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Thesis/Project Report Sheet

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Abbreviation for degree as given in the University calendar: MFA

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Faculty: Painting

Title: What Kind of relationship with nature does Art provide?

Abstract 350 words maximum:

The relationship with nature through art has been explored as a two fold bond. The first considers a relationship with nature via art and science, where the history and contemporary application of scientific illustration in art is explored; while the second explores past and present connections with nature via art and the landscape, particularly the panoramic tradition.

Historically these relationships have predominately been about dominating nature, mans dominion over the land. Science was seen as the only authority, while our relationships with the land in art, positioned the viewer at a commanding distance above and over the land, as seen in the post colonial panoramic tradition.

In contrast, "The Coorong Series" explores a lived history with nature rather than the historical role of dominance. "The Coorong Series" explores a relationship of knowledge, understanding, and the experience of nature; through two parts. The first combines art and science in "The Coorong Specimen Series", to explore the facts and knowledge that science has provided about certain plants, birds and marine life from the Coorong. Inspiration has been derived from 19thC scientific illustrations and the lyrical prints of the Coorong by Australian Artist John Olsen. Part two explores the immersive experience of the iconic landscape in "The Coorong Landscape Series" providing a relationship that seeks to understand the functionality of the location and to celebrate the unique beauty of this diverse region. Inspiration has been gained from the landscapes by 18th and 19th C artists John Constable and Claude Monet, along with landscapes by contemporary artists, John Walker and Mandy Martin.

Through aesthetic notions such as scientific illustration, panoramic landscape, immersive scale, the collection of work, an expressionistic use of paint, and labeling of each piece like a museum display. "The Coorong landscape series" provides an exploration of a region that immerses the viewer in an experience of the location. The series portrays a relationship with nature through art that educates the viewer about The Coorong region. Connections are made between the land, birds, plants, fish, and human interaction; which results in an ecological consideration of the Coorong. Ultimately it is the educational experience that art provides allowing the viewer to explore a plethora of relationships within nature, and to explore how these relationships have changed or continue to exist within this era.

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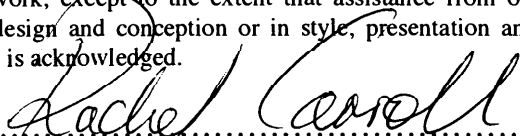
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What Kind of Relationship with Nature does Art Provide?

By Rachel Carroll
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I would like to thank the following people for making this experience and Masters Degree possible. Simon Taylor, Kelly Stewart, and Yaeli Ohana for your support and journeying with me, on the road trip to the Coorong. I would like to thank my family, for their constant support while I completed this, dad, mum, Pat, and Jemima. Thanks to Idris Murphy for the supervision and constant inspiration, and to Peter Pinson and Kate Briscoe for marking the work.

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PREFACE

The practices of European and contemporary artists have informed the development of my work. In this series titled *The Coorong*, to be studied herein, I have visually explored at length the landscape of the Coorong in South Australia, where the interaction of the plants, fish, birds, humans and the land that they inhabit has provided an ecological plethora within the one location. The Coorong is a major wetland area that is at the juncture, of the Murray Darling River and the sea. The area is under a global contract called Ramsar, (established in 1975). This contract stipulates the need to maintain the Coorong as a functioning wetland. In September each year the area is an important migratory flight path for birds that fly from Japan and China to Australia. This area is also the home to one of Australia's largest Aboriginal tribes, the Ngarrindjeri. Due to the high salinity in the wetland, birds such as the Orange-bellied Parrot are not surviving in the area, and fish are in danger of becoming extinct. It is primarily a lack of fresh water due to agricultural practices further north of the Coorong, in the Murray Darling Basin, that has impacted on this unique environment. Lakes Alexandrina and Albert are a large source of fresh water for Adelaide and they are separated from the Coorong via barrages. These barrages have controlled the flow of fresh water into the Coorong since 1964.

In order to fully explore this area and celebrate its natural diversity, I have chosen to produce two bodies of work to explore the relationships in art which explore firstly, nature through science, and secondly nature through landscape art devices. These relationships are primarily concerned with ecology in that they explore the interconnectedness of the area and its species.

In the first series I explore the relationship between science and the museum through a print series that adheres to certain scientific illustration devices.

In the second body of work, I have produced landscapes that explore three Coorong locations, as a series of oil on canvas. These locations in paint provide a relationship with the landscape, one that incorporates my experience of the location in order to engage the viewer in an experience of the land.

The three locations are Parnka Point, 42 Mile Crossing and the Pink Salt Lakes (paralleling the Coorong along the Princes Hwy). In paint I wanted to explore the energy of the place the colour and forms that spoke to me as I worked within the dry lake beds at first light. I want the viewer to see the movement of the elements within the land and experience the excitement of each brush mark as I discovered the energy and the beauty of this diverse landscape, and the excitement of being in the land.

In my own process, it has not just been a matter of connecting with an area via paint, but exploring it, understanding it and questioning it along with trying to find possible solutions for the Coorong's survival. As part of the process, I have stayed in the Coorong with 3 other artists to draw and paint on location. My interest in the interactions of art and science, past and present, plus the role of landscape painting past and present, both have fed the creative process within my own art practice.

It is the important role of art in the process of educating and communicating that has also inspired this body of work. It does not simply provide a backdrop or an illustration for the study of ecology. Art can be a visual documentation of an area, but it is also a means by which to explore and understand the type of relationships we have with the land.

Just as the art work of 19th Century artists such as von Gerard reflected the values of a generation that ultimately lead to the establishment of parks and nature reserves for future generations, I too hope that the work of contemporary artists will continue to pave the path towards a reawakening of these values in our generation and beyond.

INTRODUCTION

“In our post modern era the notion of seeing and representing nature is no longer coined simply as seeing and representing nature for what it is but understanding that as individuals we bring with this notion of representing nature a vision that is far more subjective and bound by cultural processors than previously was considered.”¹

In order to fully appreciate the cultural processors that exist in artworks about nature it is necessary to engage in the aesthetic and cultural considerations of artists from the past and present. For the purpose of this paper, I view artworks that explore nature as ones that also explore a certain relationship with nature. In *The Coorong Series* I have chosen to explore two specific cultural relationships with nature. They exist as two distinct bodies of work, but they also work together as a collection. The first explores a relationship with nature by combining science and art, while the second explores a relationship with nature through landscape, primarily the panoramic landscape.

The first aspect of this research considers how, historically, science and art have been seen as two very separate areas, while in contemporary art practices, they are being united to communicate to a broader audience and to expand the many readings an artwork can provide. Historically, science has been seen as the only authority, but in post modernity scientific truths are seen as negotiable. In light of this I have chosen to explore a relationship with science through a print series of seven species of birds and plants from the Coorong region. The series titled *The Coorong Specimen Series* explores modes of scientific illustration and presentation in order to make comment on past and present relationships with science and nature. In *The Coorong Specimen Series* it is not so much the authority of science that is highlighted or negated, but rather the recognition of the facts that science provides through the classification and archiving processes.

In this series an aesthetic alignment has been made with the Australian artist John Olsen and his prints titled *The Coorong*, along with the botanical illustrations from Post Colonial Australia, including the illustrations by Ferdinand Bauer, Ferdinand Von Mueller and Ludwig Becker; who first came to Australian shores in the 1800's.

In contrast, post modern practices explore science as an authority to be questioned, where certain truths are seen as negotiable. The authority of science is explored by contemporary Australian artist Fiona Hall in the series titled, *Leaf Litter Series*. In this series Hall considers a place for nature within a rhetoric that is dominated by science and money, which is reflected through the juxtaposition of leaves and currency. Hall provides a point of reference for a contemporary exploration of the relationship between science and art, where science still has an authority. *Leaf Litter Series* is viewed in contrast to *The Coorong Specimen Series*. While Hall highlights the authority of science, I seek to highlight the knowledge science provides.

Hall and I share an interest in the functionality of the museum display, and the classification process, as an educational tool and in the role of uniting science and art in both the past and the present. The museum display is a key component to *The leaf litter Series* and *The Coorong Specimen Series*, providing a path to exploring the many relationships between each artwork displayed. The display also provides a place to fully explore the role our museums have, in educating, archiving and researching the vast relationships within nature, providing a legacy of knowledge both historically and currently.

Hall explores the many relationships the series and display provide, such as the relationship between currency, country, and plants in our current era of world plant trade. However, in

¹ Paul Fox, *Drawing on Nature - images and specimens of natural history from the collection of the Museum of Victoria*, Catalogue essay by Naomi Cass, p. 16

The Coorong Specimen Series it is an ecological relationship; one between humans, plant species, bird species and the location, that is the focus.

The second part of this paper focuses on a relationship with the land, primarily through landscape painting, and the tradition of panoramic landscape painting.

This second series titled *The Coorong Landscape Series* considers the function of the panoramic landscape tradition. Historically dominance prevails in this tradition, which is seen in the post colonial tradition, where the viewer is commanding a view over the land, while the second highlights a tradition of immersion through scale and the collection that seeks a relationship through a narrative about co-existence and understanding.

Historically the tradition of panoramic landscape painting has provided a relationship with the land that denotes dominance. This is depicted in post-colonial images by artists such as Eugene von Guerard and William Piguenit. Here nature was kept at a distance, allowing humans to maintain a relationship of dominance. This relationship of dominance is also explored in the contemporary landscapes produced by Mandy Martin who has taken inspiration from post colonial Australian landscapes to highlight the continued dominance and degradation of the Australian landscape in the 2001 series titled: *Inflows the Channel Country*.

While both Martin and I have focused on specific locations that need to be understood more and to be brought to public attention, it has been my focus to highlight the unique beauty of a location through the experience of grandeur that the panoramic landscape provides to the viewer.

In contrast, the second tradition provides a relationship of co-existence. Here the function of landscape and the panorama through immersion is the prevalent experience of this tradition. It was explored in the 19th C and 20th C oil paintings by John Constable in his last series titled the *Six-Footer* and Claude Monet's last series titled *Nymphaeas*. A love of nature was explored through aesthetic consideration such as colour and movement in the work by Monet, the function of narrative and scale was explored via the *Six-Footer* series by Constable. The contemporary Australian artist John Walker also provides a narrative with an underlying concern for the Shoal Haven River in his series of the Bundanon, rendered in his lush oil paintings of the region.

The Coorong Landscape Series similarly seeks to explore this immersive experience of the land, where a time bound event of nature is explored to enable the viewer to consider the beauty of this unique location as well as the underlying allegory that highlights the good and bad aspects of the region's functionality. Through this research each artist has represented nature in paint to reflect a personal experience and a certain relationship with the land; in doing so they have also explored a relationship with nature that reflects an era. Mandy Martin explores the past, post colonial era in order to suggest that Australians have not evolved and created a new relationship with the land, while Constable explored a relationship that reflected farm life and nature in the English countryside, which highlighted little of the post industrial age. Equally Monet's work did not reflect the chaos of France during the post revolutionary period that he was experiencing. Similarly, it is the primary focus in *The Coorong Landscape Series* to highlight the natural beauty and diversity of the area and not the underlying threat of species extinction that is pending due to the lack of water in the Murray Darling Basin.

In our current era, where our relations with our Asian neighbours and modern technology has taken precedence in the art community, as seen in the 2006 Sydney Biennale, it has been my focus in this body of work, to return to our relationships with our European history, as well as the history of science, and the panoramic landscape. Relationships are the focus in *The Coorong Series*, a relationship with nature via science and a relationship with the land, via the panorama, to provide an overall experience of the location. It is in this experience, where a relationship with the location and a relationship with an era can be fully considered, resulting in an educational summation and awareness of this unique location: The Coorong.

Part One: The Role of Science and Art: *The Coorong Specimen Series*

*A scientific theory is like a picture of nature because it makes claims about what is essential for the re-representation of nature and acts as a depiction of this....classifications of nature are enormously revealing of what is important, of what the classifier believes to be important.*²

Historically the classifier has been a scientist. Scientists have given us a particular view of the natural world, one that was considered completely objective and true. This past scientific view is aligned with modernist views. Science held a particular authority towards nature and shaped the way we relate to nature. Now in the Post Modern era this view of science has changed. It is no longer the single authority, nor is it the only solution. In an article by Piers Blaickie titled Global Environmental change, he has argued, from a Post Modern perspective,

“[T]he role of environmental scientists in policy making as ‘talking truth to power’ and as the only rational and legitimate brokers between the ‘real’ environment and the rest of us is rejected. Instead scientific truth can be seen to be negotiated, rather than universal and invariably reproduced under the same experimental conditions and assumptions, whoever carries them out.”³

While this perspective is valid, it is also undeniable that science has truths to tell, there is fact and validity to scientific methods. As highlighted in the words of Naomi Cass; *“The biological sciences seek to place all living things in a specific and unique position within a picture of nature. As a representation of nature, biology is extremely effective. I could think of science as a true picture of nature – one that can stand in for nature”*⁴

For this reason, the Coorong Specimen series remains faithful to scientific illustration and classification. This is achieved through the use of a printing technique, central placement of each bird and plant and the labeling of the specimens. Science as imperfect and negotiable is viewed in this series through the use of line, which is not scientifically perfect or exact. It is not so much an exact scientific representation of nature that is sought but an experience of the movement and energy of each species as viewed on location.

Through *The Coorong Specimen Series* I am interested in how science has been perceived in the past and the present. To question this role of science I have chosen to explore two aspects of scientific illustrations as visual devices: firstly, the role of classification and the specimen and secondly, the role of the visual display as seen in the museum display of the series.

2 Paul Fox, Drawing on Nature - images and specimens of natural history from the collection of the Museum of Victoria, Catalogue essay by Naomi Cass, p. 17

3 Global Environmental Change, vol 6,no2 1996. p.81

4 Paul Fox, Drawing on Nature - images and specimens of natural history from the collection of the museum of Victoria, Catalogue essay by Naomi Cass, p. 14

In order to consider the role of scientific illustration it is necessary to consider the origins of this visual device. The first scientific illustrations were used in the Middle Ages for easy identification of herbs used in pharmacology and descriptive botany. These first illustrations were produced on woodblocks for book illustrations. This process was superseded by etching (Intaglio printing). Some engravings were heavily detailed tonally, so that hand colouring was no longer necessary. Historically, scientific drawings of specimens were produced for a variety of reasons, but primarily they were to record, classify, and name species as a means of gaining a better understanding of the land at this time.

