

Jon Cattapan

Rosalie Gascoigne

Antony Hamilton

Kathleen Petyarre

Imants Tillers

ExpansE :

Aboriginalities, spatialities and the politics of ecstasy

an exhibition by Ian North



ISBN 0 86803 510 6

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Expanse: Aboriginalities, spatialities and the politics of ecstasy
essay by Ian North

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I N



John D. Moore

Sydney Harbour 1936
oil on canvas
91.5 x 122.5
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney



ARTS A Antony Hamilton acknowledges the support of the government of South Australia through Arts SA



F o r e w o r d

This publication and exhibition mark the beginning of the official program of the University of South Australia's Art Museum in its new City West Campus location. North Terrace, Adelaide's cultural boulevard, also features the Lion Arts Centre, the Art Gallery of South Australia, the South Australian Museum and the State Library.

Over the last decade our Art Museum has built a significant reputation for its exhibition program. It has consistently encouraged the creation of new work by South Australian artists covering all the media, forms and philosophies that comprise contemporary visual arts. It has done this in a way that contributes educationally, both within the University and into the wide community. Less known to the public is the Art Museum's essential role in managing the University's art collection. This includes significant research collections of South Australian ceramics, as a result

of major gifts and bequests including the *Dr Chamberlain Collection of Ceramics* and the *Dr R. J. Lyons Collection of South Australian Ceramics*.

Art Museum Director Erica Green saw the merits of a high-profile Art Museum gallery in the city and oversaw its relocation – a great symbol of our desire to bring more of the University's visual arts functions to the city, where they have so much to contribute to Adelaide's cultural re-vitalisation.

It is also fitting that this first exhibition, *Expanse*, should have Professor Ian North as its curator. Widely exhibited as an artist and with a distinguished background as an art museum curator prior to becoming Head of the South Australian School of Art from 1984 - 1993, Professor North has long been the Art Museum's principal advocate and this collaboration is therefore timely.

Finally, however, that the Art Museum's inaugural project at City West, *Expanse*, demonstrates such a high level of artistic and critical relevance, is a source of pride, illustrating as it does the University's premier educational role on behalf of the visual arts in South Australia.

Professor Denise Bradley, AO
Vice Chancellor



For all of its life, until now, the University of South Australia Art Museum has operated a vigorous exhibitions program through a not easily discovered gallery alongside the South Australian School of Art, at the University's Underdale campus. Although rudimentary, the gallery was physically large and professional in constitution, allowing exhibitions of scale and high standard. And it notoriously challenged the imagination of artists, resulting in the creation of many innovative, and unquestionably memorable works of art.

However the very welcome opportunity to relocate the Art Museum gallery to reconstructed premises at the University's new City West campus, is regenerative. Our new gallery will continue to productively challenge and incite artists, as it should. But the gallery's significantly greater visibility and more accessible location in Adelaide city's cultural heartland will enlarge the scope, authority and educational value of all projects conducted here, inherently. Our contribution to the fabric of South Australian cultural life, and beyond, will surely grow.

These considerations were certainly in mind when I invited Professor Ian North to produce our inaugural City West exhibition. I have been humbled by the ambition, energy and scale of his response. The exhibition *Expanse* fulfils any criteria of relevance, for a project with which to launch the Art Museum's new gallery.

Expanse brings us the work of five Australian contemporary artists of high reputation, each exhibiting major new work for the first time and additionally includes a painting - for which we are indebted to the Art Gallery of New South Wales - by John D. Moore, *Sydney Harbour*, 1936, which functions as a qualifying point of reference.

The artists range from the pre-eminent postmodernist Imants Tillers, whose work reflects a new sense of location without denying his thesis of locality failing, to the religious pragmatism of Kathleen Petyarre's desert dreaming, through Rosalie Gascoigne's precise metaphors for place, the installations of Antony Hamilton, dealing with contemporary bush myths, and the urban epiphanies and toxic nightmares of Jon Cattapan.

Expanse takes as its leitmotif, as curator North calls it, 'that our survival is grounded in nature'. He proposes that, in spite of their differences, the five artists' work, if taken together, signals a shift in Australian art, from the postmodernist 1980's to a less ideological, more reflective sense of place based not on essences but on the understanding that Australians can forge a culture embracing urban, rural and outback Australian realities as well as participating, necessarily, in international exchanges.

The work is chosen for its artistic power. But Ian North has also produced an extraordinary corollary to the exhibition in his accompanying essay, imaginatively and ambitiously mapping a fresh terrain of cultural and social space. In this, he suggests that seen and considered, the work in *Expanse* encourages the opportunity to explore issues of Aboriginalities, white and black; the literal and theoretical spaces conditioning Australian art and life today; and the 'forbidden'(unfashionable) areas of aesthetics and nature.

Expanse is a benchmark, and we gratefully thank everyone involved.

Erica Green
Art Museum Director



E x p a n s e

Aboriginalities, spatialities and the politics of ecstasy

I a n N o r t h

1. Expanse: an introduction

The ground is always shifting, but while the terrain summoned by 'expanse' might possess indeterminate edges, it contains a broad conceptual comfort zone in its centre: the notion of a spreading sense of size, however bleak or beautiful the mental or physical prospect, implies a certain certainty. But not an absolute fixity, not even in the material domain. Sir Thomas Browne's 'Nature...that lies expans'd unto the eyes of all'¹ is a shaky concept in the face of the nature/culture debate (is there nature beyond this construct?), yet to assert nature's existence is by implication to be involved, willy-nilly, in a war waged by the human animal against the rest of the biosphere. Best to be a little provisional here, to lay in stocks for a long haul.

Trumpets re-heralding the end of high art have long since cracked its walls, sending the fine arts streaming spectacularly into the flood-plains of popular art, fashion and design. The evacuation of the citadel has been sufficiently complete to allow one a scavenger's licence to pick up what is left, because there is little, it seems, at stake: it is as if no-one knows what art is any more, and few choose to ask². This *laissez faire* lawlessness is manifestly unsatisfactory, but for now it is necessary only to



refute assertions of art's utter end, which, like all generalisations, require only one exception for their downfall. Herewith are five artists, Jon Cattapan, Rosalie Gascoigne, Antony Hamilton, Kathleen Petyarre and Imants Tillers, whose work not only shows that Australian art lives, a banal conclusion, but also, when seen in a certain light, that a shift is occurring in the field, presaged in certain respects by thousands of years of Aboriginal culture³. In spite of the artists' widely differing trajectories, from modernism and modernism's 'primitive' other to postmodernism and beyond, their work in aggregate cuts across the details and debates of recent Australian art history to indicate productive new ways of being in Australia.

This has been occurring against a context of art world ennui more radically debilitating than that which infected *Popism*, Paul Taylor's landmark exhibition in Melbourne in 1982. The artists concerned, whose number included Imants Tillers, made art about the end of art as an homogeneous system, and thus affirmed what they were ostensibly attacking⁴. *Popism* ventured the cool thrill, not of aesthetic pleasure, but

of the double-take. It comprised an avant-garde in Peter Bürger's anti-art sense, promoting an art of jolting re-arrangement, a compounding car crash at an intersection without lights: hence a clear distinction between Popism and the simpler, more celebratory character of earlier Pop. Taylor nonetheless saw photography as a *lingua franca* and paradigm for Australian art at this time, on the grounds that both were a conduit and point of confusion of all media. This reduction of photography to the passively instrumental fatally weakened the logic of his argument, but his rhetoric was persuasive: the period of appropriation was publicly launched in Australia. Taylor built upon Paul Foss's brilliantly succinct and original articulation of conceptual co-dependency between Europe and Australia, to suggest that a true Australian art can be made from shards of others⁵. Such views were consonant with the similarly prescient writing of Imants Tillers, who also saw it as an advantage that Australia, supposedly, could access only fragments of more dominant cultures, hence ideally fulfilling a postmodernist paradigm⁶. The Popist moment of productive negativity segued into a subtle and equivocal re-assertion of value, as manifested, for example, in Ted Colless' *Design for Living* exhibition, Sydney 1985⁷, or Imants Tillers' continued and sustained adoption of painting, not as a regressive step but as an implicit assertion that the medium was just one among many. It is not altogether without irony that the artistic and theoretical fevers of the early and mid 1980s presaged a rapidly expanding market bubble in Paddington and Soho alike⁸.

The consequent outbreak of careerism endemic in the art world now seems inevitable. Both theory and the market encouraged artists to imagine that they could leave the 'provincialism problem' in the 1970s, and to wish away the fact that under its terms even artists at putative centres were almost invariably bound to lose the game⁹ - even if they intuited the consoling thought that the very success of 'original' art, by making it seem that all prior art led up to it, rendered that same art provincial, just because it was dependent on that history¹⁰. Artists increasingly felt that they could find a footing on the ladder of global success while dealing with the snakes of sexist oppression, the media and ecological degradation, in moves sanctioned by the apparent postmodernist termination of legitimising imperialist narratives.

