



Gail Naden, *Totem*, 2009. Digital color print. 420 x 594 mm
Image © of the artist



Gail Naden, *Protected Species*, 2009. Digital color print. 420 x 594 mm
Image © of the artist

Confidently these questions about the natural environment will reconfirm individual and community senses of place and identity – the place central to our understanding of our role within the world and our ability to control our future.

Engage.

Perspectives.Art.Ecology. is a truly and self-assuredly local and unconditionally global project. The processes and artists involved and

the artworks selected make this exhibition a unique experience.

Engaging and balanced, these artworks will certainly test the capacity of regional audiences to engage with somewhat different and challenging prospects and artistic proposals; proposals that will hopefully inspire new conversations about our environment.

Adnan Begic

Curator, Western Plains Cultural Centre
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Kim Goldsmith, *Hope*, 2009. Digital color print. 841 X 594mm Image © of the artist

Dubbo Regional Gallery - The Armati Bequest
Western Plains Cultural Centre
76 Wingewarra Street PO BOX 81 Dubbo NSW

Opening hours:

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Tel: 02 6801 4444

email: info@wpccdubbo.org.au

Visit: www.wpccdubbo.org.au

WESTERN PLAINS CULTURAL CENTRE



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PERSPECTIVES.ART.ECOLOGY.

23 May – 19 July 2009

FOREWORD

perspectives. to look through. to see clearly. to determine horizon. to move towards the future.

art. the conscious use of skills, knowledge and the language of artistic medium (acquired by experience, study, observation and creative imagination) in the production of new meaning.

ecology. an open investigative discipline which productively contributes to an understanding of our everyday relationship with nature.

Perspectives.Art.Ecology.

Cultivation of, and care for our natural environment reflects our understanding of Nature. This knowledge and awareness is evident in our culture - in our relationships with the natural, social and communal issues.

Perspectives.Art.Ecology. is the result of several months of intensive collaboration between artists and people from the local and regional communities of Central NSW.

Regional artists Kim Goldsmith and Gail Naden have for the past several months engaged in an intensive and exciting art mentorship program with visiting new media artist Peter E. Charuk.

This partnership produced an interesting conversation about the environment of the Western Plains of NSW and inspired new collaborations with its communities.

Perspectives.Art.Ecology. resulted from these collaborations.

Place.

The Western Plains is a distinctive location. It is presented in harsh pastoral scenery, in the heat, drought and beauty of the harsh terrain of the Australian bush.

But what really constitutes this Place, is the first universal question?

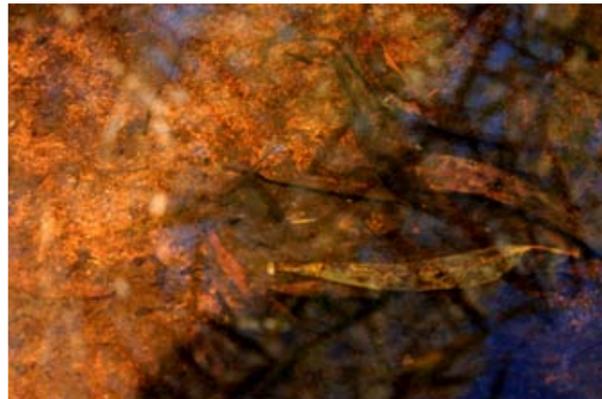
Placing ourselves in the landscape is place-making; our active engagement with the world that expands externally in all directions. There is a vast central Austral land, its continental plate to be rediscovered around us; cities are far away on the coastlines, the centre, and the metropolis.

We stand here on the periphery surrounded by landscape, equipped with the luxury of unpolluted air, an intensive scent of wild grassland, bounded by a horizon which offers an immeasurable perspective.

Place is a mindset. A landscape preserved for centuries by its people, an organic memory of environment. It is a place for recognition of an ancient knowledge about the Nature, the wisdom of the first People and their relationship with the Land - its earliest culture.

Project.

A new knowledge about local communities and their environment, Aboriginal insight into the spirit of the land, and the trends of accessible new technologies have been the main inspiration for everyone involved in the *Perspectives.Art.Ecology.* project.



Kim Goldsmith, *Little River Dreaming*, 2009. Digital color print. Image © of the artist

Since January 2009 we travelled to places, visited sites, and curiously talked to both people who live in small communities and to professionals engaged in regional environmental issues.

We witnessed productive environmental regional actions and enhancements with strategic solutions on energy, waste and water irrigation improvements. Developments with strong ecological and ethical sensitivity and respect to the community: Dubbo Alive - A Living Initiative for a Vibrant Environment, Biodiversity Garden, Peak Hill Gold Mine, Regional Burrendong Botanic Garden & Arboretum, Macquarie Marshes and Trangie Research Station.

Environment. Ethics.

A retrospective body of work of Blue Mountains based artist Peter E. Charuk provides us with a very broad context to relationships between the human and the environmental. These works present a definitive example of debating ecology in art, the basis from which the mentorship with Naden and Goldsmith was established.

Environment ethics as a framework proves to be a cornerstone of Charuk's artistic intention. His entire practice is centred on the critical paradigm of the *human/nature* interaction, and predominantly resolved within the broader social, ideological, political and cultural context of the visual.

Charuk's art is most often concerned with the simple and obvious and is made in response to our most mundane experiences. This comes from a genuine ethical dimension in the artist's observation of the natural world and human environment.

Charuk's first major body of work, from 1980, was a series of large photo-etchings. These works (*Alternative Answers*, 1980) combine original newspaper clippings, photographs, sketches, drawings, artist's notes and writings that reflect global contemporary ecological, scientific and political issues associated with the energy crisis of the late 1970's.