During the voyage of the first fleet, illustrations were produced by Joseph Banks who sailed with Captain James Cook on the Endeavour to document new foreign land, Australia. Cook and Banks were the first to give Australia the name 'terra nullius', as they saw little potential in this sandy soiled land. As a scientist, Banks was more of a collector and a cataloguer, therefore little was discovered about the extensive eco systems within Australia. This was not helped by their decision not to see the knowledge potential of the indigenous community.

In contrast, Charles Darwin sought to transform our understanding of not only biology but also his own understanding of nature. He arrived in Sydney aboard the Beagle in 1836, to later pen the discovery of the theory of evolution. Unlike Banks, Darwin saw the potential in this unique land and the potential in its first inhabitants, the Aborigines. He sought to understand the lands natural processors, not just to name and classify. Darwin wasn't the only scientist interested in this unique land.

It was in 1801 that the ship the Investigator, captained by Matthew Flinders, brought Ferdinand Bauer to our shores. He was a scientist and artist largely unknown until the Sydney Museum displayed his work in 1998. He produced detailed scientific illustrations of Australian plants and birds, which captured the detailed beauty of the species for records in England.

Scientific illustrations were not usually etched and hand coloured by the same scientist who made the first observations in the field. Bauer was unique in that he completed the whole process, and this can be seen in (fig.1) titled *Grevilles banksii*, a native from Queensland. It is a Banksia Coccinea from his illustrations *Florae Novae Hollandiae* in 1813, a book he published consisting of 15 plates. Influenced by Robert Brown, a botanist who studied in Edinburgh, Bauer included the detailed magnifications of the different floral pieces. Bauer is considered to excel in hand colouring and delicate detail. When his illustrations were rediscovered in 1975, they were considered "perhaps the finest botanical illustrations ever made".⁵

Unlike Banks, Bauer, and Darwin, Ferdinand Von Mueller took the scientific illustration and classification of Australian species into a new era. Von Mueller was a pioneer in terms of Australia's beginnings in botanical science and botanical illustration. He was also the leading force at a time which saw Australia seeking independence from Europe in both science and politics. Von Mueller immigrated to Australia in 1847. He was the first botanist/chemist to extensively record and document the flora of South Australia, which he began in 1852.

Thanks to Von Mueller's efforts and extensive traveling, collecting and collating in and around Australia, he was able to publish many books that housed the extensive examples of his research and also the diversity of Australia's flora. An example is a book titled *The Fragmenta Phytographiae Australiae (1852-1882) A Second Systematic census of Australian Plants*, which contains several illustrated monographs, along with the description and illustration of the Myoporinus plants of Australia (1886-1887).

5 Martyn Rix The Art of Botanical Illustration, p.120

Many artists were apart of his team including Helena Forde who produced the image (see fig.2) *Flora of the Darling River*, and Ludwig Becker, who studied painting, natural sciences and the classics in Germany. An example of Becker's work can be seen in (fig.3) titled *Murray Cod*. This illustration by Becker is also an example of how science provides the analytical description of nature through the presentation of its parts. Illustrations like these can show how scientific illustration is free from any contextual influences, such as economic, social, ecological and religious.

By 1901 botanists were largely finished with exploration and discovery and it was then time to consolidate and develop the uses of botanical science and illustration. Botanists hired by the Australian Government helped within primary industries, such as agriculture and forestry, along with in house work at universities for education. This resulted in illustrations that had more of a diagnostic focus.

The past provides an aesthetic history of scientific illustration that relays a notion of preciousness, age, and fact. By exploring this aesthetic in a contemporary setting the past is revisited for the legacy of knowledge it has provided through the classification process and in the archiving process within the museum display.

These notions are explored at length in *The Coorong Specimen Series* along with the sense of re-discovery, where science and art, combine in this era to provide a new view of the natural environment, and the relationships we have with it.

The Coorong Specimen Series: Classification and the Museum Display

Through classification, science has historically had an authority over nature, but this relationship has evolved to include metaphor and convention, providing description as well as a visual of nature. It is this evolution of the authority of science that I wish to explore in contemporary art practices.

Illustrations from the past have provided inspiration for the first series, *The Coorong Specimen Series*. Scientific illustration processes such as printing, central placement, single motifs of bird or plant, labeling and display provide a considered look at the unique wildlife of the Coorong region. Scientific illustration also inspires me through the notion of discovery where they hark to a past where the first discoveries were being made about the plants and animals in Australia. By incorporating scientific illustration devices and display considerations into this body of work I am choosing to highlight a relationship with nature through science. Science provides insight and knowledge about a region and its species. It is not the authority of science that is explored but the recognition of facts provided by science that is highlighted in *The Coorong Specimen Series*. In this series which began as sketches on sight, I have chosen to explore the relationships between specific plant and bird species within the region and their corresponding locations.

Through classification and the museum display I am creating a metaphor about the relationships between the birds, plants and locations within the Coorong, which is an ecological concept. These metaphors help explain the ecological processes that are at work within the Coorong in order to provide a deeper appreciation of the area's unique function, as a wetland, a bird sanctuary and a unique ecosystem within itself. The overall role of the Coorong's ecosystem in relation to Australia's largest river system, the Murray Darling is also explored.

By providing these insights about the area's function and purpose, knowledge and understanding prevails, which adds further appreciation of the area. Through appreciation comes the desire to preserve. In preserving we have to understand the relationships that already exist within a region, the relationships we seek to have within the region, while finding ones that are about sustaining the region. By creating this series it is this notion of relationships that has fueled my desire to create for the viewer an opportunity to explore our past and present relationships with science in the Coorong.

A relationship with science and art in this series is juxtaposed to create a metaphor about how an area operates, in order to convey knowledge and history. Science in the past was a relationship with nature which wavered between discovery and exploitation. The science, as viewed in this present series is a chance to continue the discoveries of the past, but to also highlight a need to consider new ways of seeing how the area operates. Even now, little is known about the region's biodiversity and ecological relationships. New discoveries are needed to understand how the area functions on an ecological level in order to preserve and sustain the delicate ecosystems that have been in place for thousands of years.

Science and art provides a new aesthetic platform for considering new discoveries about a region while highlighting current considerations. In order to experience the extensive possibilities of this aesthetic; where science and art unite. It is necessary to consider the function of combining art and science in another contemporary art practice, that of Australian artist Fiona Hall.

Hall has employed scientific illustration methods extensively in the series titled *The Leaf Litter Series*. In this series Hall explores the relationships between sciences, nature and the economy. Hall has presented leaves on bank notes, as a museum display, to create her own metaphors. Through juxtaposition Hall has provided a place for discourse that primarily addresses the authority of science in this evolving practice of scientific illustration.

Through metaphors and convention, Hall is interested in the function of science and issues of Postmodernism. In *The Leaf Litter Series* Hall has produced scientifically exact, black and white drawings of leaves, using gouache and juxtaposed them with bank notes. In this series the leaves' country of origin corresponds with the country's currency. They are presented on a wall at odd intervals like a museum display. This series was produced by Hall in 1999 – 2003 during a residency in Sri Lanka.

Hall has provided inspiration in relation to my own practice, to explore the function of art and science combined, and to highlight the variety of relationships within this aesthetic.

In order to fully appreciate the ecology relationships in *The Coorong Specimen Series* I have chosen two aspects of the scientific illustration process to explore at length. One is the classification process and the second is the function of the museum display. Both provide an overall picture of the species in the region, and our relationships with nature now, and in the past.

*An ecological relationship is one that considers the whole region and not just the one aspect. It is a scientific term defined as; “(the scientific study of) the pattern of relations of plants, animals, and people to each other and to their surroundings.”*⁶

The Process of Classification

In the *Coorong Specimen Series* prints have been produced and classified like a scientific illustration. In this series I have produced 7 dry points comprising of the plants: *Ruppia* and Beaded Glasswort, the birds: Orange-Bellied Parrot, Malleefowl, Pelican and the Curlew Sandpiper and the fish: the Macquarie Perch. Each is labeled with the common name, the scientific name and whether they are rare or abundant within the region. See (fig. 4-9)

The series utilizes aspects of scientific illustration processes. This includes printing, central placement and labeling. This creates an educational tool where science provides the facts about the relationships between species and the location they inhabit. The labeling also provides information about the individual species; the name which creates a link to the past, when the species were first discovered, and the labels also provide insight into the rarity or abundance of each species within the region.

In providing a link to the past the viewer is asked to consider the invaluable time that scientists have given to collating these names and facts for our education and understanding of a region, and to consider how further insights have been made and are being made today within a region. One of these insights highlights our need to maintain the native plants within a region. Knowing that certain plants are from South Australia, and also noting how important it is to remove weeds (which are plants that have not come from these regions). I have chosen only native plants and birds in this series.

The Labels: The Coorong Specimen series

Ruppia, *Ruppia* sp., Ruppiaceae, endangered
Beaded Glasswort, *Starcocormia quinqueflora*, abundant
Macquarie Perch, *Macquaria australasica*, endangered
Curlew Sandpiper, *Calidris ferrunginea*, abundant
Malleefowl, *Leipoa Ocellata*, rare
Pelican, *Pelicanus conspicillatus*, endangered
Orange-Bellied Parrot, *Neophema chrysogaster*, rare, possibly extinct

Similarly, Hall has labeled the specimens of leaves in the series titled *Leaf Litter* by using both botanical names and common names to enhance the relationship between art and science. These labels constitute a way of exploring the many questions raised through this body of work.

Hall comments on this: “*The multiple parallel systems of plants names seem to me to eloquently indicate widely different outlooks and levels of awareness.*”⁷

One aspect of awareness that Hall’s piece provides can be seen through the use of labels and classification, providing a discourse about the original and historical belief that science is the single authority. Through classification and naming, ownership is implied and through ownership

⁶ Longman, *Dictionary of contemporary English*

⁷ Julia Ewington, Fiona Hall .p.155

there is power. Power and ownership are addressed in this series through the use of the specimen and classification as a visual device, but it is augmented through the use of bank notes. By rendering the specimens on banknotes Hall comments on humanity's ownership of nature and use of nature. In this series nature has become a commodity.

The title *Leaf Litter* adds to this notion of power over nature; the title encapsulates Hall's concerns for the environment, not just as a commodity but a disposable commodity. This in turn raises questions in relation to how nature can be better appreciated. Hall implies that we must consider how the value of nature has changed and needs to change.

Hall has used the juxtaposition of the specimen and currency to question the use of nature as a commodity, and as a disposable commodity, as the title suggests. This provides a metaphor about the role of trade in relation to nature. Nature has a history of trade, where many colonies were sustained by plant trade. The work poses questions about the history of colonialism and the development of world economies, how plants are responsible for the rapid growth and wealth of many countries e.g. coffee beans and orchids.

In the 1960's this question of using plants for economic gain was explored by the German fluxus artist Joseph Beuys. Beuys hoped that money would one day no longer determine the value of our resources, instead, the environment as a resource would dictate how our economies would be run. Ultimately, our environment has no monetary value; it is not until a river stops providing fish and fresh water that the cost of buying and transporting fish and water into a town highlights the true monetary value of the environment.

The economic possibilities of the environment are addressed in the *Leaf Litter* Series where the juxtaposition of currency and leaves allows the viewer to question the prevalence of this currency. There is also something iconic about the leaves painted on banknotes suggesting leaves could be the new currency. What if we put nature on our bank notes instead of figure heads? Would this give nature a priority? The leaves and their display raise many questions: Does money grow on trees? What are the costs to our environment when nature is treated as a commodity? What role does science play in this monetary realm? Has science sometimes used nature as litter? By also presenting the old in a contemporary setting it also asks: are these relationships still valid?

While Hall and Beuys focus on the commodity and trade of nature, it is through the labeling and classification process within the *Coorong Specimen Series* that knowledge and understanding takes precedence. By adding labels such as 'rare' or 'abundant' to the species, the notion of scientific truth to the specimens is given. *The Coorong Specimen Series* thus acknowledges the role science has in providing important facts about species abundance and how a species functions. (See figs. 4-9.) In naming each species, identification and language provide a common ground for understanding. This is something the Aborigines also used. It can be argued that: "*Aboriginal knowledge of nature, like scientific knowledge it constitutes a coherent and comprehensive system of classification and relationship, connecting patterns and symmetries, negotiation and authority, explanation and application.*"⁸

Clearly, Aboriginal knowledge is not simply a matter of spirituality, myth or hunting and fishing, as explored in the catalogue essays compiled by Paul Fox, *Drawing on Nature*. In the essay titled *Nature and Knowledge in Australia*, it is explained that to believe so is not only "misinformed [but] tragically misleading."⁹ The fact that the Aborigines used similar classifications and labeling processes highlights that the naming of individual species is not necessarily consistent with white European strategies of domination.

⁸ Paul Fox, *Drawing on Nature*, p.20

⁹ Ibid

The labels on the individual specimens in *The Coorong Specimen Series* provides a way to learn more about the individual locations within the Coorong and it is a way to connect the species to each location, and species to each other e.g. plant to bird. This also enhances the educational aspect of this body of work. As a series of specimens this educational aspect can also be found in the function of the print as a multiple, where it has been reproduced to spread the truths about the species in the Coorong.

In the 1960's, Beuys also noted the importance and function of multiples. Through his own multiples series Beuys saw the potential of spreading the message about an idea. Beuys compared this process of spreading ideas with how a writer publishes a book, and through the distribution of that book, thus the distribution of the writer's ideas.¹⁰ Similarly, by producing multiple prints of the one species, a message about the individual species can better circulate, for the purpose of creating awareness about the Coorong.

Through print making *The Coorong Specimen Series* also adheres to traditional methods of specimen production for publication. The size and central placement of the bird, plant or fish is also important. *The Coorong Specimen Series* adheres to certain scientific display devices, as seen in the use of dry point, which adheres to the traditional printing processes of the early botanical illustrations. One aspect of this series that does not connect to a scientific representation is found in the actual line work of each piece. The images are not as precise as a scientific illustration.