As Rex Butler observed, appropriation moved through stages: the copy seen as different from the original, the same as the original, and at once the same as and different from the original - changing, that is, from

iconoclasm, to iconic homage, to banality¹¹. Art world attention has long since moved away from appropriation as such, through grunge and neo-abstraction, to an approach to the real: that is, to the assertion of that mode of being whereby a thing becomes specifically individual rather than provisional. The practice of certain artists, Jon Cattapan among them, who understood but never fully adopted the machinations of appropriation, now seem prophetic in this regard. It might further be noted that Aboriginal art retains a charge of creative conditionality, in that it typically quotes from Dreamings without fully revealing them¹². Yet a great deal of recent non-indigenous Australian art attempts to venture a zone beyond art, effortlessly reproducing the latter's effects and styles in a deathly dance of continuing provisionality: artists promoted as overcoming that syndrome often seem fatally to embroider, with a wry, knowing subjectivity, the forms and patterns of past art, achieving either an uncertain realism, or taking refuge in the intellectually sanctified safe haven of the minimal and conceptual. The five artists in *Expanse* - do they speak more authentically than this, do they only *seem* to speak authentically, or, because they speak authentically, are they to be deemed ancestral, regardless of their chronological age?

The 1980s saw Australian artists increasingly attempt to negotiate between the proverbial local and the global, but the ascendancy of economic rationalism has placed most artists' dreams of international reputation on ice. The Australia Council now perceptibly privileges objective-driven funding over its earlier imperatives of artistic freedom; the Federal Government besieges an ineptly defended Australian Broadcasting Corporation; the National Gallery is possibly chancing a glance backwards to imperial models of collection building¹³; and university art schools gyre around notions of art as research, in a search for federal money. Yet this is but black noise to the work going on in artists' studios. Urgently felt local realities have broken up the sweeping, gridded abstractions of hoped-for empire, once glistening in artists' minds: a new, almost rueful acceptance of the here and now seems to prevail. This very quality,

along with an embrace, to individual taste and capacity, of all the information at planetary disposal, lends the best art today a charge of assurance which might slowly resonate through an enervated art world and outwards, into the broader Australian culture and beyond.

The sophisticated sense of locality implied makes no claims for nationhood or essence, and is not pitched for or against an ideology, in the manner of the Jindyworobaks or in the Antipodean style of inverted exotica. It is not intended to serve the interests of chauvinistic nationalism any more than it proposes that art should *only* slide into the floating world of international image circulation. The highly diverse work of the artists in this exhibition intersects, rather, with the themes sketched below, which are offered as discussion points without any intention of discussing the art's character and content exhaustively. The work includes the shafting modernist/postmodernist metaphors of Rosalie Gascoigne; Imants Tillers' nets of place, art and culture; the resonating, myth-invoking but media-savvy installations of Antony Hamilton; the intense, religious pragmatism of Kathleen Petyarre, and the quasi-surreal urban epiphanies of Jon Cattapan. All of the artists concerned *in effect* respond to, or in Petyarre's case help constitute, the central feature of Australian art today, namely the ascendancy of Aboriginal art. One may press into service and re-inflect an old term to describe the work here presented: in concert, it displays a new interest in local colour. All of the work stems at least partly from the artists' grounded sense of being within, rather than alienated from, their localities, whether urban, rural or outback, while remaining open to connections both global or metaphysical. Expanse indeed.

2. Aboriginalities

Whitefella artists' long march out of the landscape, with Fred Williams' work of the 1960s their last resounding hurrah¹⁴, occurred when Aboriginal claims were moving in the opposite direction, culminating in the High Court's Mabo and Wik decisions of 1992 and 1996 respectively. This is triply ironic, as revitalised Aboriginal culture came into high visibility, a classic return of the repressed, during the bicentenary of white settlement in 1988, with an art based on the land. Aboriginal art now is mainstream Australian art. However vulnerable it may be in terms of political and financial economies, its presence and continuing vitality is a triumph of, and beyond, survival.

Mabo overthrew the doctrine of *terra nullius*¹⁵. Yet, as noted above, whitefella artists in the same period generally sought to be *corpora disiuncta*, part of a tendency which continues in the 'posthuman' rhetoric of cyberspace today. White guilt worked against the convergence of Aboriginal culture and that of the rest of the Australian population, for which, incidentally, there is no satisfactory word in general currency¹⁶. A desire to leave behind the vestiges of nationalist and representational landscape traditions possessed non-indigenous artists, as did a less conscious compulsion to parallel culturally the ethically unimpeded explosion of international capital.



Jon CATTAPAN
The City Submerged no 15 (Pacific Fence) (detail) 1990-1998
 1 oil on canvas 197.5 x 167.5, 17 oil on linen or canvas
 1 glass sheet, 14 photocopies
 overall dimensions 250 x 600
 courtesy Annandale Galleries, Sydney and Sutton Gallery, Melbourne

The latter process saw culture destroying nature as a meaningfully separate category in accordance with postmodernism's theoretical rationale, that of deconstruction, which would deny any ultimate ground to such a binary intellectual distinction. That the concept of nature should be thus cast may seem extraordinary at an everyday level when considered against the vast, inimical expanses of Australia, a consequent sense of disjunction scarcely being annulled by the tactic of asserting that all human activities and artefacts are as natural as a wombat warren. (One might as well say with Sir Thomas Browne that 'all things are artificial, for nature's the work of God'¹⁷). On a deconstructive level the nature/culture debate is rendered meaningless; within that understanding one can retrieve a useful, quotidian sense of distinction, as in the work of eco-historians, Stephen Pyne for example, who assert a

nature 'out there' as an active protagonist in history. Pyne's writings on Aboriginal fire farming in Australia alone relate a saga of relationship between cultural and natural forces, revealing their independence and interdependence alike¹⁸.

Non-indigenous artists nonetheless remained bound by a necessity to reject their cultural and physical inheritance. Their association of the landscape genre with imperialism provided a powerful reason, in the wake of modernism and the Vietnam war, for the creation of a virtual artistic apartheid. They abandoned the field, as it were, to Aboriginal artists. Yet to consider the land is perhaps to approach the ground of our being, a disputed concept in a posthuman age. I have spoken of a new sense of place as being provisional, as stemming backwards from a quiet assessment of one's situation in the world, rather than stemming outwards from a location. This provisionality is also provisional. The new direction in Australian art (new, that is, when considered *in toto*) also possesses a firmer foundation, in the slower changing physical and cultural conditions of life in Australia.

The human genome project and studies in genetics are modifying ideologies which venture the dominance of culture over nature, as encapsulated, for example, in the idea of the death of the author¹⁹. Many have noted the obvious, that we have to possess a continuing sense of identity to survive and function as social beings... and consumers²⁰. The collapse of religions, both traditional and secular, had a common basis in disappointed hopes for the perfectibility of humanity, which in turn had its origins in a failure to acknowledge the animal nature of human nature. As Peter Singer has observed of intellectual history of the last one and a half centuries, Darwin has been understood to have become irrelevant where Marx began, a mistake of epic, tragic proportions. Singer argues against the ingrained idea that our psychic make-up is predominantly a cultural construct, in favour of a Darwinian system of ethics. This is not to be a rightest 'survival of the fittest' philosophy, but

one in which our biological evolutionary inheritance is taken into cognisance²¹. Other writers have long since produced compelling evidence for a genetically transmitted receptivity to certain forms, shapes and even views as a way of accounting for the phenomenon of aesthetic pleasure, which in many cases can be cross-cultural. We may develop this line of thought further into the realm of the contingent, by noting that we are informed by our physical environment, whether urban, suburban, rural or outback. The proposition that relationships between various landscapes and people are complex and diverse is a truism. Another, however, deserves further consideration: namely, that a different consciousness obtains in someone living for a long time in Australia (or anywhere) as compared to elsewhere. A virtually indefinable, shifting but nonetheless real mixture of cultural and physical influences renders the notion of being Australian more than merely the after-life of a myth, an advertiser's confection, or the fading effect of political jurisdiction.

To acknowledge humanity's animal nature in conjunction with even the most superficial consideration of Aboriginal history, is to become aware of how the land and human culture interweave. Aboriginal art can constitute title deeds, as it were, on an area of country, backed with resonances of religion, respect and the authority of countless generations. Insofar as much Western Desert art, in particular, can be seen as landscapes as well as maps and expressions of Dreamings, it lends W. J. T. Mitchell's observation that 'landscape is a particular historical formation associated with European imperialism'²² a particular postmodern spin, even as it opens up options for fresh considerations of the genre. The desert dot paintings are made with Western art media for a Western market, concealing far more than they show about the mysteries so avidly sought by buyers, a knowing gesture of counter-colonialism on the part of fourth world artists whose actions thereby fit a postmodern conception of the world all too cutely²³. The paintings are nonetheless principally adaptations not of Western ways of viewing which reflect the colonising eye, but rather stem from ceremonial works made on sand or bark, from the stuff of the land. All of the best Aboriginal art today emulates Albert Namatjira's practice, in that by conforming to Western conceptions of art, at least to the extent of using Western materials, artists reclaim the land for its traditional custodians²⁴. In so far as Aboriginal paintings are maps, they are made by and for people who are at home in the land described therein, and thus have little to do with Cartesian cartography, which historically projected its lines of longitude and latitude from outside the territory which comprised its object.

