



FUSION JOURNAL ISSUE 10

LAND DIALOGUES: Interdisciplinary research in dialogue with land

landSCOPE: deconstructing the myth or master narrative of the 'beautiful view' and the nature of representation in 'landscape painting'.

Bärbel Ullrich

INTRODUCTION

Where have I come from?

“My artwork has dominantly been concerned with the landscape, whether within a confined urban environment (garden), or, extended to include the wider countryside and bush lands. The landscape has been an escape, a retreat, the subject/object of and place for contemplation. From childhood, the bush has been a secret garden, a physical landscape and the landscape of the mind, which germinated and nourished my inner being.”¹

As a land-based artist I maintain that the word ‘landscape’ is not only inadequate but is laden and contaminated with historical ideologies and associations.

The landscape tradition paints a single view – this view is framed and contained. Early Australian landscapes generally depict man controlling and dominating nature. The natural world is represented as a usable ‘resource’ for economic growth to be exploited for the short-term advantage of humankind.

For the body of work for my MA Visual Arts I moved away from the traditional single ‘view’ of the landscape. I replaced the ‘scape’, denoting a view or the representation of a view, with ‘scope’ denoting a device looked at or through, an instrument for observing or showing; the extent to which it is possible to range; the opportunity for action; the sweep or reach of mental activity, observation or outlook. My work became landSCOPES² rather than landscapes to include a broader and more complex discourse about the depiction of land and our relationship to the environment. With the use of collage and mixed media, the surface became more complex and layered allowing for the interplay of ideas, images, materials and techniques.

The space in the work was also disconnected to ‘the view’ or any notion of perspective as it is an overlay and interplay of layers. The focus shifts within the

¹ Ullrich Exegesis MA Hons 2004.

² **See figure 1.**

work where the scale of the images shift from the macro to the micro, from the particular to the universal, from the natural to the cultural, from illusion to abstraction, from realism to stylisation, from denotative to symbolic. Small areas or fragments allude to a larger environment.

It became a landSCOPE which deconstructed the myth or master narrative of the 'beautiful view' and the nature of representation in 'landscape painting'. I found wherever I was in the landscape, including what appeared to be quite remote and inaccessible places, evidence of human or cultural intrusion. Images or signifiers of this intrusion became an integral part of my artworks whether subtly or quite directly. An anxiety about destruction or depletion of the land entered my work. The use of symbols also entered my work.

From my MA Hons thesis "***Landscape: Symbolism and Spirituality***" and the exhibition project "***100 Prayer Mats for Gaia***"³ I have identified 5 separate yet interconnected ideas/concepts/concerns that I will continue to extend and develop to address new areas of research and knowledge.

1. Images of landscape are not natural but cultural.

Landscape painting is a cultural construct and is laden with ideologies relating to people's/culture's perceptions of the land and their relationship to the environment. As cultural constructs rather than 'natural' images drawn from the environment they express or represent the ideologies of the time in that they are produced. Our ideas about the land and the earth are effected by our culture and by extension our religious beliefs and these in turn will influence the images and attitudes we create about the land, our place and our relationship to it.

"Landscapes are culture before they are nature; constructs of the imagination projected onto wood, water and rock."⁴

³ See figure 2.

⁴ Schama. 1995. 61.

“For although we are accustomed to separate nature and human perception into two realms, they are, in fact, indivisible. Before it can ever be a repose for the senses, landscape is the work of the mind. Its scenery is built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock. ... Even the landscapes that we suppose to be most free of our culture may turn out, on closer inspection, to be its product.”⁵

2. The earth as a living organism – the Gaia hypothesis

I am interested in the relationship between science, ecology, spirituality and religion. The new science of Gaia is called geophysiology. It is the idea of the Earth as a kind of living organism, something able to regulate its climate and composition so as always to be comfortable for the organisms that inhabit it. The idea of Mother Earth or, as the Greeks called her, Gaia, has been widely held throughout history and has been the basis of a belief that coexists with the great religions.⁶

The concept of Gaia where the earth has a consciousness of which everything is a part of is not in conflict with Aboriginal mythology. They believe in the sacred relationships of the cycles and rhythms of nature that reflect the story of the earth’s metaphysical creation. Gaia, like the Dreaming “has continuity with the past back to the origins of life, and extends into the future as long as life persists.”⁷

For the Aborigines:

“The earth is the centre of the intelligence of creation; a symbol and memory of the primordial Dreaming; a receptacle of all seeds cosmic, metaphysical, and biological; the nurturer of all life, both visible and invisible. By listening to the songs and energies of the earth the Aborigines hear the voices of the universal dreaming.”⁸

⁵ Schama. 1995. 6-9.

