf of all the Tumut Field Study artists, I would like to say ‘Thank You’ to the Tumut Shire community for the knowledge, hospitality, resources and time that you have generously shared with us. I hope you enjoy both exhibitions.

John Reid
Field Studies Convenor, ANU School of Art
28.7.2008

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http://www.engagingvisions.com.au

Tumut: An Exhibition of Visual Art
6 – 9 August, 2008
Ex-State Bank Building
106 Wynward Street
Tumut
Tumut Art Society Gallery
Five Ways
Tumut
‘Amateurs and professionals: music making in a country town in the 1860s.’

The Tumut district was in many ways typical of rural NSW in the mid-nineteenth century. Settled predominantly by British immigrants, the district had a number of keen amateur musicians, who at the earliest opportunity formed a Philharmonic Society. The repertoire they performed reflected contemporary British tastes in music: arrangements of folk songs and dances, compositions by British composers, and arrangements from the popular operas of the day. The discovery of gold in the area stimulated growth in the early 1860s, and brought also many visiting professionals to the local concert rooms.

Into this environment came a young professional musician from Germany. Hugo Alpen’s role in this community as conductor, composer and educator resembled in many ways that of an 18th century Kapellmeister. Music-making flourished in the district during Alpen’s years there, and events and circumstances, opinions and attitudes are documented in remarkable detail by the local press. This very detailed reportage of local events and characters—typical of the rural press, yet rarely found elsewhere—presents a rare opportunity for a glimpse into the place of music in 19th century Australian society.

Deborah Crisp, ANU School of Music

Adelong Mine
The musical work which I have composed for this field study comprises three continuous movements. The first draws from my perception of the first arrivals to Adelong, their spirit in new enterprise and the stillness of the temporal and metaphysical morning of the settlement. The first movement utilises a variant of a folk melody to express the cultural beginnings of the new settlement. This melody forms the basis of the composition.

The progressions of the second movement signifies shifting movement and change, this symbolises the settlement’s burgeoning use of the river to operate shifting machinery for mining purposes, and the turn-of-century shift to romantic chromaticism. The compartmentalisation of both the river’s flow mirrored in the use of shifting chromatics to navigate through compositions of the region and era in the time when the mine was in full swing.

The final section utilises a traditional four-part vocal style to reinterpret the same folk melody. This is the sunset of the piece, the settlement and conclusion. The refinement of tonal harmony is symbolised in this European style which I am using to encapsulate the final filtering process of the mine which extracts small amounts of precious gold from tonnes of rock. The river continues on majestically through rock pools and waterfalls, unaltered by this massive human construction that sits on her banks. The mine is built into the natural crevasses and contours of the river basin and seems to belong there somehow. It was built to last.

Ewan Foster, ANU School of Music
Judith Fuller

These works are a response to the natural environment in particular the water against the land as viewed from the air. Viewing the water systems from the ground is an experience with a microcosm such as a creek, river or water catchment area that is localised and enveloping. Viewed from the air these smaller systems disappear into a vast ecosystem where the effects of the drought or human intervention through dams is far more visually dramatic.

Dorothy Noble

We experience life as a continuum and rarely remember to be mindful of the present moment, which so quickly is placed in the past as we move into the future. These gestures in wax capture that present moment when molten wax plunges into water.
Sarah Ryan

The sun unrolling this landscape in the early morning as the toilet paper unrolls the landscape that has been used to produce it. Hills have been bared and smoothed by fire and the last remnants of burnt pine trees are gradually exposed as the sun brushes them with light. The softness belies a harsher message. There is no evidence in this wide landscape of the native forest that once clothed it; this is the price we pay for wanting unlimited toilet paper, cardboard and timber at least cost.

Karen Tran

My field study has led me to produce a series of abstract drawings. These investigate structures and surfaces I’ve encountered in the built environment in and around Tumut.

Karen Tran

untitled (Tumut structure study)
Karen Tran, 42 x 29.7 cm, graphite and charcoal on paper, 2008

Sarah Ryan

Unrolled
Sarah Ryan, 2008

Untitled (Tumut structure study)
Karen Tran, 42 x 29.7 cm, graphite and charcoal on paper, 2008
There is a long cultural history of ritual immersion in water. What changes is the context. This particular physical encounter with the medium was undertaken for several reasons. One was to produce a visual image concerned with the business of staying alive.