Aboriginal art's apparent parallels with Western abstract painting, now nearly a century old and the stuff of museum blockbusters, has allowed its world-wide acceptance. The primitivist fantasy, the long-held European belief in the power of the 'primitive', has augmented this process, with its roots not just in Rousseau but in Baldwin Spencer and Sigmund Freud, who found in Aboriginality the origin of modernity, repressed to the unconscious to become its centre. Hence it lives on: when the dead father is Aboriginal, 'his repression signifies an unconscious identity by non-Aboriginal Australians with Aborigines'²⁵. Aboriginal cultures simultaneously remain predominantly 'other' to Western consciousness, their aesthetics and mode of production being imbued with a powerful religious charge along with more instrumental functions. This twin aspect of Aboriginal art, along with its superficial similarity to Western art forms, allows and fosters a trafficking between cultures (once) radically different in their histories and presumptions²⁶.

The combination of spirituality and pragmatism, of emotional and practical imperatives, also explains why Aboriginal art is often dazzlingly superior to most non-indigenous Australian art, which now so often conspicuously lacks both qualities. These factors whitefellas can sense in Aboriginal art while they access and extrapolate upon such aspects of its originary Dreaming as the artists choose to reveal. One expert on Petyarre's art, Christine Nicholls, has made a provocatively productive connection between the struggles of Petyarre's Thorny Devil across vast terrains and J. M. W. Turner's miniature mariners battling immense seas and skies²⁷. Looking at Petyarre's paintings is indeed to experience something like the vortex of the micro and macro rendered in Turner's undated watercolour *Shipwreck*, or his *Snow-Storm - Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth*, 1842²⁸. No-one looking at Turner's work could doubt his imaginative involvement with the elements he represents. Petyarre's work suggests that she, too, is crossing the country with the Thorny Devil as she paints multiple metaphors for the creature's progress, her shimmering veils of dots suggesting both local colour and the mystical immanence of the underlying Dreaming.

The Thorny Devil has a chameleon's ability to adapt its colouring to its surrounds. As such it could be a figure for all Australians. Imants Tillers does not necessarily resile from his 1982 thesis that locality fails²⁹ and one would never ascribe to him a reductionistic place-based art, yet he has spoken of, in effect, an opening out into the existential experience of nature and a lessening need for abstract positionings. 'The triangle of doubt...formed by Canberra, Cooma and Mt. Kosciusko', has become distinctly less important to

him as a consequence of his move in 1996 to Cooma³⁰, a country town in the Monaro area about an hour's drive south of Canberra, the nation's capital. Tillers' references to Aboriginal art, in particular that of Michael Nelson Jagamara, have been well-documented, along with vehement responses by Gordon Bennett and assorted critics³¹: the Aboriginal connection is perhaps constitutive of his growing interest in a particular location.

The title of his work in this exhibition, the fifth and last of his monumental *Diaspora series*³², is *Monaro*. Its most immediately obvious features, in comparison with the earlier works, are its quietistic mood; its silvery grey, pink and bronze hues; and its subtle tonalities, echoing the bare hills and purified light of the Cooma region³³. It has been exhibited in sections in Cooma under an exhibition title, *Prayer for Rain*³⁴, hence linking the work's mediated, metaphysical references to the physical realities of the district. In consonance with the artist's long-established appropriative strategies, but in contrast with his more formally deconstructive practices of the early to mid 1980s, the work cites imagery from photo-mechanical reproductions, including the work of Colin McCahon (the numbers and the 'T' forms³⁵), Sigmar Polke (de-capped mountain in central panel), and the onlooking cherubs (from the early nineteenth century German romantic, Philipp Otto Runge), to form a statement about locality, originality and chance. The work comprises another step in the artist's enterprise of registering the twin consequences of diasporas, on the one hand, a globalising denial of national borders, and on the other, an emphasis on

Rosalie GASCOIGNE
Frontier V 1998
painted corrugated galvanized iron panel on wood
116 x 120
courtesy Roslyn Oxley Gallery, Sydney



localism³⁶. The church in *Monaro* is a landmark in Riga, a reminder that Tillers' 'paintings resemble Latvia in that each is a battleground'³⁷ of competing yet aggregating references, and that a principal concern is identity constructed from shifting grids of global connection³⁸. Tillers' *Book of Power*, the collective name for his multi-part works on canvas boards undertaken since 1981, is similarly subject to complex possibilities of subdivision, recombination and indefinite extension, underscoring the intertextuality of his subject matter. Yet Polke's little mountain rhymes with The Three Brothers, actual volcanic cones south-east of Cooma, while the grey light in *Monaro* links it to the work of Rosalie Gascoigne, who scours the same region for shards of material to act as its metaphor, as well as to essay the wider interior. *Monaro* thus connects in turn to Antony Hamilton's installations, in part invariably formed from materials picked up in the bush.

Whitefellas have shaped the land (notoriously!) and been shaped by it (controversially). The first half of this century, still the object of politically focussed nostalgia in the bush, was a time of Anglo-Celtic nation building, assertions of Aryan superiority and what has been called the beginnings of white Aboriginality, whereby the advent of virtual reality in the form of colour printing in magazines fostered a growing pride in Australia's red centre and great geological age³⁹. With Namatjira's post-war succession to the landscape tradition, identification with place rather than with race occurred to an extent bounded by white tolerance of Namatjira as an honorary non-black, just as it had been for Hans Heysen during the First War to the extent that he was seen as non-German.

Whitefella admiration of natural features, Uluru for example, helped Aboriginal peoples recover their past: Ayers Rock (as it was formerly known) has long featured on tourist posters. Comparable processes happened with the Maori in New Zealand, paralleling the both beneficial and toxic processes of historical recovery which also occurred in such countries as Greece and Serbia. Uluru is now more important to both black and non-indigenous Australians than the dog on Gundagai's tucker box, a reversal of the situation in the 1950s. From that time on Australia increasingly opened itself through travel and immigration to the wider world, while at the same time national self-assertion steadily grew, in itself a kind of Aboriginality, a sense of coming from and identifying with particular Australian origins and characteristics.

The suitably ugly word 'ghettoisation' stands for a condition at the opposite pole of assimilation, though advocacy

of both processes can stem from similarly evil assumptions of supremacy. Edward Said's straightforward proposition that 'survival is about the connections between things'⁴⁰, as opposed to their separation or blending, does not occlude different histories or strategies for living: some Aboriginal artists begin their presentations to others with assertions of their tribal affiliations, while others, usually city-based, insist on the primacy of their identity as artists *per se*. Nor does a leitmotif of this essay, that our survival is grounded in nature, deny in any respect the reality of our predominantly suburban, coast-dwelling society.

Hence the work of Cattapan has an equal place with that of Petyarre. His painting installation, *The City Submerged no 15 (Pacific Fence)*, 1990 - 1998, proposes a connection between actual cities, especially in the Asia-Pacific region, to fantasies of same, and common undercurrents of diseases similarly both real and imagined. The work comprises *puncti* of fluid, multi-layered elements which work around and against a central, seductive cityscape, drowned yet alive with the infernal energies of the dispossessed. Cattapan conceived the *City Submerged* cycle in New York in 1990 as a way of capturing the spontaneity of his quasi-surreal drawing (a regular practice for this artist), stiffened however with an armature of more conscious imagery of drowned urban environments, inspired initially by the idea of a cleansing flood and encouraged by his reading of J. G. Ballard⁴¹. In *The City Submerged no. 15* a man empties a bucket in a void, a screw, fishtrap or vagina dissolves in space; and a dark kidney of glass reflects back almost nothing of the viewer. The large red painting conveys 'a cataclysmic melt-down quality...how everything is actually incredibly ephemeral including peoples' economies', while an ovoid 'necklace' form, for example, might suggest amoeba-like entities, 'things that aren't visible...as simple as being a germ or part of the atmosphere, some kind of spirit form'⁴². In the words of one critic, 'Cattapan longs for something beyond the grasp of paint, and as a result he has, like the Surrealists, elevated and romanticised the indeterminacy experienced in dreams'⁴³.

Cattapan's sensuous, fragmented networkings of decay, science and intensities of beauty speak to the situations of most Australians today. Gascoigne's three works in this show, subsumed in the artist's

mind under the title *Frontier*⁴⁴, invoke a different kind of ruined settlement, one that takes light from a vaulting sky and reflecting clay-pans alike, its iron remnants standing like Ern Malley's 'vertical banners of praise'⁴⁵. *Frontier's* references are not necessarily confined to the past. As cities in Australia swell, country towns decay, founded as many of them were on very non-Aboriginal perceptions about the carrying power of the land.