⁶ Lovelock. 1995. *Gaia*. xi-xiv.

⁷ Lovelock. 1995. *Ages of Gaia*. 19.

⁸ Lawlor. 1991. 48.

3. Restoring the balance

In our materialistic culture nature is separated from human consciousness, it is inanimate and mechanical.⁹

“We have lost the roots which binds us to the earth. We have lost the sense of our dependence upon the earth and our responsibility in the maintenance of the natural order - the perpetuation of the balance. We are the caretakers of the future.”¹⁰

There is a need to see nature “as an interlocking whole”.¹¹

Suzi Gablik, also believes that we need a new world view to restore balance, a new idea of reality that expresses the notion of interconnectedness and an understanding of the organic and unified character of the universe. Gablik believes that a world view in this sense is not something found ‘out there’, but is something that individuals construct and create out of belief systems.¹²

The belief system embodied through technology and science has increased the mentality of domination over the world and the belief in unlimited progress and power.¹³ Gablik believes that the issue of what beliefs we hold is crucial; a new belief system, if accepted by enough people, will have the effect of stabilising the relations of dominance. She believes that our present values of growth, power and domination are not sustainable and we need a new world view that would support the creation of a future different from our present situation.¹⁴

“What we are learning is that for every situation in our lives, there is a thought pattern that both precedes and maintains it, so that our consistent thinking patterns create our experience. By changing our thinking, we can also change our experience. People give legitimacy to all social institutions, no matter how powerful

⁹ Sheldrake. 1994. 74.

¹⁰ Lyndall Milani in Voight. 1996. 209.

¹¹ Collins. 1995. 213.

¹² 1993. 22-23.

¹³ Sheldrake. 1994. 60.

¹⁴ Gablik. 1993. 23-24.

those institutions seem to be, and they also have the power to withdraw legitimacy.”

15

Our belief and dependence on external material and economic values is beginning to be questioned and we are now experiencing a shift in our collective unconscious towards a renewed spiritualism and a fellowship with the earth. This is significant in a time of global environmental crisis, climate change and loss of biodiversity that threatens our existence.

Tim Flannery also maintains that it is not so much our technology, but what we believe, that will determine our fate.¹⁶

4. The idea of the need of a new mythology

A new myth to heal the planet and be inclusive of all nations and all living things – the interconnection of life on earth. Joseph Campbell believes that the image of the earth, as seen from space, is a significant symbol that signifies the unity of existence on this planet and the balance of chaos and order. He believes that this image will be the symbol for the new mythology to come.¹⁷

The notion of Gaia is intriguing as it begins to fuse scientific empiricism and positivism with mythology and mysticism. It is a new way of looking at humans and their relationship to the land and nature on a global perspective.

5. My own visual interpretation of the environment as informed by research

I am searching for new ways of looking at and visually interpreting the Australian natural environment that breaks with European pictorial conventions – such as ‘framing’ a landscape, controlling a view, power over nature. The search is for a spiritual connection with space and place – spiritual belonging.

¹⁵ Gablik. 1993. 23.

¹⁶ 2010. Xviii.

¹⁷ Flowers. 1988. 32-33.

The body of work **Sacred Land**¹⁸ completed and exhibited in 2010 is the cornerstone of the direction in which I hope to be heading.

My work will continue to explore my spiritual connection with the land and the environment. The unity of existence and the interconnectedness of life on the planet is the basis of my philosophy which points to and reflects a necessary ideological and spiritual shift that may be necessary for our survival.

My work will continue to focus on the human consciousness level – myth, symbols, cosmology and philosophy. I will continue to make representations of nature/land that challenge or reframe the European landscape tradition and its pictorial conventions. My work will also aim to address the spiritual, mythical and symbolic to reflect my personal philosophy that nature/land is sacred and that we are part of it not separate from it.

The 3 predominant questions for my PhD research are:

How can representations of Australian landscape challenge or reframe the European landscape tradition and its pictorial conventions?

How can visual images of Australian landscape address the spiritual, mythical and symbolic?

Can images of the Australian landscape reflect a particular place as well as universal characteristics?

Abstract

My proposed area of research is the representation of land within a specific area or place to which I have a deep sense of connection or belonging.¹⁹ I aim to depict the landscape as a manifestation of the creative force and as such imbue it with a sense of spirituality. My work intends to reflect the need for a spiritual shift in our attitude to

¹⁸ See figures 3 & 4.

¹⁹ See figure 5.

the environment as the unity of existence and the interconnectedness of life on the planet is the basis of my philosophy.