In contrast to my own process, Hall has learnt at length how to render the leaf adhering to methods of scientific illustration. (See fig.10 Detail, *Adiantum raddianum*; maidenhair fern) With detail and accuracy Hall has placed each leaf centrally on the bank notes using an untraditional media – gouache – which has resulted in tonally exact drawings of leaves, reminiscent of 18th and 19th century etchings. (fig.11 detail, *Sambucus nigra*; common elder).

While Hall in the *Leaf litter* series has adhered strictly to scientific illustration presentation and line work, I have chosen to explore a more expressive and emotive line which can be better aligned to the aesthetic considerations of the Australian artist John Olsen.

John Olsen's lyrical impressions of the birds and insects from the Coorong have provided inspiration for my own series. Olsen is known for his macro and micro explorations of the various regions within Australia, often coined as ecological explorations, Olsen's images focus on the interconnected and integrated equilibrium within nature.

His most recent series is an etching series from the Coorong titled the *Owl, Coorong and Emus, Coorong* (see figs. 12 and 13). Olsen has incorporated a flowing and continuous sketchy line. In the Owl etching he has also added colour. The line highlights the energy and movement of each animal. He has successfully explored the movement of each animal highlighting the essence of a moment in time, on location. "Olsen's humour, squabbling cormorants, inquisitive and always looking for a feed...Several emus with chicks dancing around low clumps of grasses when disturbed by the noise of a vehicle. Olsen's Coorong etchings were destined to become a summation of the teeming bird-life of the region."¹¹

I have utilized the dry point printing technique in *The Coorong Specimen Series* in order to explore a similar looseness of line. The process allows the line to prevail, where the detail of each species is kept to a minimum. In the Coorong series I seek to highlight a sense of the sketch, as if

10 Heiner Bastian, Joseph Beuys – Editions, Scottish National Gallery of modern Art Edinburgh, 1999, p.22

11 Ken McGregor & Jeffrey Makin, *Teeming With Life*, John Olsen, His Complete Graphics 1957 – 2005, p.26

created on location where the movement and energy of the birds and plants are relayed as a moment in time. The dry points are hand coloured with gouache to describe further the individual species.

Scientific specimens traditionally lack a certain individuation, due to the exactness in line and presentation. Unlike specimens in the museum my work has an emotional content in the work. My work alludes to museum like qualities such as the chosen printing process and central placement of the image; however my work embraces expressive qualities of line. The expressive line is the emotional content that is otherwise absent in museum pieces. I wanted to add a certain amount of personality to these pieces, although the exactness and perfection of a museum piece is also alluring, I did not want to be seen as simply making a direct copy of the museum display.

Within the 2006 MCA symposium the artist Petra Gememboeck succinctly surmises the function of art and science as collaboration when she says *“By interjecting interventions between and among our respective territories of knowledge, we hope to create a new mode of practice that is neither trapped by our territories nor a duplex copy of them, but rather multidimensional transmissions reinterpreting our meaning structures.”*¹²

It is a similar focus for *The Coorong Specimen Series* where I seek not to simply replicate scientific illustrations in order to convey the history or the role that specimens provide. Science historically does not seek to create an emotional response, the emotion that art provides. Science is about exploring and presenting the facts. In producing this work on a scientific platform I simply wish to adhere to the facts, the facts about the abundance or rarity of each species in the Coorong.

The Scientific illustration by Anne Musser of an extinct Possum, (see fig.14) is an example of an artwork that provides an emotional response within the museum context. This brings us to the second part of the specimen series: the Museum display. Here, labels and display are combined to reiterate the role of the museum and its function as an educational platform.

¹² Petra Gememboeck, Discourse of Intervention: A Language for Art and Science Collaboration , MCA 2006, CDROM New Constellations, Art, Science and Society

The Museum Display

The display of *The Coorong Specimens Series* as a museum piece reminds the viewer of the important role the museum has in storing, researching and finding solutions. The display functions as an educational tool through the combined use of visuals and labels, but also through the choice to display certain pieces together in order to provide a link and a story between each piece. The pieces work individually and together as a whole body of work. (see fig.15 complete display.) The viewer is initially drawn to the visual and the aesthetic qualities that are used to render the bird or fish, but underlying is the label which addresses the underlying concern: rare or abundant. This causes us to question: how has our use of the land undermined this species ability to prosper in the area?

Another example of this underlying rhetoric can be seen in a single piece at the Sydney Museum, in an illustration by Anne Musser, of a beautifully detailed illustration of a possum. This illustration is rendered adhering to scientific illustration, using therefore central placement, fine detail and the label which provides a distinct reference to note the rarity of this species. Titled *The Fossil Possum – Miralina doylei, Extinct* (see fig.14), the piece highlights the role that the museum has in housing examples of possibly the last references to a species. Illustrations such as these remind the viewer that it is in the museum where such examples can be found, where the knowledge about the past can be accessed and questioned. Questions such as, why is the possum extinct and how did it become extinct must surely arise in the viewer's mind.

It is then realized how beneficial the role of the museum is to house such detailed examples of particular species. It also reminds the viewer how the museum is a place for the recreation of animals when only the fossil can provide the necessary information about a species existence. This illustration by Anne Musser also provides an example of how science and art combined can provide factual information about a species and at the same time draw an emotional response from the viewer. The viewer is drawn in by the beauty and delicate detail of the possum only to be taken aback after reading the title. Just as a Gallery may house the paintings of a landscape forever lost, the museum can house the specimens and illustrations of extinct and rare flora and fauna.

Similarly, it was my motive in *The Coorong Specimen Series* to remind the viewer of the museum's role through the display, as a reminder, that we do not want these species from the Coorong to simply become specimens of what did exist in the Coorong. Through the museum's we are also reminded of the important role scientists have in educating, collating and exploring possible solutions to the mysteries of nature. Science does not have all the answers about nature, but science has provided some insight into how an area operates.

“If science has become astute enough to halt before the ultimate questions, its perspicacity has nevertheless discovered perfection and purpose where formerly men felt only chance and caprice.”¹³

The Coorong Specimen Series is presented as a museum piece to tell a story about the individual species of the Coorong and to show the interaction between birds, plants and the locations. The Coorong Museum display does not set out to highlight the dominance science has over nature, instead it celebrates the educational role art and science can provide to the viewer.

The educational aspect of the series and the museum display functions by showing how the species and regions within the Coorong are connected. This notion of connection between the specimen series and the locations of the Coorong reiterates the interconnectedness of nature. Thus understanding how an area operates can be considered at length.

¹³ Max J. Friedlander, *Landscape, Portrait, Still-life: their origin and development*, New York, 1963 p.114

In *The Coorong Specimen Series* relationships are created visually where specific birds and plants are chosen to explore specific relationships. This is seen in the relation between the *Orange-bellied Parrot*, and the *Beaded glasswort* which is its food source and in turn both can be found at Parnka Point. While the *Malleefowl* is usually located around mallee shrub areas south of salt creek, found near 42 Mile Crossing. The *Ruppia grass*, an aquatic grass, is located at the edges of ephemeral saline lakes, which is 42 mile crossing. While the *Curlew sandpipers* remain close to the Coorong Lagoon, around Parnka Point. The *Macquarie Perch* found in the upper reaches of the Murray Darling River reminds the viewer of the connection between the Coorong and this huge river system, which meanders through Queensland, New South Wales, and Victoria, before ending at the Coorong in South Australia.

Another example of the museum display can be found in the in *The Leaf litter series*. Here Hall has displayed the works at odd intervals across the wall like a museum display. (See fig.16) The museum display further enhances the scientific relationship of the pieces. The museum is a place of history (archives) and discovery (education). As a museum display a story is created about the leaves to be read by the viewer. The individual pieces are a complete statement, where each leaf in the display combined with bank notes, conveys a story about each plant's country of origin and the role it has within that country. As a complete installation the piece speaks of the relationship between countries due to nature, allowing the viewer to visually explore how nature has created and continues to create links between countries globally.

Hall has studied the relations between plants, country of origin, currency and trade. Like the scientists of the past Hall has incorporated metaphor and convention to explore the subtle role science has had historically and even now to present to the viewer certain truths about nature, ones that often involves the economic gain and control over nature. The notion of human dominance over nature is highlighted through this display, as nature is juxtaposed with currency, highlighting the use of nature as a commodity, which is sold between countries.

Although the species within the *Coorong Specimen Series* are not sold as a commodity, monetary value is highlighted through possible loss. No amount of money can bring individual species back into existence. Just as Hall's series highlights the monetary gain in shipping exotics throughout the world, it is through *The Coorong Series* that I wish to highlight the importance of maintaining species that are native to the region. Plants from another country or exotics as they are named, encroach on the space and resources that natives need to survive. It is to be noted that in this series I have not included any 'exotics' such as the European carp fish.

The individual works piece together as a museum display to interconnect and to tell a story about the ecological relationships within the region, providing the viewer with a picture of what the area is like and how it functions. They are also a reminder of the need to preserve the native species within the region, as this is a display about the natives that thrive in the area, not about the weeds or exotics that have taken over and need to be removed.

Conclusion – Part One

As classifiers artists challenge the modernist scientific view. By presenting it in a new context and exploring the new relationships that science, the museum and art can create together a certain view of nature. It provides an opportunity to emphasize certain relationships, ones that explore interconnectedness, an idea that equates to ecological thinking processes.

It is the history of scientific illustration and the coexisting relationships of nature, in art and science that are addressed by the *Coorong Specimens Series*. Relationships of coexistence can be explored to question the abundance of a species within the Coorong, and why rarity is occurring. Historically these concepts of coexistence have not been as strong; humans were more concerned with dominating nature than sustaining nature, but these specimens also hark to a past that reminds the viewer of a time when scientific information was collated to record information about how the land could be best utilized. It is in this educational process provided by *The Coorong Specimen Series* where time can be taken to once again re-access how the land is being used and seek to obtain more knowledge about how certain areas function, for the purpose of improving practices of sustainability.

In the past, scientists such as Banks were interested in the exotic potential of various plant species in Australia, but failed to note its diversity and ecosystems in any detail. In Australia the soils are fragile and the climate conditions are unpredictable and the introduction of hard-hoofed animals into the country only worsened the already 'skeletal' soils that were easily leached of nutrients. The specimens created by Banks act as a reminder of a time when the mistakes were made. Similarly, Hall explored a past in *The Leaf Litter Series* which is a reminder of when the concept of trade and exotics prevailed. It also highlights how even today the use of plants for commercial trade still exists. In an era where it is desirable to maintain the native plants and animals that are better suited to the land than introduce exotics that become weeds and take over the resources needed to maintain native habitats, such reminders are exceedingly timely.

In the *Coorong Specimen Series* I do not seek to highlight a past where mistakes were made, nor does it seek to deny the dominance science has historically had. Instead, the past is explored for the abundance of knowledge and understanding it provides, through classification.

By also presenting the past in a contemporary setting, it reminds the viewer of how we need to learn from the past and not simply use the knowledge to dominate nature once more, but to use it as a means of understanding and appreciating the natural state of a location as it remains intact. In combining art and science in this contemporary setting it allows new relationships between the two to be explored which can open the door to new discoveries. Even now through science the land and its species can be explored to discover new ways of sustaining eco relations within the Coorong. This series seeks to highlight such possibilities. Aesthetically, Olsen provides the lyrical inspiration that I seek to consider in the animated use of line that explores the life and energy of the individual personalities that reside in the Coorong. The lines represent the energy of being on the location, that sweeping urgency to complete a considered study before the subject changes or moves, the sketchy line of a moment in time.

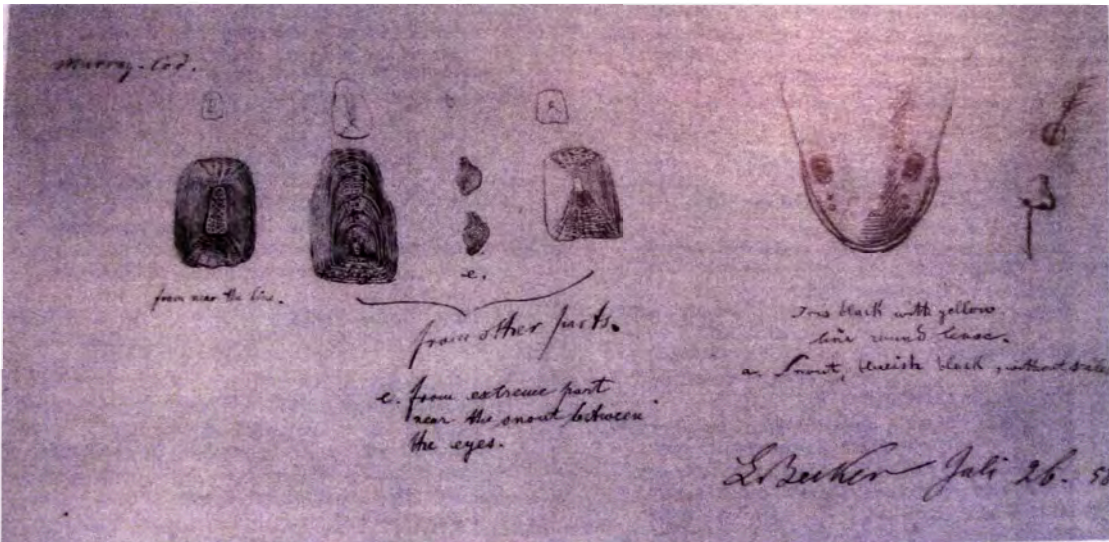
In comparison, paintings that are about the land provide another relationship for the viewer to explore, one that incorporates the function and use of the land, along with an experience of the land. By allowing the viewer to become immersed in the location through the panoramic landscape process, relationships with the land past, present and the future can be explored. In *The Coorong Landscape Series* the ecological relationships explored are about a need for a relationship with the land that highlights an understanding and interconnectedness.