'Aborigine' derives from a phrase meaning 'from the origins' (of a place). The word can thus suggest a then-and-now relationship, pushing the Aboriginal back behind the chronological barrier of the frontier into pre-history, creating as unacceptable a mind-set as that suggested by the 'savage/civilised' dichotomy⁴⁶. A broader perspective lets these divisions dissolve. Pre-invasion Aboriginal occupancy of Australia sets world benchmarks for survival and cultural endurance, but Aborigines once came from Asia, and, according to some anthropologists, from ancestors common to all humanity in Africa. The latter account of humanity's conception borders on the meaningless in terms of evolution (we may as well push on back to the Pterosaur), and its truth or otherwise scarcely matters to the argument here. Yet it contains as profound a cultural meaning as the myth of Eve which it so powerfully suggests, against which the grotesque nature of racism, and the theories of the grotesque which fed it at the time of white invasion of Australia, are rendered all the more ridiculous.

The claim and chain of human commonality is borne out by studies in genetics as well as the child-like assertion that all peoples are one, yet to many this will seem politically impossible: they may prefer to endorse Adorno and Horkheimer's claim that 'bourgeois society is ruled by equivalence. It makes the dissimilar comparable by reducing it to abstract quantities... modern positivism writes it (such a move) off as literature'⁴⁷. But to assert the unity of humanity is not necessarily to deny specificities of culture or history, nor to mask centuries of dispossession and crime: rather, it can encourage one to work through such things rather than suppressing them, allowing one (in Said's words) eventually to 'transcend the restraints of imperial or national or provincial limits'⁴⁸. To embrace

such an ethical perspective is to extend a minor but undeniably redemptive aspect of our history. It is to echo the humanitarian instincts which moderated the dark history of black/white relations in Australia, on the part of 'missionaries, clergymen and other assorted humanitarians'⁴⁹ in the 1830s and 1840s, and to allow the possibility that such people were doing more than simply acting out of nostalgia for an imagined Eden⁵⁰.

Rediscovering roots and cultures is a common goal for non-indigenous and indigenous Australians alike: for the former, to lend themselves a sense of continuity with past generations, for the latter, to meet more urgent political needs as well. For both the process is a psychic necessity. In this context the place where one has lived most or all of one's life becomes one's origin. In this stretched sense we are all Aborigines. Such comments are totalising or liberating according to the way they are used to change history. The same applies to the notion of cultural and ethical relativity, an idea promulgated, for example, by Oswald Spengler and exploited by the Nazis in Weimar Germany⁵¹, and used by Western governments today to excuse soft-peddalling on international human rights. Promulgating difference, real or imagined, can, of course, be a cover for evil as much as its counter. Minimising racial difference by asserting a degree of commonality for all Australians today and in the future, living in widely varied physical and social circumstances as they may be, can be to maximise the possibility of cultural growth.

As various writers have observed, the land continues to work silently on all of our discourses and concepts. Beyond the razor contradictions of shared and separate Australian histories, including an aching mismatch of ecological perspectives, we are all becoming more Aboriginal even as we become more global. Without wishing to revive *myths* of redemption, it is clearly as wrong-headed to deny the influence of land, country, or countries, as it is to look for an unchanging essence of Australianness. Such influences mingle in ways beyond description to form identity from and beyond the land, in multitudinous spaces of cultural formation.

3. Spatialities

One's sense of location derives from a 'practiced space'⁵², whether physical or cultural: we form spaces by walking down a street, reading a book, flying across the Northern Territory or gazing at a computer screen. In contrast with an increasing popular interest in cosmology and deep time, the condition of postmodernity in the 1970s and earlier 1980s fostered



Antony HAMILTON
Rock the cradle (detail) 1998
 muslin swaddling cloth, dingo hair, plastic pram apron
 irregular oval form, approximately 93 x 106
 courtesy the artist

a flattening of affect, a working across rather than back through cultures, and the conjoining of disparate forms and images in gestures of provocative, deconstructive ahistoricity: the work of Imants Tillers was paradigmatic in this respect. Fredric Jameson found the idea of deep time 'nostalgic and regressive', a cultural presumption of modernity, directly contradicting the notion of decentred 'intensities' as the predominant psychic possibility of postmodern times⁵³. He thus anticipated Paul Virilio's prediction that 'alongside the deep time of geology and history, the superficial time of remote interactions will rise up and take over from the surface areas of a vanished expanse'⁵⁴. To Jameson, a synchronic consciousness had already replaced the diachronic in the West, just as the myths of tribal communities, albeit told necessarily over time, are synchronic in their apparent timelessness. Jameson thus furthered the modern 'age of anthropology' (and ethnology), and its family origins in nineteenth century imperialism.

If the ironies of the contrast between Jameson's intellectual lineage and the much-vaunted collapse of 'grand narratives' can not be avoided, the postmodernist trashing of art histories as templates for artists compelled many practitioners to leave behind medium-specific practice, informed by a diachronic sense of disciplines and histories, in favour of discourse-specific practices, wherein they engaged with phenomena like desire or conditions

such as AIDS. This move reflected a shift in artistic concern from 'quality' to neo avant-garde 'interests', today becoming a synchronic and 'horizontal' expansion of artistic expression and cultural value... furthered... in quasi-anthropological art and cultural studies alike⁵⁵. Hence the work of Antony Hamilton, reflecting bush-based myths, but pitched to or generated by urban sources, or that of Imants Tillers, mining not only the panorama of great modernist and postmodernist art, but his parents' origins in Latvia.

By Hal Foster's reckoning, this shift follows a spatial logic: 'one not only maps a site but also works in terms of topics, frames and so on'⁵⁶ in a manner even more pronounced than that which informed the period of what we might call classic postmodernism, from, say, 1977 to the mid 1980s⁵⁷. This way of working demands knowledge of the structure and history of the culture concerned to be credible, thus constituting a problem which invokes another, closely related to the ethical concerns about the scope of 'Aboriginality' essayed above: that of either over-identification or under-identification with the other. The very reflexivity of contemporary art, evidenced in the work of Tillers and Cattapan, and in Petyarre's chameleon tactics, helps deflect the first such danger: their work frames the artists even as it frames the other that is their subject, hence creating a provisional sense of critical distance which might jam open the jaws of that particular trap⁵⁸.

The idea of critical distance is consonant with the predominant hope of postcolonial consciousness, that of forming a 'creole culture'⁵⁹: the creation of hybrid forms by working between cultures, as fostered by the *Asia-Pacific Triennales*. A further symptom is the desire of some artists to be considered as such before anything else, for example the high-profile case of Tracey Moffat⁶⁰, as is its opposite, the incidence of artists asserting a particular ethnic or tribal origin as their primary identification, in a gesture of counter-modernity⁶¹.

Such postcolonial discourses can open up troubling as well as generative perspectives: Roy Ascott's 1985 analogy between traditional Aboriginal transmission of their Dreamings as prototypes for the processes of telematic art, for example, was a nice but superficial conceit, for all that it countered the Cartesian conception of space being outside the viewer. By

Ascott's account the spatiality of Aboriginal thought, involving 'horizontal networkings'⁶² encompassing the viewer or audience member as a participant, might parallel the interactive global electronic zone of cyberspace. This idea contained a small element of useful truth but was also profoundly misleading, given the gulf between a solipsistic, machine-based culture, of which the computer is the apotheosis, and cultures based on aeons of association with particular tracts of land.

The analogy, proposed no doubt with good will, can be seen as obscene. On the macro, global level, the cyber domain is winning, hands down, in its war against not just indigenous cultures but the notion of nation states and the physical obstacles in the world to human desire *per se*. In the words of Virilio again, 'the resistance of distances having finally ceased, the world's expanse will lay down its arms, once known as duration, extension and horizon...at the cost of making pitiful, pitiful for all time, not only all those countries crossed in near total indifference, but the world, *the space-world*'⁶³. The cyber world is both extensive and minute, a contraction to an infinitely mobile point of individual consciousness. Some small comfort derives from the fact that we have to live in Euclidean space as well as cyberspace, to forget which is to render the present unreal: the Enlightenment principle of abstraction from the given fits only too well with the cyber world, now structured deeply into our lives⁶⁴.

Cyberspace represents an imaginary continent of desire as did the Antipodes to eighteenth century Europeans, a trope difficult to shake off, as Paul Carter's elegant postcolonialist writings on the psychic occupation of Australia demonstrate. His concept of 'spatial history', a disquisition on the literary ways in which space or nature is brought into the realm of culture through the naming processes of the explorers, has implications of particular relevance here⁶⁵: not unlike Paul Foss and Imants Tillers in the early 1980s, he sought a way of being in Australia through techniques of collage and hybridity. Typically postcolonial in its acknowledgement of desire, rather than outright deception, as the principal motivation of imperial mythologies, Carter observed repeatedly that Europeans did not just absorb, but were greatly stressed by, their primary, existential encounters with what they passed over, viewed and tagged. As Ian McLean has pointed out, Carter's account of the "'theatrical" projection of European ideology in the colonies is not just the one-way street of an imperial gesture, but ...(it) returns...to the uncanny field of the unconscious'. It thus can allow intimations of a return to the 'rudiments' of nature, or 'spatiality, not the constructs of place and culture'⁶⁶. The 'other' way of

the street, however, is the land rather than indigenous populations for Carter, whom McLean sees as acting out a Freudian quest for the pre-semiotic or pre-Oedipal realm, for the oceanic in an imagined Oceania. This kind of spirituality, McLean suggests, enacts the originary desire of imperialism: 'the danger of diagnosing Australia as a sublime space generating such states of mind is that it replays rather than transforms imperialism; for on one level, it merely confirms the age-old European view of Australia as the Antipodes'⁶⁷.