I will focus on the microcosm where images reflect the particularities of place but also have universal qualities. As such, an important element of my work will be the use of symbolism with emphasis on particular archetypal symbols drawn from both Christian and Pre or non Christian mythologies. The predominant symbol is the *axis mundi*, the symbolism of the centre with other symbols such as the elements of earth, fire, water and air to be used in my art making.

My work will explore and a new personal visual language that is in homage to Mother Earth, the Great Goddess and the Gaia principle. It will contribute to the current changes and 'shift' in representations of land from the past ideologies and cultural attitudes imbedded in the Australian landscape 'tradition'. This also means identifying with Aboriginal culture and spirituality, acknowledging past histories and moving forward in finding a personal sense of belonging to place and a new personal language of representing land that is not Aboriginal but also breaks with Western tradition.

The aim of the work is to show the primacy of land as sacred, the interconnection of all life on the planet and the evolution of our imagination towards inwardness and connection with a greater whole – a move away from our outward anthropocentric view and intense preoccupation with the human towards a focus on the world and environment where the earth is seen as the primary symbol of 'God' or Goddess' – the divinity, the transcendent.²⁰

The methodology includes the development of imagery and concepts by art practice and research, experimentation with materials and techniques. I wish to imbue the work with mysticism and a sense of the fragility of our eco system and the delicacy and complexity of the Australian landscape.

²⁰ The natural world is the primal place where human beings experienced the transcendent for many centuries before the advent of Christianity. Collins. 1995. 218.

I intend to use the artist's book concept utilising mixed media and printmaking on paper to create/develop a body of work/exhibition informed by research of the above and re presented from a personal interpretation of images of land in my environment.

Research AIMS

- I wish to research ancient archetypal symbols from Western culture and see how they can be 'found' in the environment. I wish to represent these symbols embedded/infused in or with reference to images of the Australian bush (a particular site) thus creating a universal meaning/content.
- To reflect some kind of relationship or understanding of my 'belonging' to this place rather than as a detached observer.
- To reflect in my work the sense of nature as alive, sacred and divine rather than as a mechanical, inanimate system that needs to be controlled and exploited for economic gain and profit.
- Through the creation of artworks I wish to create a deeper understanding of the mythical and archetypal underpinnings of spiritual life and my/our relation, spiritual belonging to the land.

Significance of the Study

The evolving tradition of landscape painting in Australia, and the body of critical writings about landscape, enriches our vocabulary of looking at the landscape and also contributes to changes in the way we look at the landscape. I would hope that my body of work, both written and visual, will contribute to and extend the discourse about Australian land based art, Australian identity, sense of place and belonging with a renewed spiritual emphasis.

Set in the climate of ecological crisis and global warming²¹ my work aims to emphasise a new and needed focus of cultural and philosophical thinking relating to our relationship and interaction with the environment.

²¹ Of which some people and politicians are in denial of.

Central to my philosophical approach to representing land is the primacy of the world as sacred, the interconnection of all life on the planet and the evolution of our imagination towards inwardness and connection with a greater whole – a move away from our outward anthropocentric view and intense preoccupation with the human towards a focus on the world and environment where the earth is seen as the primary symbol of ‘God’ or Goddess’ – the divinity, the transcendent.

On Spirituality

Central to my research are notions of ‘spirituality’, the representation of spirituality in art and the idea of the sacredness of land. The sacred is a basic category of human experience and the human cannot be separated from the non human and the archetypal – human nature can only know and fulfil itself in relationship to a transcendent other.²²

The concept of ‘spirituality’ is intangible and open to debate but in the context of contemporary Australian art it conveys more than formal religious faith or belief.²³ The spiritual dimension in art can be expressed in a number of ways and covers a wide spectrum of religious alliances and belief systems. It arises from individual spiritual awareness derived from personal insights and experiences which may include profound life changes, the universal quest to find out who we are in the cosmos, how we think about ourselves and our place on this earth, making sense of the world and the search for enlightenment. Spirituality is the basis of ‘seeing and being’ and is beyond the physical. It can be expressed in a number of ways ranging from overt mythic and religious symbolism, intangible and metaphysical resonances which arise within the work, ethereal modes of abstraction, images of transcendence and the resurgence of the recognition of ‘primal source’. Spiritual art is finally about “essence, about the intangible – and the sacred”.²⁴

²² Tacey. 1995. 1-4.

²³ Drury and Voight. 1996. 7.

²⁴ Drury and Voight. 1996. 8-13.