(fig.1) Ferdinand Bauer, *Grevillea banksii*, 1813



(fig.2) Helena Forde, *Flora of the Darling River*, 1865

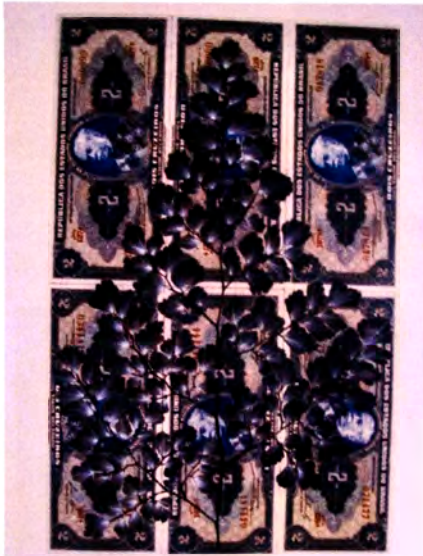


8. Ludwig Becker Murray Cod

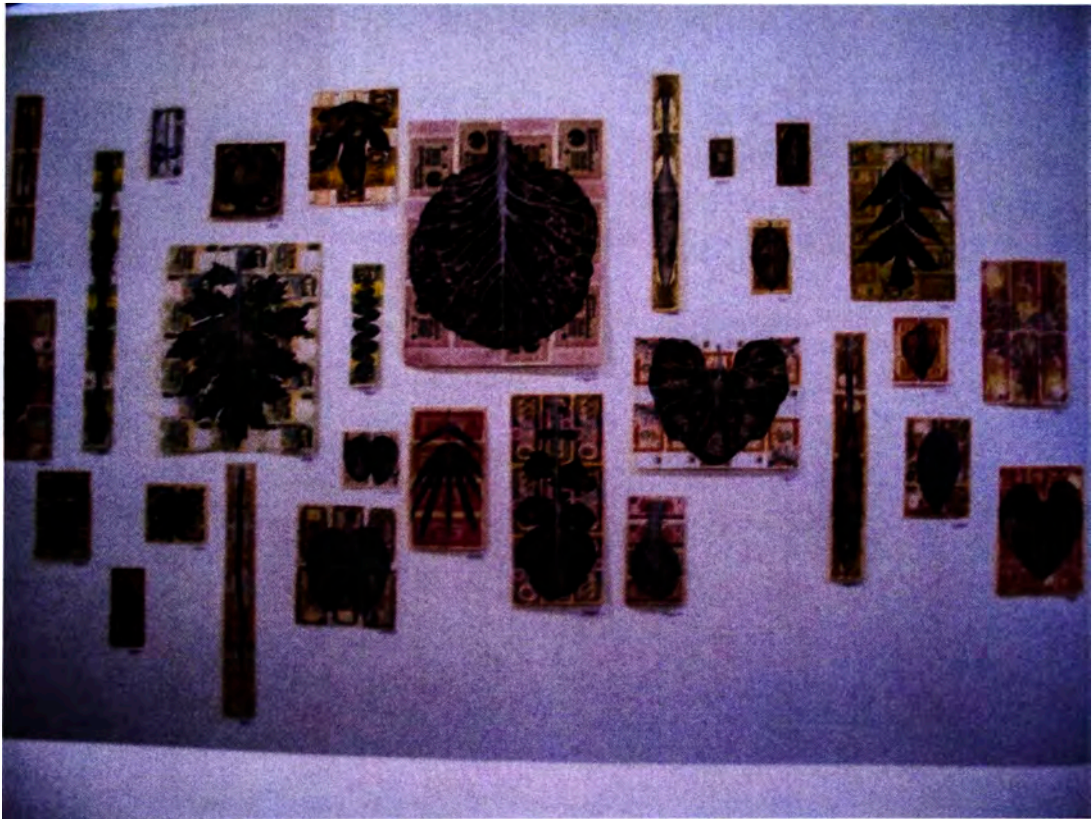
(fig.3)Ludwig Becker, *The Murray Cod*. Pencil, 1858

Fiona Hall

Adiantum raddianum; Maiden fern (detail) 1999 – 2003
Gouache on banknotes (fig. 10)



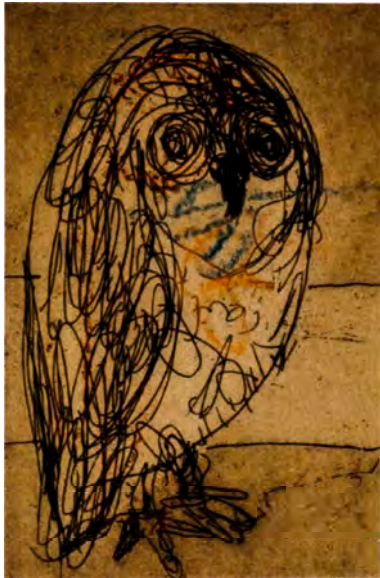
Sambucus nigra; common elder
Gouache on bank notes (detail) 1999 -2003 (fig11)



Fiona Hall, *Leaf Litter*, 1999- 2003 (fig. 15)



John Olsen, Etching, Emus, Coorong, 2006 (fig .13)



John Olsen
Etching
Owl, Coorong, 2006 (Fig. 12)



Anne Musser, *The Fossil Possum – Miralina doylei, Extinct*, hand coloured illustration, 2004 (fig.14)

*Coorong Specimen Series
2006/07*



Beaded Glasswort



Mallee Fowl



Orange-bellied Parrot



Curlew Sandpiper



Ruppia

(Fig 4-9)
(fig 15)

All dry point, hand coloured with gouache



Macquarie Perch



W.C. Piquenit, *The Flood in the Darling*, Oil on Canvas, 122.5 x 199.3cm, 1895 (fig.17)

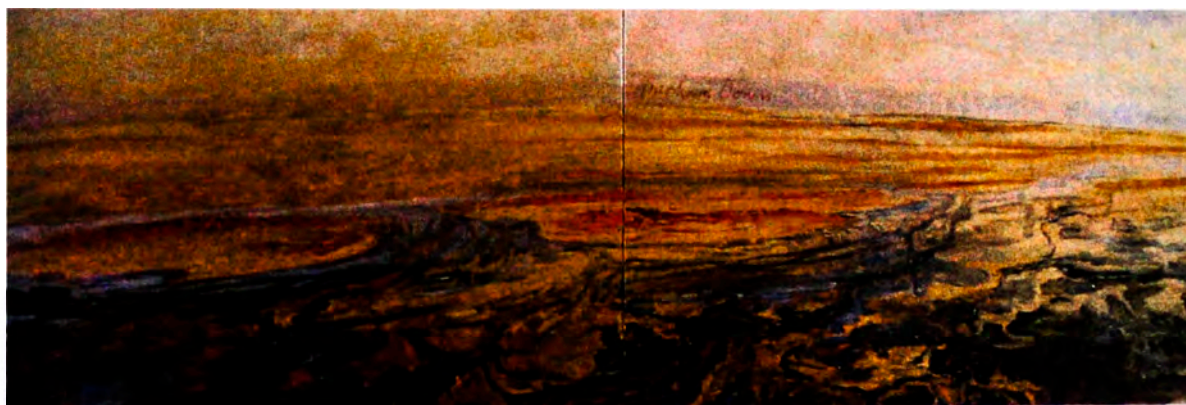


Eugene Von Gerard, *Sketches of the Murray Darling* 1855, Pencil on paper (fig. 18)

Mandy Martin



Mirages on Currareva, Junction of Barcoo and Thomson, Oil on Canvas, 90cm x 165cm, 2001 (fig.22)



Cooper's Creek in flood at Durham Downs, oil, ochre, pigment/linen, 90 x 330cm, 2001 (fig .23)



Cooper Creek on Currareva Station, Oil on Canvas, 2001 (fig .28)

The Coorong Series -2006/07 - *“The notion of experiential unity is central here for art does not consist of objects but of situations in which experiences occur”*¹



The Pink Salt Lake, oil on canvas, 220 x 90cm, 2007 (fig. 21)

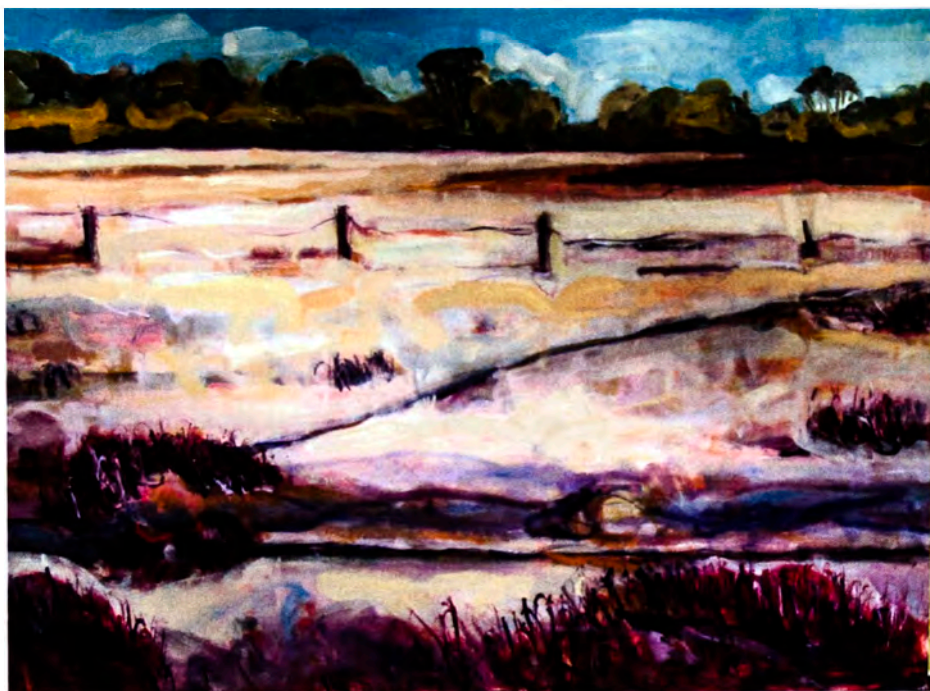


Parnka Point, Oil on Canvas, 320 x 90cm, 2007 (fig.19)



42 Mile Crossing, Oil on Canvas, 220 x 90cm, 2007 (fig. 20)

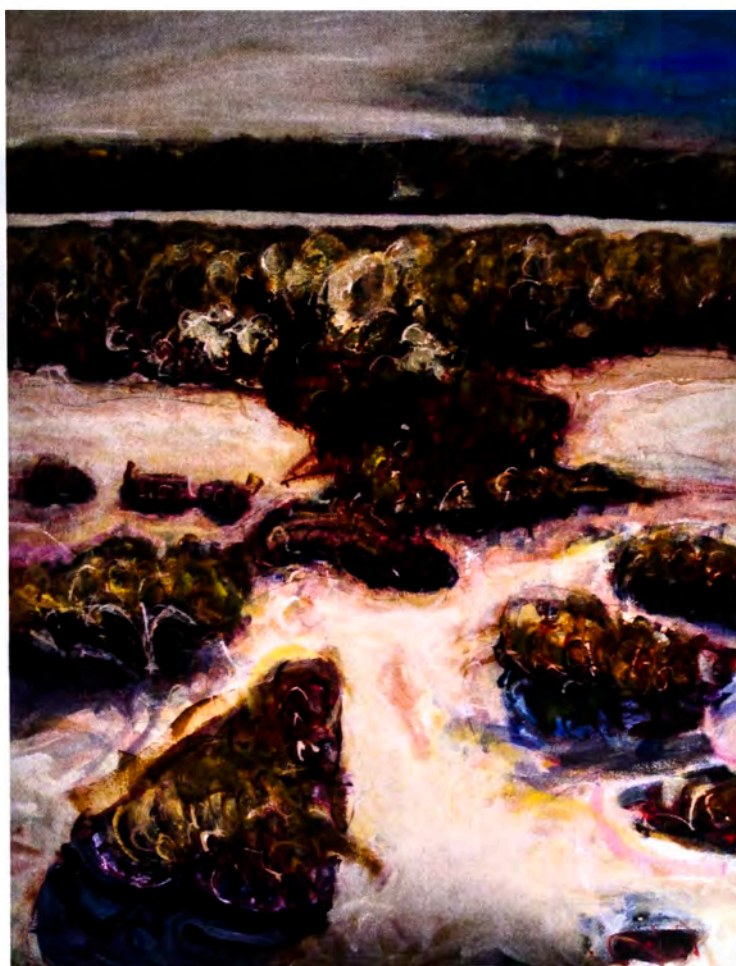
¹ Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell, *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*. P.36



42 Mile Crossing-7am, Oil on Canvas, 120 x 90cm, 2007(fig.27)



Pink Salt Lake I, Oil on Canvas, 120x90cm, 2007 (fig.26)



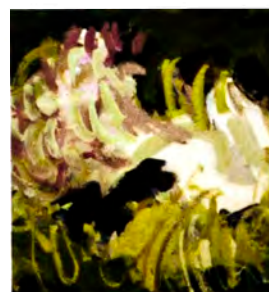
42 Mile Crossing II, Oil on Canvas, 90 x120 cm, 2007 (fig.25)



Detail Parnka Point (fig .33)



Detail: Parnka Point (fig. 31, & 32)



Monet

Nympheas, 1926, Oil on Canvas, 9 panel, 2 m x 12 m each (fig. 24)



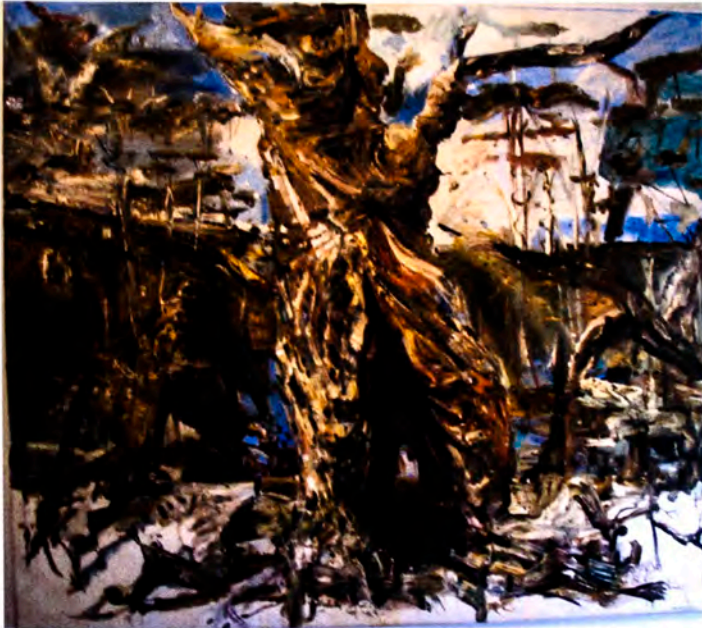
Part of the *Nympheas* in L'Orangerie, Paris
(Detail), *Nympheas*



John Constable, *The Hay Wain*, Oil On canvas,
1821 (fig.29)



John Constable, *View over the Stour near Denham*, Oil on canvas, 1822 (fig. 30)



John Walker, *The Hollow Tree*, Oil on Canvas, 2005 (fig.34)



John Walker, *The Dry Dam*, Oil on Canvas, 2004 (fig.35)

42 Mile Crossing
Ephemeral Saline Lakes
South of the Coorong Lagoon

Filled with water only during rain or from groundwater during winter, dry in summer. Supports aquatic grasses such as *Ruppia* sp.