Two photographic prints selected from *Self Guiding Nature Walks* (1985) further introduce the artist's interest in the everyday environment. These photographs of nature are created during the physical acts of claiming the top of mountains. As a fundamental premise these simple and deliberate art actions include *eco logic* and reflect an *eco consciousness*.

In 1998 Charuk produced two large scale digital print series based on diseases afflicting men and man's environment (*Men's Work* and *Iron Hans*).

These images depict an underlying visual message of human tragedy and natural disaster. They introduce a sharp environmental discourse of the eighties: consequences of human activities within environment, penalties paid for the use of pathogens and chemicals and the responses received from nature.

No Diving, from 2000, follows as a series of digital images which herald the beginning of Charuk's 'water' series. These artworks hint at the concepts of our collective and personal identity in relationship to water as one of the most innate of all the elements in nature.



Kim Goldsmith, *Bad Moon Rising*, 2009. video still from 3 minutes single channel looped video with sound. Image © of the artist

No Diving II (2005) focused more intensely on the ecology of water. Ice, another state of water, has become an authentic and measurable indicator of climate change in our time. Since the artist's travel to New Zealand in 2006 to research and record great glaciers – the *glaciers lux* project became his next and ongoing work.

The video installation *glaciers lux* is presented as a central work in this exhibition. The artwork investigates light and water as a component of transitional natural states.

Directly inspired and stimulated by the Western Plains environment, Charuk's *aqua lepus* (2009) was created for the *Perspectives. Art. Ecology.* exhibition.

Driving near Burrendong Dam Charuk found a large hare (recently deceased) on the road. This animal reminds us of one of the most environmentally conscious periods in twentieth century art: the art of Joseph Beuys, who was a prime instigator in the 60s art/ecological movement.

aqua lepus is a digitally processed image which forces an emotional reaction to the dead animal and pays homage to Beuys' ground breaking work.

It is important to include Charuk's thirty years of artistic practice in this exhibition. His work has been responsive to complex concerns and ideas about the human and the natural and loaded with the capacity to provoke questions familiar to our everyday experience.

Scars.

We humans also develop scars, scars that only the Creator heals, the One who is our source, our provider, our healer. He heals our soul, our body and our mind. He heals the brokenhearted and bandages their wounds. Psalms 147:3

Gail Naden's digital project *Burrumbinya - Be Eternal* came from immediate experiences of the Aboriginal tradition recognised in the landscape of the Western Plains.

Digital images collected in the Macquarie Marshes, the Slopes and Plains, evidence of ancient people via scarred trees, the kinship between fauna, flora and custodians of the land portray the co-existence and survival of all.

The meaning of the large series of raw digital images produced on the field trips are expanded by manipulating them with motifs from the artist's existing body of work - Naden is predominantly a painter whose work eclectically reflects both traditional and contemporary Aboriginal visual codes.

Burrumbinya - Be Eternal is a digital photographic installation of six images that traces personal identity and collective memory of Wiradjuri/Gamilaraay people of the Western Plains NSW.

These photographs signify a wider sense of Aboriginal living and natural habitat but also the sense of mortality. Human markings on trees by Aboriginal people usually reflect symbols giving evidence



Peter Charuk, *Wheat* 2009. Digital color print. 420 x 594 mm Image © of the artist

that the scarring is the result of artifact making - boomerangs, shields, canoes or materials for temporary shelters such as gunyahs. Markings on trees indicate survival.

Future.

Passing by...a passenger staring through the window – at what? Colours and lines blur to create landscapes in motion that play back through the mind in flashes of light and dark, at times throwing up blinding pattern. But what are we missing? It's not even scratching the surface - our ability to see what is really happening is distorted. The denuded landscapes, scarred and barren – overstocked, over-farmed, throwing out a desolate beauty in the process.

Kim Goldsmith, *Landscapes in motion – working notes.* 2008.

Beside two images from the *Landscapes in Motion* photographic series, from 2008, a range of new media works was produced through the *Perspectives.Art.Ecology.* mentorship process – an interactive community journal (blog), video and digital prints, a soundscape and sensory space within the gallery environment.

The installation *2030*, (2009) aims to reinforce contemporary debate about global warming in an entirely new way - our senses are provoked in an artificially controlled environment that introduces the elements of heat, humidity, sound, touch and smell; inviting the visitor to experience the sensation of a temperature change.

Little River Dreaming (2009) is a contemplative video and sound work that provides both the visual and listening pleasure of water but also a criticism of water usage. It was recorded in the dry bed of Little River, still waiting on a run of water from further upstream.

Bad Moon Rising (2009) is the looping video and sound which put across threatening notion of climate change. How do we and our communities feel about it and are we afraid of the consequences? Are we overwhelmed, confronted, disempowered?

Bad Moon Rising captures the moon - a natural part of our world that remains unchanged, unlike the elements below it that are undergoing gradual and irreversible change.

The title of Goldsmith's major project, *Coming of Age* suggests an idea of the future. It comes from the concept of change occurring in the environment within the next two decades – by 2030.

Coming of Age (2009) is an open platform – an artwork in progress which gathers community voices and reflects contemporary social and ecological issues of small and remote communities of the Central West of NSW (Trangie and Yeoval). It is an open survey on community issues in dealing with their environment. Set in a gallery context, highly interactive and published instantly in the democratic medium of blogging, the audience is invited to provide the answers on the questions: *What is your relationship to the natural environment where you live? What state is the environment in the Central West? How critical is water within your environment? Do you feel you have the ability to change the future of your environment? What is your wish for the environment in 21 years?*



Peter Charuk, *Aqua Lepus*, 2009. Digital still from 5 min loop single channel video work on loop and installation with ice sculpture Image © of the artist