Magon describes spirituality as referring to:

“a looking beyond or deeply within the self, this world and the other, sacred and mundane, heaven and earth, our relationship to the cosmos, the visible and invisible, grandeur and transcendence through healing, suffering and death and our relationship to the unknown. The spiritual refers to a dramatic shift in experience in undoing and remaking ourselves.”²⁵

In much of the literature I am using there is a strong shared opinion that we are facing a great ecological and spiritual crisis where balance and harmony have been disrupted by human production and reproduction and that we should become ecologically aware and conscious of our relationship to the natural world.²⁶ The official ideology of the modern world is the conquest of nature for the sake of human progress and that we live in a desacralised world.²⁷ The worship of earth as source of creative and spiritual energy is lost in our present global culture.²⁸

“Only by remaking and restoring the sacred can we achieve individual and collective health, since the sacred stands at the very heart of humanity, and if it is repressed or ignored humanity must suffer.”²⁹

I agree with Campbell when he says Gimbutas’ work is relevant to the need in our time for “a general transformation of consciousness” necessary for us on this planet to live in harmony and peace with the creative energies of nature.³⁰

How do we extend our imagination and belief system to discover a common consciousness and essence that relates to the earth as a living organism that we are a part of not separate or superior to? This is where the art making becomes an important process.

²⁵ 1988. 38.

²⁶ Collins, Campbell, Gablik, Tacey, Magon, Sheldrake, Lawler, Merchant.

²⁷ Sheldrake. 1994. 10.

²⁸ Lawler. 1991. 57.

²⁹ Tacey. 1995. 1-4.

³⁰ Forward by Joseph Campbell in Gimbutas. 1989. xiv.

Aboriginal Spirituality

Aboriginal spirituality is widely believed to be a great gift to our culture as it is a different way of seeing nature and the land.³¹ David Tacey discusses an Australian spirituality that emerges as one becomes attuned to Aboriginality and the sacred bond with the land.³² Stockton also believes that there is a significant change working beneath the surface – “a powerful spiritual surge” where new concerns and values have been aroused including a greater sensitivity to the environment.³³ Life for Aboriginal people is sacred, and thus reverence for life is a fundamental characteristic of their spirituality which is extended to the earth, the original mother of all life and a living, conscious being in and of herself.³⁴

The Aboriginal people of this continent learnt to survive by entering into a caring partnership with the land which became a whole way of life, a ‘spirituality’.³⁵

Aboriginal spirituality is the belief and feeling within yourself that allows you to become a part of the whole natural environment around you. Birth, life and death are all part of it, and you welcome each. The belief that all objects are living and share the same soul or spirit that Aboriginals share is part of this spirituality. On death this soul or spirit returns to the Dreamtime from where it came. The Dreamtime is all around and still exists today, thus the land becomes a place of worship.³⁶

“The land for Aboriginals is the cornerstone of traditional religion³⁷, it is the physical link between living humans and all that is unseen and eternal³⁸ in their spiritual world. ...The land is not just a surface over which people walk, hunt and live out their lives. It is not the inanimate, unresponsive stage for the action play of separate individuals who are superior to it in being animate, sentient, intelligent, self-conscious, as the European instinctively views the land. Aborigines are confirmed by

³¹ Tacey, Stockton, Lawler

³² 38-39.

³³ Stockton. 1995. 3.

³⁴ Stockton. 1995. 78.

³⁵ Stockton. 1995. 18.

³⁶ Stockton. 1995. 83.

³⁷ I would argue that Aboriginal spirituality is broader and far more encompassing than the dogmatic and restrictive field of ‘religion’ as such.

³⁸ The idea of the Dreaming can be translated as ‘originating from eternity’ and the verb ‘to dream’ draws from the idea of seeing eternal things. Stockton. 1995. 52.

their religion with the conviction that the land, together with its people, flora and fauna, and everything else it contains, is a corporate organic whole, at least as animate, sentient, intelligent and self-conscious as any of its organic parts. The Aborigine feels part of this whole, enmeshed with the land in a real dynamic identity. ...The land is a sacred place, the locus of creative acts of the Dreaming, which persist into the present.”³⁹

“An expression of this oneness is the readiness to make physical contact with the earth, as a mystical experience and a deliberate harmonising with the environment.”⁴⁰

Land is dynamic and creative for Aboriginal people. It is not bound by geographical limitations it is a living place or entity, the spirit from which Aboriginal existence comes.⁴¹ Aboriginal people say that “I am the Land”. They describe features of the land as parts of one’s body – the land is their body. This is different to the way a European speaks of identity with the land, they may have affection or emotional response to it but they see themselves as ‘a discrete individual, separate from the terrain over which one walks’.⁴²

It is in this sense that European people (and other migrants to this country) cannot have the same sense of spiritual belonging as Aboriginal people. But it does mean that they cannot feel a sense of spiritual belonging? How then can this be manifest?