42 Mile Crossing- Ephemeral Saline Lake

Label (fig. 36)

*Panorama: -“improving the nature of the recorded image and making that image more real by 'immersing' the viewer in the experience.”*¹⁴

Part Two: *The Coorong Landscape Series*: The Panoramic Landscape; a relationship with the land.

The idea of relationships is a key component to how artists and viewers of art associate with the land. Relationships with nature reflected in art provide knowledge about the land, our use of the land and our desire to preserve the land, while others highlight our dominance of the land. These relationships create a discourse for current, past and possible future considerations for interaction with the land. They have evolved much like our relationships with science; just as science is no longer the only authority, as it was in the past, nor are our relationships with the land only about reflecting human domination of the land, as was seen in the panoramic landscapes of the post colonial era. Instead, art has evolved throughout history to reflect new relationships with the land, one that highlights a desire to understand the land and connect with the land.

In this part of the paper, I wish to explore through *The Coorong Landscape Series* a relationship about a connection, and an understanding of the land and compare this to artists whose artwork has been created to explore a relationship about dominance, relationships that impose a vision on the land. The latter is explored in the images by post colonial artist Eugene von Guerard and WC Piquenit and the series titled *Inflows the Channel Country* by contemporary Australian artist Mandy Martin. Martin explores post colonial notions of dominance to highlight how these ideas may still be imposed on the land. Through this panoramic landscape tradition Martin also highlights the need to make an area a place. By being on location Martin noted how the land took on more significance once it was known, through history and story.

In *The Coorong landscape Series* a considered look at the past to highlight the history and the records post colonial artists provide. I do not seek to highlight their rhetoric of dominance in this series. Instead, I have been inspired by the impressionist techniques employed by Claude Monet in the panoramic series titled *Nymphs* and the rendering of the iconic Romantic English landscapes by John Constable in the series titled, *Six-Footer*. Both Monet and Constable employed the panoramic technique to immerse the viewer in an experience of nature. The contemporary Australian landscape artist John Walker has also provided inspiration in his exploration of the beauty of the land through his lush oil paintings that mimic the movement and life of the Australian landscape in the series created in the Bundanon NSW.

In *The Coorong Landscape Series* I have sought to create an iconic series of the Coorong. The panoramas, as icon, remind the viewer of a past era where paintings were produced as a record of the location but also highlight the importance of this region. Maybe if the Coorong is considered as an icon the area's survival will become a higher priority. In the images produced for *The Coorong Landscape Series*, the paintwork reflects the love of nature through the grandeur of the Romantic tradition and through the contemporary setting/display and labeling of the land, its flora and fauna while underlying is a concern for the survival of the Coorong.

¹⁴ <http://www.edvec.ed.ac.uk/html/projects/panorama/index.html>

It is interesting to note that Constable created his most famous series the *Six-Footer* during the post industrial age. Constable was criticized for not addressing the underlying industrial implications for land use during this era in his images. Similarly, Monet created the series *Nymphs* but he did not explore the concern for the chaos of the industrialized Paris. In this series he chose to create an iconic panorama of the lilies that provides an experience of nature. Similarly in the Coorong Landscapes, it is my objective to highlight the region's beauty and not its demise, in an era where a concern for water and the Murray Darling River as a major part of this resource has taken priority.

In contrast, Mandy Martin has created icons of the Australian Landscape to remind the viewer of the land's demise and how it has changed due to man's use. I, however, have created icons of a land in the hope that they will be preserved, if not by man then maybe in paint as a reminder of how it existed in 2006-2007. In this era our cities are so large that nature often resides outside our visual domain. Both Martin and I are working at bringing these areas back into consciousness. The marine biologist Walter Stark summarized our era well, when he comments on the pre 1960's as an era where a concern for conservation prevailed, while since the 1960's we have become environmentalists, concerned about the fight but with little understanding about the location.¹⁵ It often seems the case that in areas that reside outside the city little is known about the facts, as to whether or not an area is actually surviving. In creating a panoramic landscape series about the Coorong, a relationship with the land is created where the viewer is invited to discover the Coorong for themselves, creating awareness, and an understanding as to how the area functions and how it is currently surviving. This is achieved through the panoramic device and through the concept of the narrative, which is provided by the display plus the collection of the series combined.

This notion of the narrative and the collection has been explored in the writings by Susan Stewart. Stewart produced a book titled *On Longing, Narrative of the Miniature, the gigantic, the souvenir and the collection*, Stewart noted a shift in the concept of realism, which began in the 18thC. [Where] "The everyday experiences of the individual, becomes the locus of the real."¹⁶ Here Stewart explores the *Six-footer* by Constable who uses everyday events of the English countryside, to explore his love of the land.

In the landscapes of the Coorong I wish to explore two aspects within this series. First, the function and the history of the panoramic view, noting scale, the collection and the narrative, and secondly the function and choice of the aesthetic devices employed.

In order to consider the role of the panorama in *The Coorong Landscape* series it is first necessary to consider the history of this landscape tradition, the history of immersion has not always been the focus, the panorama also has a tradition of dominance where the viewer is positioned above the land and looks over the land. This is particularly evident in our post colonial panoramic landscape tradition.

¹⁵ Radio National 06.06.06

¹⁶ Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, 2005, Duke of University Press, p 6

The Past

*"The Panoramic view is closely connected to this desire for control and ultimately for exploitation of land."*¹⁷

The Panoramic painting tradition, much like the tradition of scientific illustration, has had two roles within the history of art. Just as scientific illustration has evolved to include the classifiers' underlying message through metaphor and convention, so too has the panoramic tradition evolved to mirror the changing relationships artists and viewers of the land have had with the land.

In order to understand the relationships that reside in the panoramic tradition, it is first necessary to engage in the past use of this landscape tradition. The panoramic as a visual device has historically denoted a vision of the land where dominance prevails. The viewer is often seen as commanding a view over nature, as the viewer's gaze is kept at a distance, above and over the land. This history of dominance is relayed well in an essay by Peter Read when he comments on the ecological poet Judith Wright's view on a conceptual divide between notions of landscape which is "succinctly expressed in between European notions of a landscape derived from the perspective of an empowered observer, whose magisterial gaze calls an appropriate aesthetic prospect into being".¹⁸

Historically, our relationship with the land has been essentially focused on the need to control and dominate the land, due to the intrinsic desire and dependency on the land to provide. This relationship with the land has not only existed in the literal farming of the land, but for artists in the post colonial era, these relationships were reflected in the panoramic landscapes.

In post colonial Australian art, artists such as Eugene Von Guerard and W.C. Piguenit painted the Australian bush using Northern European romantic notions. They painted vistas that incorporated vast skies and sweeping plains that were reminiscent of Turner and his sky series.

The minute detail seen in W.C. Piguenit's, *The Flood in the Darling*, 1890, (see fig.17) and Von Guerard's sketches of the Murray Darling River, titled *Murray* (see fig.18) capture a moment in time which documents the changes occurring within the landscape and in the region as a whole. Without knowing it von Guerard was actually highlighting in his images the changes to red gum populations. These images by von Guerard were produced in the early 1800's at a time which saw an influx of artists to Australia. It was also the time of the gold rush which also added to the dramatic changes in the shape of the land.

Piguenit and von Guerard were very aware of their need to produce images that would entice Europeans to Australia. "Eugene von Guerard understood very well that the paintings should offer a glimpse of...divine poetical feelings, but equally understood that the marketplace, both local and foreign was waiting for scenic 'descriptions' of uncharted Arcadia".¹⁹

It was this uncharted arcadia that was rendered by von Guerard and W.C Piguenit through the use of panoramic techniques and the broad open vistas that created a certain relationship with the land. This relationship kept the viewer at a distance from the land, through a gaze that enabled the viewer to stand above the land. This gaze enhanced a sense of the viewer's dominance over the land, and it created a relationship that safely separated the viewer from nature. The panorama asserts a certain authority over the land as it seeks to 'command' a view of the land, much like the way post colonial Australia was developed, through farming techniques that were imposed on the

¹⁷ Simon Ryan, *Panoramas: Colonies and Culture*, p.3

¹⁸ Peter Read, *Belonging, Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership*, p.3

¹⁹ Juliana Enberg, *Colonial Post Colonial*, Museum of Modern Art at Heide, 1996, p.17

land rather than seeking to integrate with the natural processes within the landscape. These images often inspired notions of man's power over the land and man's need to control the land. That is not to say that the paintings were not beautiful landscapes of Australia, their beauty inspired many to find a view of unexplored emotions. The emotions stirred also inspired others to protest for the environment. An example of this occurred in 1861 when the critic James Smith saw the painting of *Fern tree Gully* by von Guerard. He promptly began a public campaign against the proposal to log the area.²⁰

In the panorama landscapes created by W.C. Piguenit and von Guerard, colours were chosen to enhance the romantic and atmospheric, which resulted in landscapes more like a European lush hill side and not the dry open vistas of the Australian bush. The colours used were soft and hazy, and lush in colour- rich blues and golden yellows. They often focused on times of subdued light, early morning or late afternoon, which enhanced the European feel within these landscapes. This European feel was visually imposed on the land as seen in the images by W.C. Piguenit and von Guerard, just as the use of the land involved European farming methods which were imposed on the land.

The past provides a point of reference to note how the role of the panorama has influenced contemporary artists in relation to its role as a dominating view, but to also consider how this view may have changed.

Mandy Martin explores this very notion of dominance and imposed use of the land in contemporary landscapes where the post colonial tradition prevails. In the series titled *Inflows: the Channel Country*, painted in 2001, Martin highlights the sparseness of the Australian landscape through form and colour, and the panoramic display. In this series about the Lake Eyre Basin, Martin considers at length the post colonial panoramic by incorporating it in contemporary practice to engage the viewer in a rhetoric that explores the demise of the land. Martin encapsulates in paint the domination of past and present relationships with the land. These relationships reflect a vision of a land that has met the hand of post colonial white Australians. From 1999 – 2001 Martin set about recreating post colonial notions of pioneer landscape painters, but rather than provide a lush Arcadian view, she chose one that explored the harsh reality of what has resulted due to the direct misuse of the land.

The current state of the channel country which is a part of the Lake Eyre catchments, and Cooper's Creek, which is the major river system that services Lake Eyre, is explored by Martin at length. Lake Eyre is a great artesian basin, the largest in the world, and over 180 000 bores still exist and flow freely in Queensland. Martin traveled with scientists and historians to each location to capture the essence of the location and aspects of its devastation. Martin commented on this journey and her art process that she sees as a form of education in that she hopes will raise our awareness about an area and its decline. She says "*Maybe working within the imaginal, it is possible to address some of the big issues like where did we go wrong, and why?Nineteenth century landscape becomes a metaphorical site to examine where we are in the late twentieth century.*"²¹

This metaphor employed by Martin allows space for the viewer to question current use of the land in light of the past. These images reflect an era past, where the use of the land rather than sustaining it, was common practice. In creating these images Martin suggests through metaphor that this is something that still occurs today.

²⁰ Martin Mulligan, *Ecological Pioneers: a social history of Australian ecological thought and action*, Stuart Hill, Cambridge, Environment and Action Essay; New Visions, New Perspectives.p.188

²¹ Mandy Martin, *Inflows Channel Country* .p.14

Unlike Martin, *The Coorong Landscape Series*, seeks to highlight the beauty of this naturally arid region. I have used an expressive mark making technique to explore three locations within the Coorong as oils on canvas. These comprise of the three panoramic views titled: *Parnka Point*, *42 Mile Crossing* and *The Pink Salt Lake*. (See fig.19, 20, and 21) These panoramas were created to give an overall view of the region, to show the diversity within the region and to immerse the viewer in an experience of the Coorong. Through immersion the viewer is free to explore the region at length and feel they are part of the landscape. In becoming a part of the landscape the viewer can then engage in the narrative. The narrative is one that explores the functionality of the region, while underlying this experience of the Coorong exists a concern for its continued role as part of the Murray Darling basin and as a wetland of international significance.

It is primarily the aesthetic experience of this immersive landscape tradition, along with the rhetoric that it provides, that is the motive behind this series. Through the lush paint rendering, of this otherwise dry location, I wish to engage the viewer in the beauty of the region. I worked on location with three other artists to study and paint the region so as to better translate my experience of the location in paint. Once the viewer is absorbed by the unique beauty and diversity of this region, it is my hope that they will become more aware of the region's plight, learn how the area operates due to this series, and seek to preserve it for future generations.

Function of the Panorama Landscape

In *The Coorong Landscape Series*, the chosen view of the land places the viewer at ground level with the land. It is displayed on the wall at a similar level to which you would view the land on location, not from an elevated point. The panoramic view in this instance seeks to create awareness about the need to be at one with the land rather than at a distance or in a position of domination. This is achieved through the scale of each piece, the panoramic view, and the collection which surrounds the viewer in an experience of the location. This is evident in the images *Parnka Point*, *42 Mile Crossing* and *The Pink Salt Lakes* see (fig.19, 20, and 21) each spanning 220cm x 90cm.