Antony Hamilton is another artist (for so we may regard Carter in some respects) who operates within art discourses which challenge the political. His *Rock the Cradle*, 1998, can be seen to re-invoke notions of a feminised bush, not to mention an entire historiography of spatiality in Australia, while proposing to speak only about a conflation of tales both true and false, those of Azaria Chamberlain and the Nullarbor Nymph⁶⁸. Hamilton's interest in the stories would nonetheless seem to have more to do with a desire to see the bush peopled with women rather than seeing the bush as feminine⁶⁹. The title *Rock the Cradle* suggests a punning reference to Uluru (Ayers Rock)⁷⁰, thus indicating that the artist's reactions to media sensations contain a touch of countering levity. The depression in *Cradle's* muslin shawl, encased in a plastic pram protector with minimal air-holes, suggests a small space of an infant's absence and the vast spaces of the outback, the dingo hair perhaps constituting evidence of either devouring or nursing, but most probably the latter, thus allowing the story to remain 'open'. The work speaks of natural and industrial orders while evoking, like Frederick McCubbin's *Lost*, 1886, much older stories of a child's absorption into nature, of reversion to nurturing origins. Australia, once an imperial dumping ground of identity-denying expanse, becomes through this work a place of healing. Hamilton's work is formed by a contemporary ecological consciousness and his empirical experiences of the bush and his life at Beltana, to the west of the northern Flinders Ranges. *Rock the Cradle* forms a productive association with that of Gascoigne's installation *Frontier*. By presenting the line between 'civilisation' and 'wilderness' literally as a façade, Gascoigne suggests a connection to the spaces of both Australia's past and its interior, through elements alive with their own 'thisness'. So can artists overcome the problems of a hyphenated existence, of being here but measuring themselves against an imagined elsewhere.

4. Politics of Ecstasy

The case of Hamilton, like that of Carter, raises a question which is easy to answer but difficult in its political implications: to what extent need the artist be held responsible for dredging and analysing all the implications of his or her subject matter? Considerations of a response segue into an ancient truth: that art is bigger than artists' ostensible subject matter, for all that it may be imbricated with its triggering ideas. It would be as reductive to describe apprehensions of the sublime in the landscape, either in reality or in art, as *only* an acting out of the repressed desires of imperialism, as it would be to see them merely as the compensating result of the psycho-dynamics of disappointment, as per the proposition that such intimations were a consolation prize for failing to find Australia Felix in the dead heart⁷¹. The politics of ecstasy are often complicated beyond analysis, and are not necessarily contained by the doxa of the day.

Various cultures have established traditions of self-denial to achieve a state of higher consciousness. The first step is to gain a heightened sense of reality and self; then may occur a contrapuntal movement to a higher reality, a sense of standing outside oneself as the derivation of the word 'ecstasy' suggests, though self-punishment is not necessary for the latter. In Western culture today the relevant shocks to the system tend to be vicarious and virtual, rather than actual, hence the ubiquitous manifestations of metaphorical wounding, of puncturing through the screen of everyday psychic insulation, to be found in the zones of popular, political and (what remains of) high culture alike. One may adjoin the concept of a wound culture to what would appear to be a diametrically opposed idea, the grandeur of nature, to yield a new sense of our place in the world. To do so is to become aware of three wounds far more potentially generative than the trauma of talk-back radio or the endless parade of political scandals.

The first is fear of the Australian interior. This has never quite abated, land-cruising, carpeted, climate-controlled chariots notwithstanding, as press hysteria over the Azaria Chamberlain story revealed. For all that whitefellas have caught up with Dorothea McKellar and learned to love a sunburnt country, that old bogey still stirs the ecologically deadly political cocktail of population growth demands, a perception of the region as being fundamentally hostile and the religion of economic growth. Apprehension about the Aboriginal other was historically part of a general fear of the land. As nineteenth Australian settler

art shows, in the works of Chevalier, Piguénit, Glover and above all Von Guérard, the comforts of the picturesque gave way to outbreaks of a more anxious sublime as the other came to inhabit the centre of non-indigenous culture⁷². A benign echo of the same phenomenon is apparent in Tillers' *Monaro*, in which Philipp Otto Runge's cherubs link nineteenth century German romanticism with the present day.

To acknowledge the first wound is also to contemplate the prognosis that Sydney and perhaps Melbourne may well grow into examples of the earth's megacities⁷³, the number of which seems set to proliferate globally. Jon Cattapan's work draws from the city's metaphorical night soil, which allows rich growth and toxic emanations alike. Cattapan laces his work together with ghostly, digitally-constructed images of skyscrapers, using the very machine – the computer – that informs his painted subject matter, thus achieving a quasi-Aboriginal connection between imagery and subjectivity and acknowledging that we now live in both real cities and a virtual world city. The latter situation Paul Virilio has identified as 'glocalisation', in which 'local time of an activity still precisely situated and the global time of generalised interactivity' mix paradoxically⁷⁴. Just as all artists were fated, by Foss's reckoning, to live metaphorically in a province in relation to 'the centre', so all real cities exist at the periphery of the virtual city's vast urban wasteland. Our ability to negotiate these zones, without being absorbed totally by one or the other, constitutes a turning point not only of censorship but also of our psychic survival.

The second wound is identified by 'whispering in our hearts', in the words of Henry Reynolds⁷⁵: the wrongs done to Aboriginal peoples in Australia by those who have, in both senses, come after them. For all that such stirrings of conscience may be dismissed as a yearning for a prelapsarian paradise⁷⁶, the idea of justice is deep-seated in the human psyche. The extended history of the dispossession of Aboriginals by non-indigenous Australians, like that of the assault on Indochina by the United States, will never go away until relevant peoples apologise and move seriously towards reconciliation. A universal yearning for justice undoubtedly helps propel the current widespread recognition of Aboriginal assertions and reinventions of their cultures.

As it happens, the forced hybridities of culture imposed on all peoples under the irreversible impact of modernity (empire, technology, industrialisation), has enabled artists of talent like Kathleen Petyarre to emerge and create works at the most vital edge of art practice today. To talk of the politics of Aboriginal art's success is nonetheless to acknowledge, again, that its

modernist 'look' facilitates its appreciation on the part of Europeans and North Americans influenced also by lingering traces of nineteenth century romanticism. The situation is not straightforward: it has to be said that the primitivist fantasy, like that of the Aboriginal-cyber analogy, contains an element of retrospective justification, here based on hard-won indigenous ecological knowledge. The appreciation of a country through another's eyes may be as enlightening as it is inescapable, part of a layering sense of connectedness which allows us both to appreciate a landscape for its sweeping aspect and effects of light, and simultaneously to sense the operation of cultural codes, Western and otherwise, as the rehearsal of familiar tropes. Rosalie Gascoigne's installation in this exhibition invokes the horizontality of Aboriginal sand painting, modernist methods of assemblage, and the dispersed configurations of early postmodernist, minimalism-influenced land art. If it forms an abstracted diorama faintly reflecting an echo of Russell Drysdale, it principally relies on the indwelling power of its constituent parts. And so we may revel in the play of light and metaphor, both in the landscape and on looking at art. The latter experience might draw on unguarded moments of the former. The glimpse of an expanse of hills, sea and sky, from a tilting aeroplane, for example, can create a disconcerting sense of expanding well beyond one's usual horizons into the zone of existential, primordial truth.

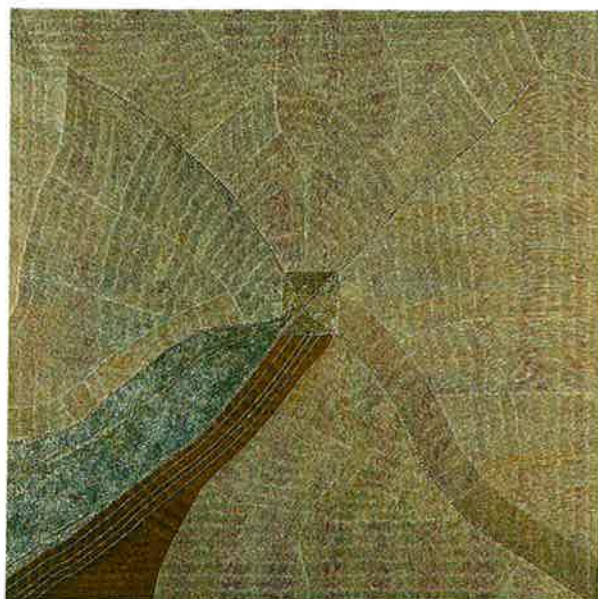
Hence to the third wound, derived from sharply felt apprehensions of the strangeness of life, for which being in nature might be a trigger and a metaphor. This transcendent sense appears to be common, yet secular Westerners have difficulty framing it culturally or intellectually. It is to experience the sublime, in Lyotard's sense, whereby a Kantian sense of a psychic overload beyond rational containment invokes the notion of heterogeneous phrase regimes, the impossibility of using a particular sort of language to describe that which lies beyond its scope⁷⁷. So saying is to recognise the difficulty of explaining such experiences, which subjectively might seem like visions of a reality beyond the quotidian, but which, like the revelations of dreams, could be no more than biochemical tricks of the brain. Their power may parallel the grip of myth. Herewith lies a connection to Aboriginal culture, and to aesthetic experience. One feels a 'timeless' intersection between a diachronic sense of personal and social history and the synchronic experience of universal connectedness, and suffers the

sensation of being outside of time, or the unified field of space/time as described by contemporary physics, beyond which lies an unfathomable void beyond the scope of any human instrument. The unusualness and the sometimes fearfulness of such intimations deflects the compass of our culture quickly back to more comforting zones of contemplation, as if turning away, out of *horror vacui*, from the interior of Australia.