Approaches to creating the new body of work

Sullivan maintains that new forms of knowledge can be constructed within visual arts practice and studio based inquiry that is not only new but has the capacity to

³⁹ Stockton. 1995. 56. The land is like the bible, it has a story to tell and that story calls for a response – the ethical system and the law. 57-58.

⁴⁰ Stockton. 1995. 86.

⁴¹ Stockton. 1995. 82.

⁴² Stockton. 1995. 85.

'transform human understanding'.⁴³ He maintains that Visual Arts can be best located as a form of **individual, social and critical inquiry**. Artworks become an interpretive space where we construct meanings through the process and the purpose is to achieve understanding rather than explanation.⁴⁴ The **imagination** and **intellect** play an important role in constructing knowledge that is not only new but has the capacity to transform human understanding.⁴⁵ Sullivan says that "Artworks are an important source of new knowledge, personal meaning, and cultural experience."⁴⁶ For Sullivan the making of art is a quest for knowledge and understanding. He believes that making art has the capacity to transform us, and thereby change the world around us.⁴⁷ This is supported by Barrett and Bolt who argue that art practice in itself is research,⁴⁸ and Elkins who believes that:

"Art should be recognised as a source of one of the highest levels of meaning. ... studio art is a way of coming to understand ourselves and the worlds in which we live – an enhanced way of being and possibly enjoying – that is central to human intelligence, different from and complementary to science and the scientific which are incapable of doing the things that art does just as art is incapable of being scientific in any deep sense."⁴⁹

Visual thinking and 'material thinking' are important processes in the creation of artworks. The emphasis is on breakthrough, originality and new knowledge. Bolt writes that "the materials and processes of production have their own intelligence that come into play in interaction with the artist's creative intelligence."⁵⁰

⁴³ 2005. xi.

⁴⁴ 2005. 49.

⁴⁵ Sullivan. 2005. xi.

⁴⁶ 2005. 139.

⁴⁷ 2005. 223.

⁴⁸ 2010. 34.

⁴⁹ Elkins. 2014. 122.

⁵⁰ Barrett and Bolt. 2010. 30.

As the **experience** of the artist is the core element in the creation of new knowledge⁵¹ and personal experience is a way of **understanding** aspects of reality,⁵² I will undergo many field trips into the bush environment as a strategy to support my studio based practice.

Intuition, understanding and the visualisation of ideas are also related to experience, understanding and the ability to see things differently. **‘Seeing’ and ‘sensing’** are important in representing experience as the basis for compiling thematic patterns of evidence from which meaning is made vivid.⁵³

It is thus through the process of visual arts practice using ‘seeing’, ‘sensing’, ‘lived experience’, ‘subjectivity’ and ‘memory’ that will form the basis of my methodology to create a context for meanings, new knowledge and new understanding. And as Sullivan says “you are never quite sure of the outcome.”⁵⁴ This is supported by Barrett and Bolt who claim that the outcomes of creative practice cannot be pre-determined.⁵⁵ Elkins also states that an artist doesn’t know why they are doing something until after they have done it.⁵⁶

Methods

Drawing and printmaking become the dominant techniques/methods for producing images and the building up of layers. Visual metaphors are produced that create and transform meaning.

- **Site specific works.** The images for my work come from our property under Mt Bogong next to the Alpine national park. I endeavour to interact with the environment and use material from the environment. The methodology I use

⁵¹ Sullivan. 2005. 191.

⁵² Barrett and Bolt. 2010. 129

⁵³ Sullivan. 2005. 60.

⁵⁴ 2005. xii.

⁵⁵ 2010. 186.

⁵⁶ 2014. 236.

is “wandering and wondering”⁵⁷, collecting materials and making drawings, rubbings and shadow drawings in the environment,⁵⁸ maintain a sketchbook and journal(s). I will draw on this experience of working from the environment and in the environment as a key strategy for creating images and symbols in my work.

- The use of **archetypal symbols** in my work including the Axis Mundi. The axis mundi is not only a symbol but for me is a significant way of working as an artist. I interact with the environment and work from intuition – letting things happen and materialise from within/the centre. Other symbols include the shadow, the circle, stones, the spiral, the mandala and Jungian and Goddess symbolism.
- The structure of my work will be in the form of **Artists books**. These may not necessarily be bound but may be loose pages, also not necessarily displayed on the walls but in stacks with some form of containment such as cloth or a box. They require the physical interaction of the viewer on an intimate and personal level as they can only be viewed by one person at a time. They can also utilise the sense of touch and smell to evoke a response/reaction from the viewer. A work on the wall can be viewed by many people and it is unlikely that you are permitted to touch.
- The use of **text** in my work will be a strategy to locate different layers of meaning and interpretation in the work.
- The use of **palimpsest** as a process/methodology of making marks, drawing, erasing the marks, leaving traces of earlier marks, layering colour, removing colour is an important strategy in my work.