The viewer is engaged by the scale, the colour and the movement of paint within the picture that creates an overall experience of the three locations. In *Parnka Point* the view provides a sweeping expanse of the fertile wetland, highlighting the variety of foliage in the foreground and the wind swept sky. In *42 Mile Crossing* the open space of this naturally dry lake bed is only an arm's length away, inviting the viewer to step into the vast but energy filled landscape. The mallee shrubs and tea trees hug the sky line and surround the lake bed edges. While the salt marsh dispersed across the lake beds carries the viewer within and around the open view.

It is *The Pink Salt Lakes* that give the most unique view of the area, highlighting the highly arid region located along the Prince's highway, parallel to the Coorong wetland; they provide pockets of colour and space. They also highlight man's influence on the region where the remains of wire fence posts stand around the lake front, separating the viewer from these precious ecosystems that are back dropped by more of a farmed view of the region, where ochre hills free of trees and scrubland reside. In all three locations the viewer is invited to take a closer look at the diversity within this naturally arid region, through the complete view provided by the panorama.

In contrast, the notion of dominance through the panorama is explored by Martin in the panoramas of the Lake Eyre region that highlights the degradation of the region. This is evident in the images *Mirages on Currareva*, *Junction of Barcoo and Thomson 2001* (fig.22) and *Cooper's Creek in flood at Durham downs 2001* (fig.23). Both images are from the 2001 *Inflows: the Channel Country Series*. These images are indicative of the region but also Martin's exploration of the post colonial format.

This is especially evident in the later of the two where Martin has taken a view that overlooks the land. Martin has also used the colours ochre and orange that are harsh and dry. They reveal an intensity and harshness about the Australian sun and landscape, and highlight the degradation of the region due to human misuse of the land. Even though the title suggests flood, the predominating skyline and hills consume the viewer's vision leaving us to seek the water that lies within the picture plane.

The linear horizontal forms of Cooper's Creek and the surrounding hills soft and gently flow across the picture plane which contrasts with the intensity of the yellow afternoon glow in the sky. This image spans 330cm and although minimal in its use of form, it seems to explore the aerial panorama to its fullest creating a sense of grandeur, which could be compared to the panorama of The Grand Canyon in the Nevada Desert. The words Durnham Downs are inscribed into the paint at the top, centre of the picture plane in softer hues, blending with the skyline. The words add to the sense of topography, as they are a suggestion of the explorer's map.

In *Mirages on Currareva*, Martin has captured a sense of the atmosphere, where the predominant yellow hue is softened by ochre only to hold the viewer in this expansive view, where one feels as if they too are in this early morning heat. The minimal landscape stretches to the far edges of the canvas only to contain the viewer's vision in the foreground with a single cloud of smoke rising from the rubble in the foreground. The softness of colour and minimal palette reflects the dry remoteness of the land. The trees to the left of the canvas number few, which also adds to the

sense of space and heat, as no shadow has been cast. The words windy day are drawn into the paint, adding to the sense of journal taking and a landscape freshly discovered. Spanning 165cm in length this image consumes the viewer's space. A cloudless sky and a bare dry foreground add to the sense of remoteness and space.

Martin explores in paint the degradation of this area that is later revealed to be an area consumed by over use for crop growing, and where irrigation is favoured. Little is known about this area or about the Lake Eyre ecosystems, which highlights a need to explore the area scientifically before the area is lost to ecological devastation. Unlike the post colonial artists W.C. Piguenit and von Guerard, Martin's images do not highlight a lush and fertile land instead Martin uses the minimal dry colours to enhance the lack of fertility in the region. These are just two from this series by Martin that explore the overall misuse of the region. There is poetry in the visuals of a location, just like the early explorers who highlighted the sense of grandeur and the epic beauty of the Australian landscape, which became more than a persuasion to the people back in England to travel to Australia.

In this series produced by Martin, she is trying to allure us in as viewers so that we might remember the grandeur of the Australian bush in the hope that we may seek to preserve it before nothing is left due to pastoral activity, cotton production, and cattle use of the land, as seen in these dry and barren images of the Lake Eyre Basin. Little is known about this area or about the Lake Eyre ecosystems, which highlights a need to explore the area scientifically before the area is lost to ecological devastation.

While I acknowledge that this history of dominance exists in the post colonial tradition, it is not one that I seek to highlight in *The Coorong Landscape Series*. The inspiration gained from the post colonial artists is a history of discovery and one that acts like a museum document of what was. In this instance I look to the images by von Gerard for the historical inspiration and knowledge about how the view of land has changed. Although the post - colonial artists created images of dominance, they were also concerned with the documenting of a region for future generations. It is this notion of documentation that I wish to highlight by connecting to this past tradition. Although I am concerned about the future of the Coorong, it is not so much the changes that I wish to highlight in this region through this series, but a need to maintain the region so it looks the same in years to come. In reflecting on the post colonial tradition we see art has a place to act as a historical reminder of what was and what should remain. It, for me, highlights the important role landscape painting has in the archiving process.

While the function of the panorama is one prevalent factor in the post colonial tradition, I now wish to explore how the panoramic tradition has another history, one that is not about domination of the view or the land, but one that is about an understanding of and highlighting a love for the land.

John Constable is a 19th Century artist who explored a region close to home, which resulted in a new prevailing experience of the land. It is not so much a panoramic tradition that Constable focuses on instead through his use of large scale images and the notion of collection, these landscapes immerse the viewer in an experience of the English countryside.

The notion of the narrative and the collection can be seen in the *Six-Footer* series by Constable. In this series consisting of 7 images that focus on the views around the river Stour, in England, including; *The White Horse* (1819), *Stratford Mill* (1820), *The Haywain* (1821), *View of the Stour on Denham* (1822), *A Boat Passing a Lock* (1823-24), *The Leaping Horse* (1825), and *The Valley Farm* (1835) I have found inspiration in his energetic use of paint and his desire for the viewer to feel at one with the English Countryside.

It is the notion of scale and the collection that I have incorporated into the Coorong series that Susan Stewart has also focused on in her book *On Longing, Narrative of the Miniature, the gigantic, the souvenir and the collection*. Stewart has related the notions of scale and the collection to the landscapes by Constable, specifically his last series. Stewart explains how there was a shift from the 18th Century onwards, which was a shift in the concept of realism. In this shift the particulars of the everyday and individual experience became the locus of the real, which provides an allegory of realism where the viewer can consider at length the general truths, both good and bad of the location. The viewer controls the reading of the collection, which Stewart has coined the 'Wandering Viewpoint'. This is achieved through the scale the 'notion of the gigantic' and finally the collection, where the narrative can be examined through the collection.²²

My desire was to create a collection of works in *The Coorong Landscape Series* to take the viewer through an experience of the region as I experienced it. Three locations have been considered at length to provide a narrative about the individual day, the unique locations within the region and the interaction and connection between the three locations. The viewer is at first asked to experience the location in all its grandeur and beauty and to then consider at length the underlying narrative of functionality and biodiversity in the region. Inspired by these notions of immersion and the collection, the continuous view of the panoramic can be viewed in landscapes titled *Parnka Point*, (fig.19) *42 Mile Crossing* (fig.20) and *The Pink Salt Lakes*, (fig.21) These three large canvases provide an initial focal point for this series. The three images *42 Mile crossing-II* (fig.25), *Pink Salt Lake I* (fig.26), measuring 120 x 90cm and *42 Mile crossing – 7am* (fig.27) measuring 90 x 120cm combine with the three large panoramas to exist as 6 images that provide an experience of the location. This experience can also be felt in the overall display of the images, where the landscapes work as a collection to surround the viewer in the space.

One other aspect of the immersion process is scale as explained by Stewart: "The gigantic is a metaphor for the abstract authority of the state and the collective public life."²³ Through scale immersion is enhanced, as it was a priority for the Coorong series to consume the viewer's vision. Through scale one is made totally aware of the functionality of the region and the seasonal considerations of the day. This notion is explored in the function of the wetland in *Parnka Point* (fig.19) on a windy dry day, where the clouds fill the sky with the movement and energy of the wind. The summer season is explored throughout the landscapes primarily *42 Mile Crossing* (fig.20), where at this location the lake bed is seasonally dry and the day clear, no rain pending.

It is the sheer scale of the *Six-Footer* series, and the effect of the material in the experience of nature that has provided inspiration for the Coorong Landscape series. In the *Six-Footer* series, Constable chose to paint outdoors on a large scale in order to engulf the viewer in an experience of the land. Unlike his contemporaries, such as Turner, Constable did not seek the sublime in nature but the naturalistic beauty of a location. Constable chose to challenge his era with the *Six-Footer*, and in choosing to paint his own country, primarily comprising of the English countryside around the River Stour, one that he new well and grew up in, he chose to highlight in his images the natural beauty of the area. These images by Constable do not highlight a historical event or an agricultural industry gone wrong, which was the focus for the landscape artists of his era. On reflection these images have become a historical icon of the English countryside. They

23 Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, 2005, p.5

provide an insight into a land before it was transformed by man. The scale of these images ranging from 130.5 x 185.5cm for “*The Hay Wain*”, 130 x 188cm for “*View of the Stour near Dedham*” give an indication of the consuming nature of the series. In this series by Constable the collection of images explores the experience of the English countryside. *Constable chose scale to reinforce this experience and the term Nature as opposed to landscape. The term nature summarized his belief in the boundless and infinite experience of the land he was painting unlike the term landscape which denotes concepts such as confined and organized.*²⁴

In *The Coorong Landscape Series* the scale remains large not to create dominance over the scene but to consume the viewer so the viewer is emotionally engaged in the unique beauty and the expansiveness of the landscape. As each panel spans 220cm x 90cm they provide an opportunity to explore a location and understand the processors within the location due to the immersive experience of scale. Scale is a way for the viewer to get to know a location.

This notion of emotional engagement which art provides can also be seen at work in music, where the all encompassing emotive sounds of an entire orchestra creates a more lasting and poignant affect on the audience.

To know a location is an important part of the process and through my visit to the Coorong, it is this experience that has provided an understanding of the intricacies of this part of our country. My series allows the viewer to get to know the country or revisit the location, as if for the first time. As a collection this piece offers an ecological narrative that explores the diversity of three locations within the Coorong and how they are connecting.

²⁴ Basil Taylor, Constable, p 48

The Collection and Narrative

“The notion of experimental unity is central here for art does not consist of objects but of situations in which experiences occur.”²⁵

The allegories or narratives explored in the images by Constable highlight the beauty of a given day and the truth within the location. Just as Constable chose not to highlight any concerns for the agriculture within the region, nor have I chosen to highlight my concerns for the Coorong region, through the paintings. Instead the time bound event within a given day is a focus for both series, where light and movement highlights the natural beauty and experience of the location.

It is through the collection that the viewer can then go on to explore the narrative at length. The narrative creates a relationship that allows the viewer to know the location. Martin’s narrative is a relationship of dominance, and post colonial history, while Constable provides a narrative about understanding and appreciation. Mandy Martin explores a narrative about finding a sense of place. It is also the objective of *The Coorong Landscape Series* to create a narrative that explores a relationship of co-existence and understanding, and the history of this. The narrative also encompasses the artist’s experience on the location, like a journal the viewers are made aware of the days conditions and the locations season.

The narrative of the Coorong is the ultimate story of the survival of the region and the way all three areas interact and are connected. These locations found south of the Murray Mouth: include Parnka Point, the water filled wetland area, 42 Mile crossing, an ephemeral saline lake that is filled with water only during rainfall and or via ground water during the winter months, and the Pink Salt Lakes that line the princes highway, gaining their pink colour from the algae *Dinalliella Salina*.

The narrative is primarily an ecological one that explores the relationship between three locations in the Coorong. To realize that Parnka Point is closest to the Murray mouth and is the main wetland area which is followed by, 42 Mile Crossing. It is in the images that a story and a history of the location as it was experienced, in January 2006 can be viewed.

²⁵ Salim Kernal and Ivan Gaskell, *Landscape ,Natural Beauty and the Arts*, p.36

A sense of place; the narrative continued

“These paintings are more about creating a sense of place. People won’t preserve a location, but they will care about a location if it has become a place. Unlike a location, a place has significance beyond its beauty, a place of happening and memories. Historically the land has been a place of significance for aboriginals but in our modern times we need to consider these locations that are not often visited or seen as our busy lives revolve around major cities making it easy to forget the significance or the possibility that these locations are in decline.”²⁶

It is this notion of place and experience that Martin has incorporated in her work that has also provided inspiration for *The Coorong Landscape Series*, along with the notion of the explorer which conjures the romantic aspects of first discovery where artists were scientists and explorers. This notion is particularly evident in the third image by Martin titled *Cooper’s Creek on Currareva Station, 2001* (fig.29). Here Martin captures the beauty of the riverbank but also the most astir aspect of the double panel canvas spanning 330cm and 90cm wide is the detailed tree that consumes the foreground of the painting. The tree in its sprawling mass has strength and presence that reaches up and out of the picture plane. The exposed roots also add to the tree’s grandeur and visually grounds the image so the viewer can view the river bank as the backdrop to this beautiful tree as it takes the main role centre stage. “The detail and grace of the tree is testament to Martin’s scientific clarity that she imbues on each limb of the tree with precision and clarity.”²⁷ Unlike her other images this painting focuses on the beauty and life of Coopers Creek. A sense of place is more evident in this piece also, as the tree creates a sense of connection and closeness, so that the land is in reaching distance for the viewer to experience.

Equally the notion of creating a sense of place and an experience of the location is sought in the series of the Coorong. Like Martin I see the importance of highlighting *that the landscape [is] an inference between humanity and the earth.*”²⁸ It is this notion of inference that is being explored to highlight the connection between the land and the viewer. To make this connection, we are one step closer to seeing, that what we do to the land we are also doing to ourselves. The notion of the scientific explorer can be found in the image *42 Mile Crossing – 7am* (fig.27.) The detail of the salt marsh, in the foreground is considered at length as the viewer is taken up and through the landscape, beginning at ground level. Unlike the other pieces this is a vertical of the scene which highlights a need to consider the area up close, providing more of a scientific observation of the scene.