Experiences of the transcendent might appear to suggest the re-emergence of an ancient sticking point for philosophy, the possibility of a foundation for ethics beyond enlightened self-interest. For this I can produce no further evidence beyond straws in the wind. If revulsion from quasi-religious ideologies, from National Socialism to communism, provided a seed-bed for deconstruction – on one level, the expression of an anti-political, intellectual *jeu d'esprit* – that moment is well passed in France, with Jacques Derrida's assertion of ethics beyond the text⁷⁸. Peter Singer, by the same token, finds a non-Darwinian first ethical cause for his proposed system of Darwinian ethics, as, it seems, does John Carroll in his search for a 'missing metaphysical language'⁷⁹, for which the reconciliation process between black and white Australia might constitute typical evidence.

It appears that one may experience a sense of metaphysical otherness at the clothes line as easily as in the traditional, Biblical spaces of the desert, although it is more prone to happen when one is relaxed, quiet and perhaps alone. Such epiphanies can constitute a kind of spirituality or notch beyond into mysticism. They may be reported as phenomena; they do not imply a rejection of rationality or distrust of scientific knowledge. As Miguel de Unamuno said of John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila and Ignatius of Loyola, what led them to their mysticism was simply the perception of 'an intolerable disparity between the hugeness of their desire and the smallness of reality'⁸⁰. The economy of that desire brings one back to an irreducible gulf between materialist and metaphysical accounts of the universe, across which all one can hope for, is that a kind of helpless courtesy may be extended in both directions⁸¹.

As noted above (and by countless others), on a more everyday level the experience of beauty and harmony when looking at works of art, for example as reported by Virginia Spate in front of a Monet⁸², can form a partial parallel with encounters with nature. It would be simplistic and classist to state that people with little stake in primary industries can experience the country as aesthetic. The rise of right-wing, rurally based political parties stems from romanticism as well as fear. Citizens from the town and country can enjoy the landscape aesthetically without denying economic dimensions. Indeed the two considerations can come together, as in roo-shooters' connivance with a public relations person in Eucla to promulgate the Nullarbor Nymph hoax. A simple drive in the country is often to experience a wash of beauty, for



Kathleen PETYARRE
Mountain Devil Lizard Dreaming 1997
 synthetic polymer paint on belgian linen
 183 x 183
 private collection

example a draught of pale light through eucalypt trunks and limbs, or a paddock, green after unexpected rain, nestling a silver dam and flooding the corner of a driver's eye, or a vista opening to a back-lit horizon, where puffy clouds shine, and others form parallels with the horizon line at the limits of perception.

In Tillers' *Monaro*, 1998, a politics of ethnic identity, art-world position and geographical location fuse in layers shot through with a silvery light hovering over angelic heads. Tillers' work ultimately operates in a metaphysical zone which connects the truth claims of both quasi-religious intimations and scientific theories, as if stemming from a trance of suspended disbelief: however equivocally, the artist appears to endorse the Duchampian proposition that 'to all appearances, the artist acts like a mediumistic being who from the labyrinth beyond time and space seeks his way to a clearing'⁸³. Hamilton's *Rock the Cradle* is a metaphor for myths of his country. Intensely

material and leavened by a liminal humour, his work nonetheless is also possessed of a metaphysical undertow. Cattapan's painted, equivocal assertions of the city carry political implications, in the words of Chris McAuliffe, for 'both art and wider worlds, even as they carry a psychic charge which resonates beyond literal layers of subject matter: at the inseparable level of form and reading (his paintings) stage the simultaneous and equivocal operation of subjectivity at the conscious and unconscious level'⁸⁴. Petyarre's identification with a survivor animal demonstrates a passionate, practical religion. Gascoigne possesses the purist politics of the religious also. Her works constitute 'notes towards lyrical derailments'⁸⁵, thus containing echoes of the Romantic poets she studied as a university student. 'It's a Joan of Arc thing - out in a paddock and a bolt of light comes down', she says, 'and I am burned at the stake'⁸⁶ (the latter added jokingly, *sotto voce*).

The artists' work seems to spring from a state of relaxed alertness, its intensity fostering diverse intimations of a radical otherness, while conveying a sense of being within the world and particular Australian localities. As human consciousness of interconnectedness with an ever-expanding cosmos increases, so it seems does the importance of ground zero, the place where we stand here and now. The work of Gascoigne and Hamilton, working from the real to the mythical or metaphysical, animates this connection in one direction, while the work of Cattapan and Tillers moves in the other, from ideas to the real (in the form of self-reflexive art objects)⁸⁷. Petyarre's work flickers back and forth along the same extended axis. In seamlessly linking the real (the practical) and the conceptual, her work can stand as a figure for the destination of all of the artists.

5. Coda: a confession

All of the artists in this exhibition I selected because their work is *expansive*, extending beyond the formal, the fashionable and the incestuous. This is implicit in the aesthetic power of their art, for me the first and final point of attraction, by which particular combinations of formal beauty and powerful ideas intertwine inextricably to form statements of singular value: a conjunction of nature (beauty) and culture (ideas), if you will. The same reasons drew me to John D. Moore's *Sydney Harbour*, 1936, one of the outstanding works in an uneven painting career⁸⁸, which I have inserted in this exhibition as a wild-card from the past which seemingly speaks to the nature/culture problem with the clarity, for our culture, of the mimetically representational. The latter quality I avoided in the other works, because I did not

want to rehearse familiar issues of pictorial landscape traditions, but rather to address elliptically the expanse of the present day. Moore perpetuates such traditions while demonstrating a quasi-photographic sensibility also to be found in the work of Elioth Gruner and Murray Griffin. These artists signal, not just by their paralleling of modernist photographic devices⁸⁹, but by their generosity of visual embrace, a democracy of vision, a willingness to accept what is before their eyes. All of these artists worked between the wars, a time of great expansion of camera vision. To cast the latter simply as a slide from Russian, politically-inspired radicality to empty formalism, a word which can be the laziest of derogations in this context, is to miss much poetry in the interplay between subject matter and form.

In Moore's case, cultural and social factors can be as obvious as the finely nuanced registration of tonal values: Ian Burn noticed two zones of content in the artist's *The Artist and her Friend*, 1930, conflating the middle distance and the background, but there are three: a peaceful foreground, complete with artist's equipment and a picnic spread; a narrow central area of broken trees, gnarled and angry beyond, for example, Hans Heysen's usual register⁹⁰; and a distant but energetic panorama of inlets and hills, progressively less denuded as they approach the horizon, a damaged dream of natural expanse barred from the two people by the picket of tortured limbs. The painting occurs two years after Moore's *Chaos*, 1928, an architect's prophetic report on Sydney's unrestrained development⁹¹. As such it would seem to support an ecological reading of *Artist and her Friend*, whereby its surrealist screen of dead trees suggests a disturbance in the field of nature⁹². *Sydney Harbour*, a view from the Moore's house at Vaucluse⁹³, follows six years after *Artist and her Friend*. In this work a series of visual screens also takes one back into a compressed rendition of the view, where buildings alternate with foliage both indigenous and exotic. An unusual number of eucalypts are apparent for an eastern

suburbs Sydney scene, along with a suggestion of the sub-tropical Pacific in the Norfolk Island Pines. These augment indicators of the harbour's pleasures. In the foreground there appear a safety rail and towels, a pewter dish as a miniature echo of the harbour's basin, and a shell as a signifier of nature's beauty and human curiosity. Moore's *Sydney Harbour* suggests his acceptance of a view which both divides and unifies nature and culture for an urban/suburban, coast-dwelling people, at the very time other artists were forming an Anglo-Celtic, blue and gold pastoral identity. Complete as *Sydney Harbour* is with signs of human construction, and with accoutrements of nature tamed and enjoyed, it also features an almost disjunctively active sky, lit from the north-west. A pink-ochre glow is apparent towards the horizon, the effect of pollution, or, we may fancy, the light of the interior.