Nature is constantly in a state of change, there may be elements of permanence, yet the layers rhythms and movements of nature reflect cyclic developments. The idea of

⁵⁷ John Wolseley

⁵⁸ Peter Sharp

‘palimpsest’ encompasses the notion of time, growth and decay in nature as well as recording the process and memory of the making of the artwork.⁵⁹

Like Wolseley, I also like to think that the bits of paper with marks on them are directly connected to the physical world where they were made.⁶⁰

The resulting imagery is a matrix built up with complex layers which reflects the transience, flux and chaos of nature. Order (cosmos and permanence) is created by structuring the format with ‘horizon’ lines, delineated areas and the overlay of symbolic shapes.

- **The use of cloth and stitching.** The symbolism of binding and knotting is related to mending and healing and also has magical connotations. Binding and knotting also have universal spiritual connotations. In many countries the ‘thread of life’ symbolises human destiny. The goddesses of fate spin the thread of human life. The cosmos itself is also conceived as a tissue, as a vast ‘web’. In the Cosmos as well as in human life, everything is connected with everything else in an invisible web. Thus the tread or the cord in mythology symbolises the cosmic principle that unites all things and also the support, the power and the divine law that hold the universe together.⁶¹
- Through **photographic documentation** I have collected many images of the land that explore the essence of the place, its form, structure and surface appearance. The photos I take of the land do not represent a traditional ‘view’ of the land but aspects of the rhythms, energy and movements in the environment. The details explore the microcosm, fractal patterns, textures, colours and shapes, especially the local characteristics of specific places. This information along with the drawings/experiments produced on site, is taken back into the studio to produce and refine the works.

Artists Books

⁵⁹ John Wolseley has a fascination with sand dunes where the image of the desert becomes a palimpsest. “Sand is a metaphor for the palimpsest of life, concealing earlier layers of existence yet preserving their traces” Grishin. 1998. 79-86.

⁶⁰ Gishin. 1998. 95.

⁶¹ Eliade. 1991. 114.115. 116. 117.

As a land-based artist I endeavour to use the artist book as a 'discipline' in which to situate my work in relation to contemporary practice as it is inventive⁶² and part of a "diverse, tactile area of contemporary printmaking."⁶³

Although it is difficult to define an artist book because of the variability in the use and combination of papers and materials, display, unorthodox shape and fragility, a general definition could be "An artists book is a book made by an artist, and is meant as an artwork."⁶⁴ They also can be categorised as an independent art form and part of a "living, changing discipline" where a more specific definition would appear to be impossible.⁶⁵

The materiality and conceptuality is what intrigues and interests me about artists books. The artist book can explore the interplay of content and form⁶⁶ where, as a 'book', the role of text can be made integral to the work and the use of pages and sequences are used instead of a single sweep of an image. The use of text means that the artist can work in a 'poetic' way.

The artist becomes a storyteller sequencing images, text and ideas together or it may have no sequential narrative but may be thematically connected. Each page has the potential of generating different spatial formats, arrangements and the capturing of ideas. The reader/viewer needs to use their imagination. It is a book where you can go backwards and forwards and spend as much time as you wish with each image which remains open to various interpretations.

The importance of the artists book is the visual thinking, a means to convey ideas rather than just being about the craft of binding. It is about how to make a book

⁶² This is an alternative format to the traditional 'landscape' art format of painting, printmaking and drawing and working with prescribed images and media. **Figures 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.**

⁶³ Selenitsch. 2008. 3.

⁶⁴ Selenitsch. 2008.5.

⁶⁵ Selenitsch. 2008. 5.

⁶⁶ Selenitsch. 2008. 5.

respond to a concept. Artists books are an ever-expanding field with a wide range of approaches.⁶⁷ It is also a means of finding new and different ways to work for myself as an artist.

In **Conclusion**, the artists book format, whether it be bound or loose pages, in series or displayed on the wall, is a strategy that can be used as a **landSCOPE** to investigate new ways of representing the Australian landscape and a vehicle to carry and transmit the complex ideas that are imbedded in the cultural, physical and personal notion of 'land' and 'place'.