Martin’s narrative is largely one about the destruction of the Lake Eyre region due to white man’s continued post colonial use of the land. Martin adds to the narrative of each piece through journal entries, at the top or bottom of each canvas. Martin also takes into consideration the seasonal changes of a given day which adds a personal narrative and experience of the location. The personal narrative as employed by Martin as a key consideration of the seasonal changes is one that allows the viewer to see the landscape through the eyes of the painter. It is one I have also explored in the Coorong series through the image *Parnka Point*. (fig.19) Here the windy day prevails, while in the panorama *42 Mile Crossing* (fig.20) the viewer is consumed by the broad open dry lake bed shimmering with heat of the day.

²⁶ Mandy Martin, *Inflows Channel Country*, p.14

²⁷ Mandy Martin, *Inflows Channel Country*, p.14

²⁸ Ibid

This notion of the day and its seasonal considerations is also one that Constable employed.

Constable also considered the narrative at length in his series of the English countryside.

The Hay Wain (see fig.29) is a prime example of the narrative. It is a personal account of a scene he knew well, one where his father grew up. The scene shows a horse drawn wagon with hay, along with a man and a boy traversing the river Stour. The narrative is about the everyday, but it contains a moment in time which encapsulates the notion of the English countryside.

It is also evident in *View of the Stour near Dedham* (fig.30) where the traffic of river is encapsulated in the busy river scene of three barges traversing down stream.

Constable took into consideration not only the activities of the river as he experienced it but the experience of the individual day, its climate and cloud formations as he saw it.

*"Achieved only through the close attention to the intimate details of natural processors, light weather and plant life, which determined mans very existence. It was to create a connection between man and nature through a naturalism that focused on the plowed field, the drama of weather, and the signs of seasonal change."*²⁹

Australian Landscape artist John Olsen comments on a similar exploration of the uniqueness in his landscape images of the Coorong. He says; *"Then there is the Coorong, that long slit of very salty water behind the sand hills, where the overflow is discarded. The Contrast is immense, ...There's nothing there, but the void is compelling because of the contemplative richness of emptiness."*³⁰

The aridity of the Coorong is highlighted in the presence of the Pink Salt Lakes, as seen in the panorama titled *Pink Salt Lake 1* (see fig.26). This oil on canvas measures 220 x 90cm and explores the naturally occurring pink algae that only exists in highly arid and salty regions. These unique areas glow pink on a cloud filled day, with only the slightest amount of water that reflects what can be found of the blue sky. The ochre hills contrast with the pink and equally glow when the sun comes out. The only signs of human intervention in the region can be seen in the images of the pink salt lakes, where fence posts stand in the foreground.

In the view of Parnka Point in the oil on canvas titled *Parnka Point* (fig.19) we find the only image of the water filled wetland area. It highlights the diversity within the Coorong as a location, where the wetland water is painted a green blue colour to show the salinity of the water that is currently 6 times saltier than the sea. The foreground is filled with the variety in colour and texture of the masses of plants that line the water's edge, while in the distance, a thin line of the distant peninsular, we see the breadth of the wetland and the vastness of the region. The wind filled sky highlights the naturally windy conditions of this junction found half way along the lower length of this long wetland of the day long narrative.

While the narrative is explored extensively in the landscapes by Martin and Constable, it is in the images by Monet, Constable and John Walker, that marks and colours have been explored as inspiration for the landscapes of the Coorong.

²⁹ Lorenz Eitner, *An outline of 19th Century European Painting*, p.127

³⁰ Janet Hawley, *The Masterly Mr Squiggle*, *The Good weekend*, sep 2nd, 2006, p.23

Paint Quality: The Marks Made and Colour

“Impressionist painting is interested in capturing the unique and emergent qualities of a particular scene, just as ecologists are interested in the particularities of specific ecosystems and their changing qualities over time.”³¹

In *The Coorong Landscape Series* I have considered at length the marks made by the impressionists, primarily Monet and the marks incorporated by Constable in his series. Firstly, the impressionists were concerned with light and the movement of marks across the canvas that emulated light and movement. It is the attention to details such as light, atmosphere and naturalistic colour that has been the focus for the Coorong series.

Monet painted in an era when Impressionism was at its peak. Along with fellow artists, Cezanne and Bernard, Monet was committed to observing corners of nature that offered momentary experiences. The focus on light and its changing effects were intuitive observations coined as “fluid mobility”³², his brush marks known as “little waves” were the luminous energy that allowed a natural progression to “the ultimate dissolution of mass”³³ as found in *Nymphaeas*.

The impressionists focused on the nature of colour, by firstly focusing on the chiaroscuro, where areas of dark in light within an artwork were surmised; secondly their focus was on the light which emanated from a luminous base within the work and finally they drew attention to colour through the use of complimentary opposites within the image’s forms. The Impressionists’ use of colour was also influenced by the naturalism found within Japanese art, and in this, Monet was considered a pioneer. He was the first artist to render these new bold colour principles successfully.

Monet was considered a revolutionary in light of this in that he sought to “shorten the gap between perception and painterly recreation” he was said to have transformed the art of painting.³⁴

In the continuous view of the Nymphaeas, Monet sought to convey, an atmospheric experience of nature and of the water lilies. Areas of broad flat brush strokes of intense hue and where short quick spontaneous expressions, highlighted the light and an intuitive response to the land.³⁵

Monet painted his final series titled *Nymphaeas* in 1926. Here the panorama takes on a whole new meaning, through the panorama format but also through the display of the images. The viewer is surrounded by the view of the water lilies and the experience of being amongst nature and not at a distance. Monet produced this 9 panel series in post war Paris, titled *Nymphéas (Water Lilies)*, (Fig. 24). This series was created by Monet as an experience, where the viewer is placed within the lake, to experience the colour and movement of the water as if it is only an arm’s length away.

Monet’s work relayed an experience of considered observation, where certain times of day were strictly adhered to, to explore the changing light and movement of a location in nature. His observations remained a part of the exact records of nature that he was creating. Space and atmosphere were his priority in any given artwork and he also saw the relationships within nature

31 Martin Mulligan, *Ecological Pioneers: a social history of Australian ecological thought and action*, p.42

32 Ibid p. 271

33 Ibid p. 271

34 Lorenz Eitner, *John Constable 1776-1837- An outline of 19thC European Painting*, p.365

35 Ibid p. 364

as integral to his working methods. Like Constable, he chose to paint outdoors in order to enhance his observational processes and naturalistic experience of nature in paint. In the *Nympheas* images “Monet designed his art to remind viewers that such transient ‘impressions’ are the precious rudiments of all visual experience, knowledge, truth and art.”³⁶

As an impressionist, his concern for light, rendering times of changing light and moments in time provided a new view of nature. In *Nympheas* Monet created a series of canvases that were intended to be viewed as close as possible to the ground so the viewer looked down at the images like they would the pond. It is this notion, where the spectator and the image co-mingle, which most appealed to Monet in this series. Completed in 1926, *Nympheas (water lilies)* (fig.24) this series is displayed in the L’Orangerie, in Paris. The room was built especially to house these expressive panoramas, creating an all consuming view of the ponds to surround the viewer in this unique experience of the colour and movement within nature. One panel measures 2m x 12m, in this series there were 9 panels in total.

Similarly in the images of the Coorong, a focus on the continued experience of the colour and the movement is considered in the images of all three locations. It was my desire to layer marks and colour like the impressionists so that the energy of the location was highlighted. A fairly windy location in all areas it was necessary to consider the paint quality that highlights the life of nature. The energy of Parnka Point, the water filled wetland, highlights the windy day as it was experienced on location. Layers of colour are used to give an overall sense of the array of colour and diverse foliage within the foreground of this image (detail Fig.31), while the flatness and slight green tinge to the water is contrasted with the movement and layers of colour in the sky. In the image of 42 Mile Crossing (detail fig.32), the dry lake bed is made up of layers of colour, ochre and pink that contrasts with the colours of the plum coloured salt marsh. The brush marks and colour convey a sense of energy within this warm, windy open plane allowing the viewer to explore the vastness of the Coorong region. This vastness is of course an intrinsic aspect of the Australian landscape, one I was well aware of when I sought to fill the space with the energy of marks.

John Olsen has also explored the vastness of the land along with his long interest in Taoism which “has taught him that emptiness can resonate as fullness.”³⁷ The landscape of the Coorong can also be seen as sparse in colour and form, but it is colour and line that goes about filling the landscape with an energy that imbues a sense of the location’s life.

Constable also provided inspiration for the paint quality in the Coorong series. In his last series Constable went about to challenge his era at a time when the ‘finished’ quality of the images was of utmost importance with paintings whose brush marks were blended and smooth. In his last series he chose to lose some of the detail and increase the scale of the images in order to create a landscape that focused on the experience of the location, one the viewer could become immersed in. “Constable found a link of association between natural landscapes, the artists personal feelings, and the work he created, in what he called the chiaroscuro of nature.”³⁸ Constable was concerned with the effects of light and he had an extensive interest in the scientific; physical and chemical processes that determine weather, primarily clouds. This is evident in the image, *View on the Stour near Dedham* (fig.30) where Constable explores fully the effect of the clouds and the light that emitted from the tops of the clouds.

³⁶ John Rewald and Frances Weitzenhoffer, *Aspects of Monet*, p.117

³⁷ Janet Hawley, *The Masterly Mr Squiggle*, *Good Weekend* Sept 2, 2006, p. 23

³⁸ Basil Taylor, *Constable*, p. 42

In the 1820's he developed a physical technique that resulted in a heavily textured lattice of dragged coloured strokes.³⁹ These unconventional marks and an unconventional consideration for the surface of the canvas which saw expressive and impressionistic marks being used for the first time, has provided inspiration for the Coorong series. *The Coorong Landscape Series* was also influenced by Constable's belief that "Painting is a science, and should be pursued as inquiry into the laws of nature"⁴⁰ This pursuit is known as "skying" where clouds are painted for a deeper understanding of the clouds functioning. This pursuit of science and marks is evident in the image *The Haywain* (fig.29), where Constable explores loose objectivity and less description, the colours are darker and he uses more paint and a palette knife.

In the Coorong series the marks in the sky are used extensively in the image *Parnka Point* (fig.33). This painting provides a considered look at how the wind creates movement and form in the sky, highlighting the wind of the location.

The dryness of the Coorong is explored in the panoramic oil on canvas titled *42 Mile Crossing* (fig.20). It is a naturally dry location where a limited palette is used in order to express fully the colour within the region. Rather than bleach out what colour there is in the landscape I have chosen to explore the many colours within the landscape in order to capture in detail length the richness of the location's textured nature. Unlike Mandy Martin the images I explore celebrate the natural dryness which is found in this location, not a dryness that is a result of degradation. The fullness in colour and in the mark making provides a sense of the area's energy and life. The dry lakebeds set amongst the rich maroon coloured salt marsh shrubland glow in the morning sun. The low lying salt marsh and the green gray drooping sheok and tea trees which are found at the horizon provide an overall survey of the region. The result in a piece that celebrates the dryness as a natural aspect of this unique ecosystem as it is naturally meant to only hold water during rainy seasons, so that this piece is true in rendering the dry summer season as it was experienced.

Unlike any other medium, oil paint has a tactility and movement that mimics nature's organic energy. In using oil paint in the Coorong landscape series I wanted to enhance this notion of the energy and life. The use of oil paint is prevalent in the images by Monet and Constable and it is also prevalent in the images by contemporary artist John Walker.

While Constable and Monet have provided a historical reference and inspiration for the Coorong Landscape series, it has also been inspired by the works of contemporary artists such as Mandy Martin and John Walker which provide a considered and contemporary view of the Australian landscape tradition.

Martin was mentioned above for her images that relay a panoramic tradition about domination. In contrast John Walker, another contemporary artist, explores in contrast the energy and experience of the landscape. This has been Walker's priority, one which is particularly evident as seen in the 9 panel series titled *Shoal haven Ridge*, where the viewer is invited to walk through the movement and energy of a location and seek the underlying message that relays a moment in time, and a moment that explores the experience of the Bundanon and the current history of this location. There is also a paint quality that is explored in the images by Walker which continues to highlight the natural impression of nature that paint so easily provides unlike any other medium.

In the work by Walker, *Hollow Tree*, Oil on canvas, 2001 (fig.34), he explores an understanding of the trees form, imbedded in the knowledge of observation. Which Walker seeks throughout his series from the Bundanon. These two pieces are amongst a body of work that explores a concentrated vision of the landscape as it struggles to survive the various onslaughts due to

³⁹ Anne Lyles, *Constable the Great Landscapes*, p 64

⁴⁰ Lorenz Eitner, *John Constable 1776-1837- An outline of 19thC European Painting*, p.31

natural cycles and the more recent pressures from agriculture and settlement. Walker captures the Australian flora as surviving even though it is always in a permanently damaged state.⁴¹ The image is imbued with a sense of energy and contains a universal exploration of a tree in all its movement, and growth, as it seems to be turning and twisting in the picture as it is viewed. Walker uses the lush quality of oil to enhance the colour and freshness of the bush. The viewer is drawn in by the tactility of the paint and the movement and semblance of nature that it provides. The viewer is engaged in the experience of the paint and mark just as one is engaged in the experience of the bush when placed in front of a huge tree. The detail and energy of the bush prevails. It is the organic quality of paint, especially oil paint that has a synergy with nature; one can see the bark curling on the tree, just as one can reach out and consider touching the soil of the Coorong in *42 Mile Crossing*. It is my hope that it will only enhance the experience of the location and the viewer's desire to go experience the location.

John Walker is a landscape artist who has contemplated the fullness of life and colour within the Australian bush while underlying his art one also senses there is the concern for an area. A concern for Australia's land is more prevalent in the image by Walker titled *The Dry Dam* 2004 (fig 35). In a considered look at this location reveals the paint quality has changed compared to former works and explores the asperity and dryness of this location while maintaining the energy. The skyline in this image provides minimal form and content, which adds a subtly and calm to this otherwise bright image. Through movement and mark making Walker has encapsulated an essence of the bush and its natural inhabitants that highlights an inquiring mind into how a tree moves and grows and exists within the land while at the other extreme his landscapes finds room to explore the land's shape and sprawl to convey a sense of the natural aridity and asperity of the land.⁴²

Underlying the images of Lake Eyre, the Bundanon and the Coorong Landscape series is a considered look at how a landscape is surviving. It is its survival that is ultimately the first consideration of the images by Walker, Martin and I. The areas are presented to the viewer to predominantly experience the beauty of a location but to also act as a reminder of the importance of our natural heritage. In the experience of *The Coorong Landscape Series* the viewer's immersion into this unique land has been the priority, in order to experience nature and this location as if for the first time. Seeing something so familiar in a new way encourages us to look again at what we know so well, along with a new understanding and hopefully a new appreciation. Through this appreciation, a new found love of nature is born and, one is hopefully encouraged to preserve these locations, and help maintain nature as a whole.