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Imants TILLERS
Monaro (detail) 1998
 acrylic and gouache
 288 canvas board panels, numbers 52594-52881
 300 x 840
 courtesy Sherman Galleries, Sydney
 photography Paul Green

- 1 Oxford English Dictionary (1971), s. v. 'expanse'.
- 2 I speak here, of course, of the contemporary art scene, not the block-busting market for museums and (certain) art histories.
- 3 And, it must be said, many instances of whitefella writing and art making as well: the claim is not for an absolute newness, so much as to recognise particular potentialities in the present historical moment. Cf. for example Ross Gibson, *The Diminishing Paradise* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson), 1984.
- 4 The exhibition included work by Maria Kozic, Howard Arkley, Juan Davila, Richard Dunn, Imants Tillers, Jenny Watson, films by Jane Stevenson, Ian Cox and Philip Brophy, and (on the opening night) music by Tsk-Tsk-Tsk.
- 5 See Paul Foss, 'Theatrum Nondum Cognitorum', *Foreign Bodies Papers*, Local Consumption Publications (1981): 15 - 38; and Paul Taylor, 'Popism' (in *Popism*, National Gallery of Victoria, 1982), reprinted in Rex Butler (ed.), *What is Appropriation?* (Brisbane and Sydney: Power Publications and the Institute of Modern Art, 1996), 75 - 83; and Taylor, 'Popism - the Art of White Aborigines', *On the Beach* 1 (1983): 30 - 32.
- 6 Imants Tillers, 'Locality Fails', *Art & Text* 6 (Winter 1982): 51 - 60; and Tillers, 'In Perpetual Mourning', *ZG/Art & Text*, Summer 1984, reprinted in Kerry Crowley (ed.), *Imants Tillers*, Venice Biennale Australian Pavilion catalogue (Sydney and Adelaide: Australia Council and Art Gallery of South Australia, 1986), 16 - 20.
- 7 Cf. Butler, *Appropriation*, 35 - 36.
- 8 The boom in contemporary art sales ended in Sydney in c. 1989, two years after the New York stock market crash of October 1987 ended New York's. The Sydney market has slowly improved, but has never again reached the 'crazy heights of the late 1980s' (Tony Oxley, telephone interview with author, 15 July 1998).
- 9 Cf. Terry Smith, 'The Provincialism Problem', *Artforum* (September 1984): 54 - 59.
- 10 Butler, *Appropriation*, 25.
- 11 To paraphrase Rex Butler, *Appropriation*, 15.
- 12 This thought was suggested to me by reading Christine Nicholls, 'The Art of Emily Kame Kngwarreye: A Utopian Tale', in *Emily Kame Kngwarreye: Body Paintings* (catalogue), (Adelaide & New York: Robert Steele Gallery, 1998): 5.
- 13 A revised acquisition policy is due to be announced late 1998.
- 14 I am talking here at the macro level of perceptions rather than the micro level of reality 'on the ground': my comments do not gainsay the work of significant artists to the contrary. This includes (more or less at random) the continuing work of John Olsen, the photography of Virginia Coventry, Jon Rhodes, Wes Stacey, and a host of over-looked photographers in the 1970s and 1980s; the continuing painting of artists like Mandy Martin and William Robinson, and the 'convergence' landscapes of Tim Johnson.
- 15 Cf. Sean Flood, 'The Spirit of Mabo: the land needs the laughter of children', in Ross Mellick & Nick Waterlow, *Spirit + Place: Art in Australia 1861 - 1996* (Sydney: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1996), 104 - 105.
- 16 Tim Bonyhady suggested *balanda* from Arnhem Land in his article 'Colour Separation', *Australian Review of Books* (June 1998): 13, but this term, like its counterparts from other Aboriginal languages, is regional in its reference, meaning that its adoption could give offence to members of other language groups.
- 17 Sir Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici* (1643), part 1, section 16.

- 18 Stephen J. Pyne, *Burning Bush* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1991) or *Vestal Fire* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1997).
- 19 Roland Barthes, 'Death of the Author', in Stephen Heath (trans.), *Image/Music/Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 142 - 148.
- 20 E.g. Terry Eagleton, *Against the Grain* (London and New York, 1986), 66.
- 21 Peter Singer, Darwin Lecture (London School of Economics, June 1998), as summarised in his 'New Ideas for the Evolutionary Left', *Australian*, 17 June 1998: 48 - 49.
- 22 W. J. T. Mitchell, 'Imperial Landscape', in Mitchell (ed.), *Landscape and Power* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 5.
- 23 Cf. Charles Green, *Peripheral Vision* (Sydney: Craftsman House, 1995), 125.
- 24 Ian Burn and Ann Stephen, 'Namatjira's White Mask: a partial interpretation', in Jane Hardy, J. V. S. Megaw and M. Ruth Megaw (eds.), *The Heritage of Namatjira* (Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1992), 254 - 255; and Burn, 'The Metropolis is only Half the Horizon', in Tony Bond (ed.), *The Boundary Rider: 9th Biennale of Sydney* (Sydney: Biennale of Sydney, 1993), 30 - 32.
- 25 Ian McLean, *White Aborigines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 69.
- 26 This may serve as the beginnings of an answer to Terry Smith's perhaps rhetorical question, 'How can there be, at once, an insistence on incommensurability and a trafficking between differences?' (T. Smith, 'Generation X: the impacts of the 1980s', in Butler, *Appropriation*, 258).
- 27 Christine Nicholls, 'Introducing the Art of Kathleen Petyarre', unpublished mss., Flinders University, 1997, n. p.
- 28 Respectively: *Shipwreck*, n.d., watercolour, British Museum (W 508), and *Snow-Storm - Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth making Signals in Shallow Water, and Going by the Lead*, oil on canvas, Clore Gallery for the Turner Collection (BJ 398).
- 29 Tillers, 'Locality Fails', 1982.
- 30 Tillers, in interview between Tillers, Jennifer Slatyer and the author, Cooma, 18 May 1998.
- 31 Among them the artist Juan Davila; cf. his 'Aboriginality: a Lugubrious Game?', *Art & Text* 23/4 (March - May 1987): 53 - 56.
- 32 Tillers has stated that the reason for there being five works in the series is because one of his key texts was Joseph Beuys' *Manresa* performance, the first part of which refers to five elements of an organically divided form (interview, Cooma, 18 May 1998).
- 33 The artist has drawn a connection between the Monaro and McCahon's similarly bare Central Otago region (interview, Cooma, 18 May 1998).
- 34 Raglan Gallery & Cultural Centre, Cooma, 1998.
- 35 The numbers refer to McCahon's renderings of the Stations of the Cross and other works. The use of the 'T' form also refers to a form found repeatedly in McCahon, but also refers to the initial letter of the artist's family name. The 'T' images in *Monaro* relate to similar small paintings the artist has made from the landscape in the area. It is noteworthy that McCahon's presence is less apparent in this work than in the earlier works in the *Diaspora* series.
- 36 As noted by Michael Newman, 'Imants Tillers', in Rebecca Coates and Howard Murphy, *In Place (Out of Time)* (Oxford: Museum of Modern Art, 1997), 31.
- 37 Tillers, 1988, as quoted in Wistan Curnow, *Imants Tillers and the Book of Power* (Sydney: Craftsman House, 1998), 127.
- 38 Among other references: Robert Fludd, 1574 - 1637 (the ladder); Mallarmé's poem 'The Throw of the Dice', 1897 (the upper case numbers). The principal text derives from Joseph Beuys and also appears in the other *Diaspora* works (interview, Cooma, 18 May, 1998).
- 39 Daniel Thomas, 'Isolation. From the Great War to the 1950s', public lecture (one of a three-part series *Respondings. Australian Art: the view from Skangarooiva*), University of South Australia, 15 October 1997.
- 40 Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993), 408.
- 41 Cf. Jon Cattapan, 'J. G. Ballard: obsessions', *World Art Inaugural volume* (1993): 120.
- 42 Cattapan, interview with the author, Melbourne, 16 May 1998.
- 43 Charles Green, 'Jon Cattapan', *Artforum* XXXIX, no 3, (November 1990): 184.
- 44 Rosalie Gascoigne, telephone conversation with the author, 15 June, 1998.
- 45 Ern Malley, 'Sybilline' (1944), in Max Harris (introduction), *Ern Malley's Poems* (Adelaide: Hyde Park Press, c.1969), 29.
- 46 Cf. McLean, *Aborigines*, 66.