Reference List

Barrett, Estelle, and Bolt, Barbara. *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry*. New

York: I.B.Tauris. 2010.

Collins, Paul. *God's Earth: Religion as if matter really mattered*. Melbourne: Harper Collins. 1995.

Dury, Neville, and Voight, Anna. *Fire and Shadow, Spirituality in Contemporary Australian Art*. Roseville East

NSW: Craftsman House. 1996.

Eliade, Mircea *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press. [1952] 1991.

Elkins, James. ed. 2nd edition. *Artists with PhDs On the New Doctoral Degree in Studio Art*.

USA: New Academia Publishing. 2014.

⁶⁷ Selenitsch. 2008. 11.

Flannery, Tim. *Here On Earth: A New Beginning*. Australia: The Text Publishing Company.

2010.

Flowers, Betty, Sue. ed., *Joseph Campbell, The Power of Myth, with Bill Moyers*. New York: Doubleday. 1998.

Gablik, Suzi. *The Re-enchantment of Art*. New York: Thames & Hudson. 1993.

Gimbutas, Marija. *The Language of the Goddess*. London: Thames & Hudson. 1989.

Grishin, Sasha. *John Wolseley, LAND MARKS*. North Ryde, Sydney: Craftsman House. 1998.

Lawler, Robert. *Voices of the First Day: Awakening in the Aboriginal Dreamtime*. Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions. 1991

Lovelock, James. 4th edn., *Gaia, A New Look at Life on Earth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1995.

----- 2nd edn., *The Ages of Gaia: A Biography of our Living Earth*. Oxford University Press. 1995.

Magon, Jane. "Spirituality in Contemporary Australian Art: Some Contexts and Issues of Interpretation." *ARTLINK: Art & the Spirit*. Vol.18 No.1 March 1988.

Merchant, Carolyn. 2nd edn. *Radical Ecology: The Search for a Liveable World*. New York and London: Routledge. 2005.

Schama, Simon. *Landscape and Memory* Great Britain: Harper Collins. 1995.

Seddon, George. *Landprints: Reflections on Place and Landscape*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press. 1998.

Selenitsch, Alex. *Australian Artists Books*. National Gallery of Australia. 2008.

Sheldrake, Rupert. *The Rebirth of Nature. The Greening of Science and God*. Rochester, Vermont: Park Street Press. 1994.

Stockton, Eugene. *The Aboriginal Gift: Spirituality for a Nation*. Alexandria NSW: Millenium Books. 1995.

Sullivan, Graeme. *Arts Practice and Research: Inquiry in the Visual Arts*. Sage Publications. 2005.

Tacey, David.J. *Edge of the Sacred: Transformation in Australia*. Melbourne: Harper Collins. 1995.

Voight, Anna. *New Visions. New Perspectives, Voices of Contemporary Australian Women Artists*. Roseville East NSW: Craftsman House. 1996.

List of Figures



Figure 1.

Bärbel Ullrich

***Intrusions* from the *LandSCOPE* series**

1993-1995. Mixed media on canvas.

200cmx100cm



Figure 2.

Bärbel Ullrich

#1 & #95

**From *100 Prayer Mats For Gaia*. 1999-
2001**

Mixed media on canvas. 78cm x 48cm.



Figure 3 & 4.

Bärbel Ullrich

From the series *Sacred Land 1-20*.

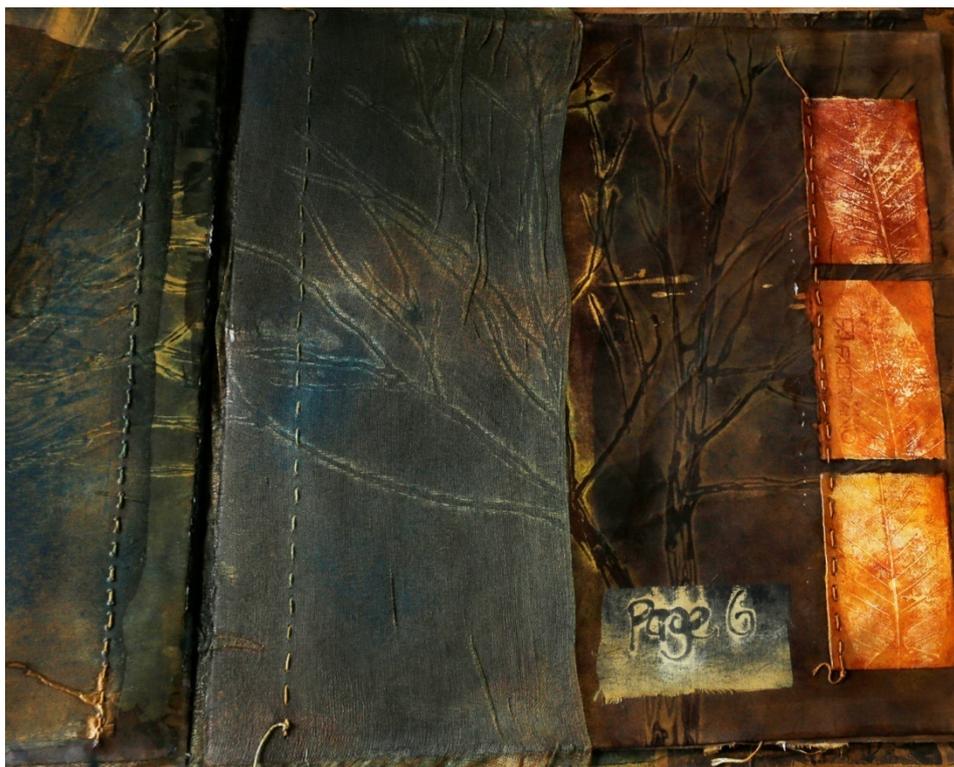
2009.

