



CANOPY

into the forest

Curated by Peggy Lyon and Ashley Yihsin Chang
MUNDARING ARTS CENTRE
2 May to 8 June 2014



PETER DAILEY | Lungs

This work is merely a play on form and function. When asked to participate in this show I was thinking specifically of trees that work as air filters. I was reminded of a pair of old dust extractors that used to be on a sawmill, visible from the bypass highway into Perth. It seemed an irony to me that these objects stood just as proud and regal as the trees that were being cut up inside the mill once did, especially as they both had a similar function in life. I wondered, if the trees had looked more like machinery, would we have treated them any differently?

Represented by Turner Galleries, Perth



JOANNE DUFFY | Understory II

Never still. Never silent. The forest, a place of ever changing light, smells, sound and hue. *Understory* is an array of views with no fixed time or moment, of the forest view from a common height - in the understory. It is an abstraction of the variety of textures, colour and shape of bark, leaf and limb, but in constant motion

as the forest' life cycle moves through the six Nyoongar seasons. Represented by The Studio Gallery, Yallingup
www.joanneduffy.com.au



NORMA MACDONALD | Lost Canopy

While researching for this project, I was drawn to the weather-aged tree stumps, bleached from years of bathing in the elements, slowly turning many shades of black and greys. When they crumble back to nature many stories of yesterday will slowly perish and history will be gone forever. These majestic giant

trees intertwined their branches, forming the canopy for the many species of flora and fauna that are now threatened by extinction.

My work is a reminder of the loss of our past and a warning for our future. I did a relief print from a tree stump onto sheets of printing paper. Within these images I could envisage two head shapes. People talking together, vibrant communities so many years ago when their only concern was for their well being and survival. Outside of the centre image are small relief prints taken from the same tree stump only this time it is symbolic of the NOW, today. These images look like a web - communities still connected and still concerned for the survival of our forests. These branch shapes reaching out like a canopy, protect what we have left for our future generations to come.

Represented by Gomboc Gallery, Middle Swan



ALAN MULLER | Walken Boona Boodja (Rainbow Tree Country)

In this work the atmosphere, ocean, land and trees interact as part of the living Earth. The shape of the view down onto the trees references an oblique view from space of the south-west of WA, where vast forests existed before English settlement. The

Bibbulmun, Kaneang, Wardandi, Pinjarup and Whadjuk Nyoongar peoples saw their country radically and irreversibly changed by the cutting down of trees and the clearing of land. One of the unintended consequences has been a constantly declining rainfall. A spiritual connection to the Earth and to Place is not a naive, romantic notion. It has become an imperative for the very survival of our species. It is now time for us to show our humanity to the Earth itself.

Represented by the Melody Smith Gallery, Perth



MEL DARE | Mine

Humans are social animals. We feel the need to identify, to belong. An extension of this is ownership: setting up fences, laws and etiquette to define, contain and guard what is mine, what is yours, what is ours. We conquer nations; assimilating culture, customs and language. Possessing more and more. Priding ourselves on our property, our status, our achievements, our values. Imbuing them with stories to build our importance and self worth... the ever increasing mine. Mine is an act of ownership. Mine is an act of entitlement. Mine is an act of violence.

Mine: Used to indicate the one or ones belonging to me.¹
Mine: An excavation in the earth from which ore or minerals can be extracted.²

Mine: An explosive device used to destroy enemy personnel, shipping, fortifications, or equipment, often placed in a concealed position and designed to be detonated by contact, proximity, or a time fuse.³

^{1,2,3} Definitions from www.thefreedictionary.com/mines



BEC JUNIPER | This is not European romance

"...as an artist I approach my native place of birth with a prerequisite love and fear...The west is a stranger place than we think..." excerpts from quote by Tim Winton.

This painting depicts a lone tree standing foreshortened at the bottom of an aerial view of the desert.

Vulnerable, out of scale at great odds - a beautiful idea, a harsh reality. This is where we live.