Dean Sewell’s work in the Tumut region examines the human condition in response to environmental concerns and its relationship between social and environmentally sustainable practices.
Elaine McGregor

T for Tumut
Elaine McGregor, height - 60cm, width - 40cm, depth - 0.2cm, tea towels (cotton cloth), thread, 2008

Souvenirs celebrating the everyday in Tumut

Benjamin Edward Robert Ashe

Apple trees
Benjamin Edward Robert Ashe, dimensions variable, found objects, acrylic paint, earth, 2008

My work is about the land. Once upon a time the land was occupied by Eucalypts and River Red Gum, now it is shared with Blackberry, willow and Apple trees. The bands on my work reference indigenous art forms and the white paint represents the influence that white invasion has had on the land. These sculptural forms originated at an apple orchard and having been inverted have become symbols for the trees themselves.
The art works are from the ‘Remnant Vegetation’ series where I am photographing vegetation on privately owned land that is being managed for conservation purposes.

My photographic exploration in Tumut ranged from the classic black and white to “chocolate box covers” (i.e. the perfect, almost unreal landscape). My approach went beyond capturing an image as a fleeting moment in time, to incorporate the solitude, sensory influx, and “walkabout” story behind the journey that led to the image.

The photographs selected for this exhibition focus on patterns created by wind, water and the sun. "Spirits of bushfires past" bring together cloud-chasing with the historical politics of the land below. The whiffs of cloud leaping from the tree-line at the crest of the Goobarragandra Valley echoed flames from bushfires that enriched such landscapes in distant pasts, perhaps last experienced before European settlement.
Felicty Green

A river is a place of light and magic. In a rural landscape it offers sanctuary to what life remains. It personifies what is wild in nature, and coaxes out the creature in ourselves. These small paintings are a merging of quiet observations with the cherished memories of my time spent on the Goobragandra River.

My work mostly explores environmental issues and the nature of humanity in the environment. I prefer working in wood and/or using discarded material. In past lives I have been a librarian and library manager and have worked in a wide variety of libraries. I was then an event manager and ran the ACT Heritage Festival in 1999 and 2000.
Amanda Stuart

Mythologies

Amanda Stuart, *Dog on the Knockrook*, 2008

Sustainable agribusiness, sustainable communities reflected in cast bronze.

Claudia Bottrill

Sustainable agribusiness, sustainable communities reflected in cast bronze.

Sustainable agribusiness, sustainable communities

Claudia Bottrill, dimensions variable, cast bronze, 2008

My aim is to explore the tensions that arise when domestic and wild animal and human communities cohabit a terrain – specifically within the south-east Australian landscape and psyche.

The wild dog / dingo issue is a highly complex and emotive one – my work seeks to explore these issues on physical and sub-conscious levels.
Human activity and natural forces interact to form the landscapes we see today. In the pine plantation areas around Tumut the hills resemble a giant vegetable garden.

This creature is collecting stories about Tumut. The audience is encouraged to write a sentence about life in Tumut on the green leaf paper and attach it to Larry’s back branches.
Katherine White

Goobarragandra River 1.

La Divine Feminite

Christina Irvin

Goobarragandra River Triptych

I have lived beside this beautiful river for many years and love its many moods. This triptych was painted from field studies done at the quiet time of Autumn when the spirit of the river is at peace.

Janet French

Basket

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This collection of landscape images is a “mini- retrospective” of my responses to the natural environment of the Tumut region from late 1990’s to 2008.

The drawings and paintings have been carried out “in situ” and developed in the studio. My preference for an interpretive approach to landscape, with evidence of the creative process as an integral part of the work, underpins my spontaneous style.

By exploring different methods of applying paint, mixed with pastels and using a watery consistency, waiting until the paint semi dried before working it, I was able to work on a larger scale more affordably.

I used minimal paint as it thinned with water on application.

Although not realistic or even capturing the local area, the outcome was inspired by my earlier drawing day at Goobarragandra.
Environment Studio, School of Art The Australian National University
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