Mixed Media on paper. 77cm x 56cm.



Figure 5. Photograph Bärbel Ullrich



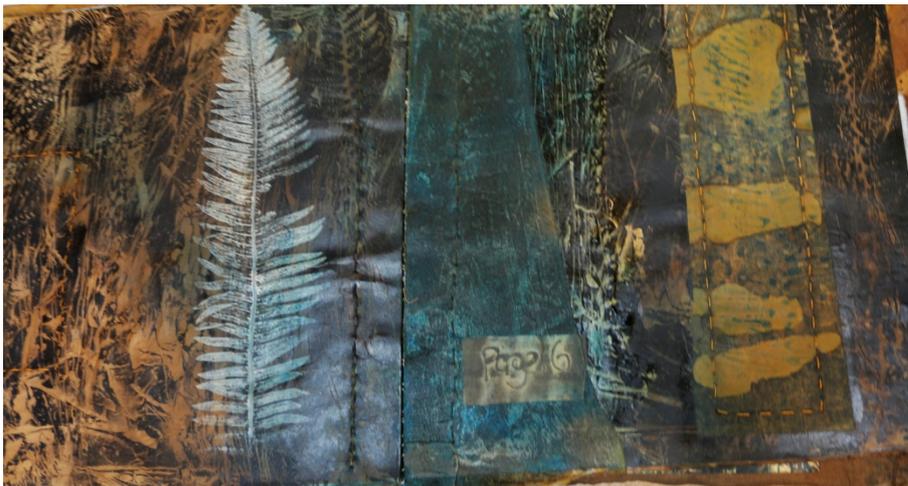


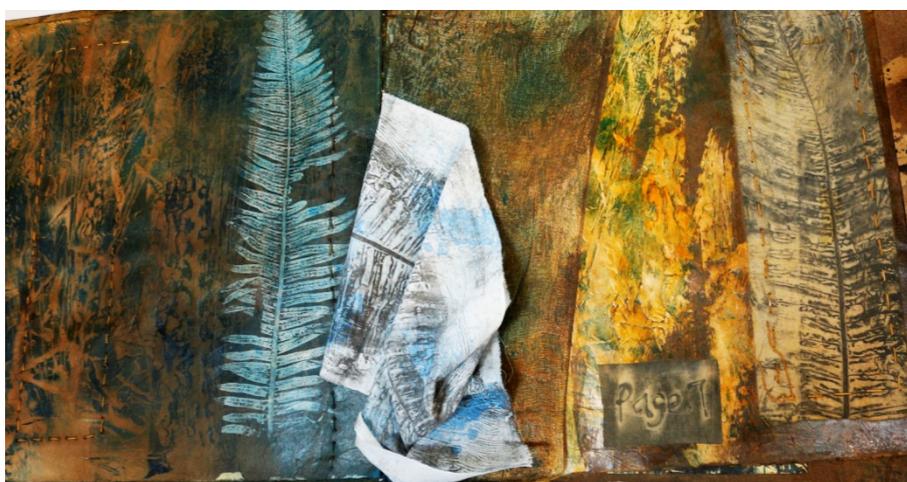
Figures 6, 7 & 8.

Bärbel Ullrich

From the Book of the Sacred Moon Tree. 2015.

Mixed Media on paper. 55cm x 55cm x variable.





Figures 9, 10 & 11.

Bärbel Ullrich

From the Book of Ferns. 2015.

Mixed Media on paper. 55cm x 55cm x variable.