Represented by Linton and Kay Galleries, Perth
www.becjuniper.com.au



CLARE MCFARLANE | Caladenia

Pattern is often a decorative way to represent 'nature'. We use it in our homes, on the clothes we wear, even on electronic devices. Patterns can provide a way to introduce nature into our lives. But it is a controlled ideal of nature. In this work, our control of the natural world is the background for a stunning oversized spider orchid.

I wanted to represent this small delicate flower as almost a monster - still beautiful but an exotic beast. Spider orchids are not a traditionally soft, pretty flower. Though small and delicate, the flower's form is somewhat alien. I wanted it to stand out from the dark manicured background and strike you with its stunning form.

Represented by Turner Galleries, Perth



PERDITA PHILLIPS | Karri Kings (Please don't tuck me in until I'm yours)

Today, on this day, are we environmental procrastinators? Or can we maintain, in an unstable world, a state of 'anticipatory readiness', to the futures that face us? I am currently experiencing political incomprehensibility, but trying to avoid apocalyptic thinking.

This project began with two old sets of images. One is of the Karri Log that used to be in Kings Park, taken by Frank Hurley in the late 1950s. Another was a series taken around the town of Pemberton in the 1970s and reproduced in the form of a fold-out postcard. These images have been re-photographed at the same location, with the help of the Pemberton community.
www.perditaphillips.com



GREGORY PRYOR | Nanuk 2

A river etches a space in a forest and often the mightiest of eucalypts rise majestically from the banks as if to protect the meandering body of water on it's journey to the sea. These riverside trees are also extremely important vantage points for water birds and one can observe all the subtleties of the open expanse of water from the camouflage of dappled light and shade within. 'Nanuk 2' has it's origins in the bend of the Swan River near what is now called Success Hill Reserve. The Nyoongar people believed the wahgul or rainbow serpent rested here and the ancestors of these trees would have had a wonderful view of this important event.

Represented by Lister Gallery, Subiaco



NALDA SEARLES | Return

Jim Searles, born 1918, was one of many men who became a clearing force throughout the southern wheatbelt in the 1930s, the time of the Great Depression. Young strong men were paid a pound an acre to clear-fell virgin timbered country. Using draught horses and heavy chains, as well as axes and pure muscle power, great swathes of land were denuded. Nothing was left standing except the occasional very large tree. He recalled to me felling a xanthorrhoea which he measured at the time at 28 feet in fallen height (approx 8.5 metres) - a giant of a plant by any standards.

Years later, as an old man, he became the proud owner of a wood lathe and spent hours turning out very solid lamp bases and egg cups as many men are wont to. Amongst his wood finds, gathered in his travels, was always sandalwood, long dead. As he turned the sweet-smelling wood, shavings accumulated beneath his lathe in luscious piles. When the pile grew too large, he bagged these shavings and offered them to me, for I am a chip off the old block you may say. So these *Shape Changers Slippers*, which he wore till his death, have been coated with his sandalwood shavings. They are a collaboration between father and daughter but I intend them to make a statement as to the manner in which the timber country was made bereft of its wondrous forests by that original clearing.

Even later in his life, my father became somewhat of a naturalist. The singlet was his standard working attire, here covered with banksia appliqué, as an homage to that return he had to a great appreciation of the flora of his country.



HOLLY STORY | Red Rain

What is that thing called "nature"? To each of us it takes a different form, according to our own nature.

Represented by Turner Galleries, Perth



LINDA VAN DER MERWE | Listening For A Place, series 1 Entry

For where would we be if all the wild places are destroyed? The forest (the bush) is elemental, it provides a powerful sense of mystery, and that mystery is itself mysterious. In folklore, fairytales and mythology, transformation stories play out in forests as a rite of passage, transitioning us from childhood to adulthood and beyond. In these wild places we meet ourselves in relationship to 'the other' it is exhilarating and terrifying, numinous, liminal.