All three images of the Coorong explore the vastness of the location, filled only by the variety of shrubs as seen at Parnka point, notably the beaded glasswort and ruppia grass, or the mallee shrubs and salt marsh at 42 Mile Crossing, while the Pink Salt Lakes are filled with the movement of brush marks that highlight the shiny salt crusted plateau, in all its encrusted beauty. Areas appear richer in pink around the foreshore where the residue of white salt clings to the sand at the edges of the lake. The landscape images are accompanied by labels which add to this notion of the narrative. The labels provide information about the region, such as the salinity of the water at this time and the labels create links so that connections between birds, plants and locations can be considered at length.

41 Martin Shrub, In the new tradition of landscape painting , April 13, 2002

<http://gallery.discoverymedia.com.au/artzinePub/story.asp?id=67§ion=ArtStud>

42 ibid

The Labels

In the labeling and display of *The Coorong Landscape Series*, I explore how this collection of images can act as an education unit. Just as art in a museum takes on a whole new meaning due to its context, art with labels can also add to its museum like appeal. Just as an image is touted as an icon, the Coorong as a labeled series highlights the need for the viewer to go beyond the experience of the location and ask questions such as: how does the area function? How is it surviving? How is it connected to the Murray? (fig.36) The labels provide information about how each area operates and guides the viewer around the room to see the visual connection between each area within the Coorong. The labels provide information as well as the current state of the location. They also point to how the three locations are connected along with how the various species of plants and birds are a part of each location and how they relate to each other. An example of this is the label for *42 Mile Crossing* (fig.36) where the location is linked to the aquatic grass, ruppia.

Finally, we can view the complete collection titled *The Coorong* which combines the two series, *The Coorong Specimen Series* and *The Coorong Landscape Series*. In this final display the series come together to provide an overall view of a region. Just as the labels provide a point of connection for each series, the visuals also provide a complete survey of this region.

The Specimens will reside like a museum display at one end of the room followed by the landscape images *Parnka Point* (fig.19) *42 Mile Crossing* (fig.20), *42 Mile Crossing II* (fig.25) *42 Mile Crossing-7am* (fig.27) *The Pink Salt Lake* (fig.21), *Pink Salt Lake I* (fig.26). They follow the order of how they are found within the Coorong and surround the viewer in an experience of the location.

An ecological notion is explored at length through this series and that allows the viewer to consider the area's functionality, the relationships that exist within the area, as well as to consider the relationship we have with the location that either hinders or enhances its existence. It is not just a relationship concerned with the ecology of the region that is explored in each individual place, nor as a whole location, but it seeks to question the relationship we have with the land now. Is it one that needs to be continued? Or should it be reassessed? Equally the collection seeks to celebrate the location and unique ecology within the region.

It is my hope that through this collection of paintings the viewer will not only experience the location, but through the educational experience of the location, knowledge about the area's existence and its uniqueness will hopefully lead viewers to seek out the location, appreciate and preserve it.

CONCLUSION

A relationship of co existence has been sought through the exploration of two aesthetic devices. The first, *The Coorong Specimen Series*, explores a relationship with art and science in relation to the Coorong, and the second, titled *The Coorong Landscape Series*, explores a relationship with the Coorong via landscapes to provide an overall experience of the region. Through these two visual relationships, comprising of two aesthetic approaches, a discourse is provided that explores an ecological relationship, one that shows the interconnectedness between land, animals and human.

The history of scientific illustration is one where science was seen as the only authority and where man used science to dominate the land, but it also had a history where classification and new discoveries prevailed. It is the latter that is of greater consideration in *The Coorong Series* while the former is better relayed in the specimen series of leaves by Fiona Hall. Hall's work considers the rhetoric of money, trade and nature, one that has a past and a present. Here nature is a commodity, a disposable commodity as suggested in the title *Leaf Litter*.

In *The Coorong Specimen Series* it is a history that celebrates the many discoveries explored through science, the museum and the plethora of knowledge and facts the two provide. It is a visual language that explores classification and presentation to consider the placement of individual species within the Coorong and the relationships they share with each other and the location, along with a considered look at how they are surviving in the location. An aesthetic alignment is made with the Australian artist John Olsen where the movement and the individuation of each bird is considered at length through the form while using a loose, raw line. The scientific illustrations by Ferdinand and Bauer provide a guide for presentation and labeling via a detailed study of the history of this aesthetic.

Throughout history landscapes have also provided a visual relationship offering a place for nature and humans to coexist and explore an ecological discourse about a location. It is primarily this notion of co-existence that is the focus for this body of work. If we acknowledge an ability to co-exist along with our ability to adapt, change, and intermingle, with nature's ability to change and co-exist, we are able to consider broadly the function and role of the different locations within nature.

It is not about areas where human contact has aided or dismantled nature, nor is it a dominance of nature over humans or humans over nature as seen in the panoramic landscapes by von Guerard or Mandy Martin. Instead it is a considered focus to create a space where the two can co-exist which encourages a new discourse, one that is primarily concerned with knowledge and education. Historically dominance has prevailed, but by looking through our European history there has been a move toward an aesthetic that speaks of experience and understanding. In the panoramas painted by Claude Monet and the landscapes painted by John Constable, a link has been provided to a past that began with an appreciation and a desire to understand nature.

In this era, where new technologies dominate contemporary art practices and our relationship with the city and our Asian neighbours prevail, as seen in the 2006 Biennale, these landscapes of the Coorong provide an opportunity to create a relationship with an area outside of the city and remind the viewer of Australia's natural heritage. It has been my focus in this body of work to return to a European painting heritage, and to explore a history of science and the panoramic landscape.

In *The Coorong Landscape Series* a relationship with the land is not so much about the history or the changes in the location that have occurred, but a time bound event that enables the viewer to consider for a moment what it may be like to traverse this unique Australian landscape.

Constable and Monet successfully rendered the light and the movement of nature to highlight a relationship about the experience of a location. This experience occurs with the sense of immersion which is achieved through the panorama, scale and the collection which acts as an overall experience with nature to consume the viewer in a moment in time.

While Mandy Martin invites an exploration of the past in her panoramic landscapes of Lake Eyre, which focus on the degradation of this region, in contrast *The Coorong Landscape Series* celebrates the history of change and record through the painting.

In Martin's work a relationship of dominance is explored which the panoramic view of the land historically denotes. Martin has explored the degradation of the land and makes an alignment with post colonial artists who first explored this land. Martin explores the history of mistakes in relation to the lands use in order to make a commentary about what is still occurring today, where past relationships are used to mirror current relationships. In the Coorong landscape series I defer only to the post colonial tradition to celebrate the historical changes within a location that have been recorded through these artworks and as a reminder of what was. I wish to remind viewers that we do not simply want the Coorong Landscape to become this history, as seen in the images by von Guerard and W.C. Piguenit.

An aesthetic alignment has been made in my series with the impressionistic techniques of layered marks and the considered use of light and movement within nature, as seen in the panoramas by Monet. Constable has also provided aesthetic inspiration through his naturalistic focus, where his use of natural colour, simplified form and textured marks prevail have contributed to how I have completed the huge canvases of the Coorong.

John Walker also explores the Australian landscape through the lush oils of the Bundanon, where the movement and energy is shown in detail within the landscape. In a similar manner I have chosen the natural colour and glow of the oil to highlight the lush variety within the surfaces of the Coorong. Underlying the beauty of these images is a concern for the area's survival.

Ultimately each artist is focused on a relationship with nature that relays an experience with a location or a particular experience of a species within the location. In the same way both the specimens and landscapes of the Coorong have provided a journey through a land that seeking to highlight a current experience of the location, a moment in time.

As a complete body of work *The Coorong Series* seeks to address the notions of environmental harmony by creating a complete picture of an area through two separate visual devices: landscape and the specimen print series. In turn, two relationships with nature are explored, one via science and the other via the landscape and panorama. As a complete body of work a picture of interconnectedness and harmony is addressed to create an understanding and awareness about a location, its demise and how it can be preserved. Through imagery, colour, mark, the narrative, labeling and display their interrelatedness provides an educational platform for the viewer to explore. It is an education that allows the viewer to explore the functionality of a region and its individual species along with their place within this experience; it is ultimately an ecological relationship that is being presented.

In *The Coorong Series* we are also introduced to the entire Murray Darling Basin, a region that is currently a place for concern. Underlying the beauty of the Coorong is a concern for this region. As Australia fights for an abundance of the one commodity it cannot produce – water – this situation currently highlights an opportunity to re-assess our land use. The very success of crops such as cotton and rice is dependent on the one resource Australia – one of the driest countries in the world – lacks. Through the Coorong series there is a focus on a discourse that celebrates the diverse variety of the plants, birds and landscapes within the region, but one that also considers an underlying concern for the future of the Coorong if fresh water is not supplied to the region which includes the Murray Darling River system.

To be surrounded by the land in this series is not just about assimilation, but finding a sustained relationship that can be explored allowing nature to predominate, while appreciating that to an extent nature is adaptable. Through a sense of immersion art becomes a cultural signifier of harmony and co-existence. In exploring an iconic consideration of this region through art the need to inspire others to learn more about the region and share in a concern for the preservation of this unique location is highlighted. It may not be until a location is labeled as an icon, that it will be considered important and worth sustaining.

Ultimately, *The Coorong Series* is an educational platform that creates a relationship via the panorama, landscapes and specimens, resulting in an understanding, love and hopefully preservation of what is one of the largest wetlands in the world. In this MFA research I have looked at the problem of identifying nature or more correctly the way that “nature is identified”. To do this I have endeavoured to combine different approaches, which I have outlined in the written component of this research. The conclusion to this will however be seen in the body of art works which when seen all together will I hope both extend and amplify the notion of a “relationship with nature” and in this case a relationship based on a location: the Coorong.

List of Illustrations:

1. Ferdinand Bauer, *Grevilles Banksii*, published engraving of watercolour, 1813
2. Helena Forde, *Flora of the Darling River*, watercolour, 1865
3. Ludwig Becker, *Murray Cod*, pencil and indian ink, juli 26, 1858
4. *The Coorong Specimen Series – Orange Bellied Parrott* 2006, dry point, 49.5 x 53.5cm, hand coloured with gouache. 1/1
5. *The Coorong Specimen Series – Ruppia* 2006, drypoint, 49.5x 53.5cm b/w, Hanamula Paper, 1/8
6. *The Coorong Specimen Series – Beaded Glasswort* 2007, drypoint with gouache, 49.5 x 53.5cm, Hanamula Paper, 1/1
7. *The Coorong Specimen Series – Curlew Stint* 2007, drypoint, with gouache, 53.5x39.5cm, on Hanamula Paper 1/1
8. *The Coorong Specimen Series – Mallee Fowl* 2006, drypoint with gouache, 53.5 x 39.5cm, on Hanamula Paper 1/1
9. *The Coorong Specimen Series – Macquarie Perch* 2006, drypoint with gouache, 53.5 x 39.5cm, Hanamula Paper 1/1
10. Fiona Hall, *Leaf litter Series*, Detail, *Adiantum Raddianum*; maidenhair fern
11. Fiona Hall, *Leaf litter Series* Detail, *Sambucus nigra*; common elder, gouache on banknotes
12. John Olsen, *Owl, Coorong*, 2005, etching 11.5 x 8cm
13. John Olsen, *Emus, Coorong*, 2005, etching 25.5 x 28.5cm
14. Anne Musser, *The Fossil Possum – Miralina doylei, Extinct*, 1996, hand drawn illustration
15. *Coorong Specimen Series*, dry points, totaling 6
16. Fiona Hall, *The Leaf Litter Series*, 1999- 2003 gouache on banknotes detail installation, 62 pieces, various sizes
17. W.C. Piguenit, *The Flooding of the Darling* 1890, 1895, oil on canvas
18. Eugene von Guerard, *Sketches of the Murray Darling* 1855, pencil on paper, 17.6 x 22.2cm
19. *The Coorong Landscape Series, Parnka Point*, 2007, oil on Canvas 220 x 90cm
20. *The Coorong Landscape Series, 42 Mile Crossing*, 2007, oil on canvas, 220 x 90cm
21. *The Coorong Landscape Series, The Pink Salt lake*, 2007, oil on canvas, 220 x 90cm
22. Mandy Martin, *Mirages on the Currareva*, 2001, oil on canvas, 1m x 1m

23. Mandy Martin, *Coopers Creek in Flood at Durham Downs 2001*, oil, ochre, pigment on linen, 90 x 167cm
24. Monet, *Nymphs*, 1926 (completed) oil on canvas, 9 panels each 2m x 12m (+detail)
25. *The Coorong Landscape Series, 42 Mile Crossing II*, 2007, oil on canvas, 120 x 90cm
26. *The Coorong Landscape Series, The Pink Salt lake I*, 2006, oil on canvas, 120 x 90cm
27. *The Coorong Landscape Series, 42 Mile Crossing – 7am*, 2006, oil on canvas 90 x 120cm
28. Mandy Martin, *Coopers Creek on Currareva Station 2001*, oil on canvas, 90 x 167cm
29. John Constable, *View on the Stour near Denham 1822*, oil on canvas, 130 x 188cm
30. John Constable, *The Hay Wain 1821*, oil on canvas, 130.5 x 185.5cm
31. *Parnka Point* - Detail
32. *42 Mile Crossing* - Detail
33. *Parnka Point* - Detail
34. John Walker, *The Hollow Tree*, 2003, oil on canvas, 220 x 220cm
35. John Walker, *The Dry Dam*, 2004 oil on canvas, 120 x 120cm
36. Coorong Series, Label - Detail

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