NIEN SCHWARZ | Hot World Buffet

I cook in the bush for geological crews. We light fires for warmth and cooking. Charcoal from my hearth is a medium through which I interrogate the impact of widespread land clearing for agricultural development, mineral resource extraction and mass consumerism. Trees reach back more than 250 millions years before we evolved. Each tree is invested with the sun and the Earth's latent energy. Gathering wood is a sobering task; in the process I deprive animals of their homes and the ground of future humus. The daily picture: globally more people to feed, the ritual of burning wood and fossil fuels to cook on, while the affluent wallow in paper and discard unfashionable furniture. What kind of future are we birthing? Consider Peter Seidel's *invisible walls*¹ - wilful negligence concerning daily actions that adversely impact the environment. The psychological, social, economic, and political factors that keep us from taking responsibility for the advantages of industrialisation and living beyond sustainable means.

nienschwarz.org

¹ Seidel, Peter, *Invisible Walls: Why We Ignore the Damage We Inflict on the Planet...and Ourselves*, Amherst New York, Prometheus Books, 1998



DAVID SMALL | A Point in Time

I enjoy, observing (especially the landscape) and the process of painting. The bits in between the observing and the process can be a lot or a little.

Represented by Emerge Art Space, Perth



PAUL UHLMANN | I want to see things that are above

This work responds to the natural environment of the south-west of WA through the historic lens of the black mirror. In the 17th and 18th century it was common for European artists to have among the tools of their paint box a small convex black mirror or Claude Lorrain Glass, employed by the painter to assist in the task of reducing the

complexity of the scene to a more simplified tonal range. The artist would ironically turn their backs to the landscape in order to study their subject and in this way the mirror was a mediating device between the artist and the subject. Rather than providing me with distance on the subject, I find that the black mirror imperceptibly shifts my perception so that I am able to contemplate the everyday with a beguiling intensity.

Represented by Art Collective WA
pauluhmann.wordpress.com



PHILIP WARD-DICKSON | Invader - Now and Then

The *Invader* series of paintings references the impact of introduced exotic species on the Australian ecosystem. It evolved from earlier emblematic banner-like paintings, based on abstractions of the unique form of Banksia leaves and the distinctive wildflowers of WA. The time I spent in the West Australian bush,

engaged in observation of the flora, was overshadowed by a growing awareness of the impact introduced species were having on this beautiful but fragile ecosystem. Introduced species were often the only animals sighted. In this four-panelled painting, the Fox and the Cat have been juxtaposed with our threatened native species, the Bilby and the Numbat. The introduced Fox and Cat are depicted as casting a shadow, while the Bilby and Numbat appear merely as shadow-like traces of what had once inhabited the landscape. Represented by Turner Galleries, Perth

CANOPY - into the forest

Almost two hundred years have passed since the Crown of England claimed the western third of Australia for its empire, persuading some of its citizens to occupy the distant Swan River colony. The long-standing, finely-balanced relationships between the indigenous owners of the land and the country on which they depended for survival and well-being were about to be destroyed in any area where the colonisers were given land grants or leases. The mostly opportunistic newcomers had a completely different way of thinking about the land, based on personal ownership and profit, and through persistent coercion and violence, their view came to prevail.

Their actions eventually had a damaging impact on the vast swathes of forest which once covered this land. Over time, the combination of government regulation, transplanted attitudes from England and a failure of imagination meant that most colonists were incapable of seeing a way of living other than the one they had brought with them. It was a time when British ways were seen as superior, ensuring that most people were blind to the knowledge and experience garnered over tens of thousands of years by the dispossessed Nyoongar people.

The consequences of this early lack of insight together with an ongoing refusal or reluctance by individuals and governments to take the steps necessary to end land clearing have been devastating, with much forested area gone, some cleared land dying and increasing salinity. Irene Cunningham in her passionate and meticulously-researched book *The Land of Flowers* describes one of the repeated episodes of clearing:

*Salmon gums grew over millions of hectares, covering what is now known as the Midlands, the wheatbelt and the region that became the goldfields. A magnificent forest fanned out from Coolgardie for hundreds of kilometres in every direction in 1895. It was chopped down to produce fuel for gold furnaces. By 1900 only one-tenth of the goldfields forest remained and that would soon be cut out.*¹

Since the founding of the Swan River Colony in 1829 there has been an unresolved conflict between what we as a community need to do for our own long-term survival (look after the land and its unique ecosystems) and what we as individuals want to do for our own short term personal pleasure or gain.

In the past, the mythology of the Australian way of life has been heavily dependent on the notion of the pioneer, prospector and pastoralist, and once found heroic expression in the large landscapes of artists such as Frederick McCubbin. McCubbin's much-loved painting *Down on his Luck* is a typical example of the fascination with a romanticised idea of life in the Australian bush. It was painted in a now densely-populated suburb of Melbourne.²

Many people still think fondly of the bush "out there" but few of us have an intimate or detailed relationship with the land. Whether such a relationship is necessary for an understanding of the value of natural ecosystems is doubtful. The painter Fred Williams, who was preoccupied with the country, professed no affinity for the bush and yet he changed the way many of us see this country. "I don't want to live in it" he said. "I only want to see it from a distance. I couldn't say I love the bush.....I simply want to paint pictures from it."³

For this exhibition sixteen contemporary artists based in Perth were invited to make an art work with reference to this natural and cultural legacy we have inherited.

Peggy Lyon

¹ Irene Cunningham, *The Land of Flowers*, Otford Press 2005, p16

² Art Gallery of WA, Looking closely at Australian Life www.artgallery.wa.gov.au/collections/documents/mccubbin.pdf

³ Anthony Clark, *The Age*, Melbourne, 12 July 1980

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List of Works

1	Clare McFarlane	Caladenia Acrylic and aerosol on canvas	\$6,000
2	Peter Dailey	Lungs Painted wood, fibreglass resin, cardboard, steel	\$7,500
3	Holly Story	Red Rain Hand-stitched, embroidery hoop, linen, nettle thread, Marri kino, wax	\$3,385
4	Joanne Duffy	Understory I Oil on Belgian linen	\$4,000
5	Joanne Duffy	Understory II Oil on Belgian linen	\$4,000
6	Linda van der Merwe	Listening For A Place, Series 1 Entry Water based oils on canvas	\$6,000
7	Nalda Searles	The Shape Changers Slippers Mans slippers c. 1997, sandalwood shavings from lathe work c. 1993, rubber bowyangs Return Mans cotton singlet c.1998, grey blanket cut and stitched with linen thread	\$2,900
8	Mel Dare	Mine Acrylic paint and ink on Belgian linen	\$5,200
9	Gregory Pryor	Nanuk 2 Oil on linen	\$8,600
10	Paul Uhlmann	I want to see things that are above (triptych) Digital print	\$1,380
11	David Small	A Point in Time Oil on board	\$2,000
12	Alan Muller	Walken Boona Boodja (Rainbow Tree Country) Acrylic on canvas	\$4,400
13	Bec Juniper	This is not European romance Mixed media including grass tree resin and charcoal	\$1,800
14	Perdita Phillips	Karri King Mixed media on paper	\$660
15	Perdita Phillips	Karri Kings (Please don't tuck me in until I'm yours) Digitally printed limited edition softcover artist book, edition of 21	\$66
16	Perdita Phillips	Karri Kings (Please don't tuck me in until I'm yours) Digital print on paper rephotographed work, edition of 16 (Original postcard series NFS)	\$77
17	Philip Ward-Dickson	Invader – Now and Then Acrylic on composition board	\$11,000
18	Norma MacDonald	Lost Canopy Lino printing ink, watercolour, acrylic, ink, pencil on watercolour paper	\$3,000
19	Nien Schwarz	Hot World Buffet Wooden sideboard, charcoal, paper, maps, digital print, plaster frame	\$3,000



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The curators Peggy Lyon and Ashley Yihsin Chang would like to thank the *Canopy* artists for their fine work, enthusiasm in engaging with this subject matter, and the many productive conversations which ensued.

All images are a detail image from individual artists' exhibition pieces.

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