- 47 Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (trans. John Cumming) (London: Herder and Herder, 1973), 7.
- 48 Said, *Imperialism*, 407.
- 49 Henry Reynolds, *This Whispering in Our Hearts* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1998), 22: 'A foundation stone of the humanitarian cause was the belief in the common origin of all human beings, that all people were created in the image of God, had descended from Adam and Eve and all alike had immortal souls.'
- 50 Cf. Philip Jones, 'Cries and Whispers', *Adelaide Review* (July 1998): 10.
- 51 Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West* 2 (1928, reprint, in one volume edition, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1959), esp. 331 - 333.
- 52 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (California: University of California Press, 1988), 17; quoted in Juliana Engberg, 'Location', in *Location* (Melbourne: Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, 1992), 1.
- 53 Fredric Jameson, 'Postmodernism and Utopia', in *Utopia/Post Utopia* (Boston: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1988), 12.
- 54 Paul Virilio, *Open Sky* (London and New York: Verso, 1997), 129.
- 55 Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: MIT Press, 1996), 199, 202.
- 56 *Ibid.*, 202.
- 57 A period that might begin, that is, with the Douglas Crimp curated *Pictures* exhibition (Artists' Space Gallery, New York, 1977).
- 58 Foster, *Real*, 222.
- 59 Green, *Vision*, 146.
- 60 Tracey Moffat, letter to Clare Williamson, in *Who do you take me for?* (Brisbane: Institute of Modern Art, 1992), n. p.
- 61 Cf. Homi Bhabha, 'The Postcolonial Critic: Homi Bhabha interviewed by David Bennett and Terry Collits', *Arena* 96 (1991): 59.
- 62 Ursula Szulakowska, 'Australian Art - Practice and Theory', *Leonardo*, 24, no. 2 (1991): 168.
- 63 Virilio, *Sky*, 118.
- 64 Cf. it is noteworthy that Fredric Jameson found a new sublimity in the 'immense communicational and computer network' as a figure for 'the impossible totality of the contemporary world system', in 'Postmodernism or the cultural logic of late capitalism', *New Left Review* no. 146 (July-August 1984): 78-80. For all the Marxian reductivism of Jameson's perspective, his account of postmodernism as the cultural superstructure of multinational capitalism remains pertinent and justifies the term's continued use.
- 65 Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: an essay in Spatial History* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987) and other writings; cf. George Seddon, *Landprints: reflections on place and landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 38 - 43.
- 66 McLean, *Aborigines*, 158-159.
- 67 *Ibid.*, 161.
- 68 A baby, Azaria Chamberlain, was taken from a campsite near Uluru by a dingo in 1980. The parents, notoriously, were suspected of murder, and it was many years before their names were cleared. The Nullarbor Nymph was the invention of Kangaroo shooters, who told the press in November 1971 they had sighted and photographed a half-naked white woman running with kangaroos by the Eyre Highway near Eucla, South Australia. This transparent hoax was admitted as such by its perpetrators some six months later.
- 69 Daniel Thomas, telephone interview with author, 24 July 1998.
- 70 The artist also finds a pun in a parallel between the hooded form of the plastic pram protector and an outcrop of Uluru, as sketched by the explorer William Gosse (Antony Hamilton, interview with author, Adelaide, 14 July 1998).
- 71 As proposed by Ross Gibson, 'The Middle Distance', *Art Network* 19 - 20 (1986): 34.
- 72 McLean, *Aborigines*, 45 - 46.
- 73 That is, with a population upwards of ten million people (cf. Eugene Linden, 'Megacities', *Time*, January 11, 1993, 33).
- 74 Virilio, *Sky*, 144.
- 75 Reynolds, *Whispering*, 245 - 246.
- 76 Cf. Jones, 'Cries', 10.
- 77 Cf. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988); and Meaghan Morris, 'Postmodernity and Lyotard's Sublime', *Art & Text* 16 (Summer 1984/5): 44 - 67.
- 78 Jacques Derrida, *The Specters of Marx* (New York & London: Routledge, 1994), 59. Cf. Mark Lilla, 'The Politics of Jacques Derrida', *New York Review of Books* XLV, no. 11 (June 28, 1998): 39.
- 79 John Carroll, *Ego and Soul: the Modern West in Search of Meaning* (Sydney: Harper Collins, 1998), 253.

- 80 Quoted by Simon Leys, 'The Imitation of our Lord Don Quixote' *New York Review of Books*, XLV, no. 10 (June 11, 1998): 35.
- 81 To paraphrase Helen Garner, *True Stories* (Melbourne: Text, 1996), 174. Garner compared 'people who think politically and (those) with a metaphysical bent'.
- 82 Virginia Spate, "'Concerning the Spiritual in Art": A Sceptical Essay', in Nick Waterlow and Ross Mellick (eds.), *Spirit + Place* (Sydney: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1996), 79.
- 83 Curnow, *Power*, 116.
- 84 Chris McAuliffe, 'A Solution', in *Jon Cattapan* (Melbourne: Realities Gallery, 1992), 5.
- 85 Ilya Ehrenbourg, 1927, as quoted by the artist (telephone conversation with the author, 4 October 1995). Cf. the author's 'Notes towards Lyrical Derailments' (on Rosalie Gascoigne), *Adelaide Festival Visual Arts Program* (Adelaide, 1996): 10.
- 86 Gascoigne, telephone interview with the author, 17 June 1998.
- 87 My thanks to Christopher Chapman, a conversation with whom helped tease out this point (telephone conversation, Adelaide, 26 July 1998).
- 88 John D. Moore was first and foremost an architect.
- 89 Ian Burn, *National Life and Landscapes* (Sydney: Bay Books, c.1990), 112.
- 90 Cf. *Ibid.*, 106.
- 91 *Chaos* depicts a view from the heights of Neutral Bay towards Kirribilli. The Bridge, had it been built, would have been apparent in the centre of the picture (David Moore, interview with the author, Sydney, 21 May 1998).
- 92 The visual evidence impels this view, even if the trees were dead as the result of normal Alpine tree-death: the view depicted is probably from near the top of Mt. Wellington, Tasmania.
- 93 John D. Moore designed and built the house, at 14 Gilliver Avenue, in 1927. The towels on the rail may result from swimming at the enclosed beach at Nielson Park, a favourite spot for the artist's swimming and sketching (David Moore, interview, Sydney, 21 May 1998, and telephone conversation, 25 July 1998).

Jon Cattapan

Jon Cattapan was born in Melbourne in 1956, studying at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and later completing a Masters degree at Monash University, Melbourne. In 1989 he was awarded the Australia Council's Greene St studio in New York, and subsequently lived in New York for sixteen months. From 1992 he taught at the Canberra School of Art, moving to Sydney in late 1993, settling again in Melbourne in 1994. He continues to live and work in Melbourne, where he heads the Victorian College of the Arts Drawing Department.

Cattapan has exhibited extensively since his first one-person exhibition at Realities Gallery, Melbourne, in 1983; he has held further solo shows in New York, India and Korea, as well as in Sydney and Melbourne, including *Journal Entries* at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art in 1993. His work has been represented in significant curated surveys such as *The New Generation*, National Gallery, Canberra, 1988; *The Naked City*, Contemporary Art Centre, Adelaide, 1988; the *Moët et Chandon* touring exhibitions, 1987 - 1990 & 1992; *Australian Perspecta*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1993; *Asia-Pacific Triennial*, Queensland Art Gallery, 1993; and *The John McCaughey Memorial Art Prize*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 1997.

The City Submerged no. 15 (Pacific Fence), 1990 - 1998, suggests a psychic map connecting actual cities (especially, as the sub-title suggests, in the Asia-Pacific region) to fantasies of cities, and to undercurrents of unease and disease. Cattapan laces his work together with ghostly, digitally-constructed images of skyscrapers, using the very machine, the computer, that informs his painted subject matter, drawing attention to the fact that we live in both real cities and a virtual world city.

Cattapan first conceived his *City Submerged* cycle in New York in 1990 as a way of capturing the spontaneity of his quasi-surreal drawing (a regular practice for this artist) but stiffened with more conscious imagery of a drowned urban environment, inspired initially by the idea of a cleansing flood. The large red painting conveys 'a cataclysmic melt-down quality...how everything is actually incredibly ephemeral including peoples' economies', while, for example, the ovoid 'necklace' suggests amoeba-like entities, 'things that aren't visible...as simple as being a germ or part of the atmosphere, some kind of spirit form' (J. Cattapan, interview with the author, Melbourne, 16 May 1998).

The City Submerged no. 15 (Pacific Fence), 1990 - 1998
1 oil on canvas 197.5 x 167.5, 17 oil on linen or canvas
1 glass sheet, 14 photocopies
overall dimensions 250 x 600
courtesy Annandale Galleries, Sydney and Sutton Gallery, Melbourne



Rosalie Gascoigne

Rosalie Gascoigne was born in Auckland, New Zealand, in 1917. Completed a BA degree at Auckland University; no formal art training. She moved to Australia in 1943, living on Mt Stromlo, outside of Canberra, where her husband was an astronomer. An interest in gardening led her to classes in Ikebana (the modern, minimalist Sogetsu style) in 1962, two years after she had moved to the Canberra suburb of Deakin. In the mid 1960s Gascoigne began day-long trips into the countryside to forage for materials, initially for Ikebana, which she abandoned by the early 1970s, in favour of a growing interest in making assemblages in steel or wood. In 1969 the artist moved to the nearby suburb of Pearce, where she has since lived and worked.

Gascoigne's first solo exhibition was held at the Macquarie Galleries, Sydney, in 1974. She has since held many solo exhibitions, latterly at the Roslyn Oxleyg Gallery, Sydney, and the Greenaway Art Gallery, Adelaide. Her work has been included in many significant curated exhibitions, both solo and group, including *Survey 2: Rosalie Gascoigne*, National Gallery of Victoria, 1978; *Third Biennale of Sydney: European Dialogue*, 1979; the 40th *Venice Biennale*, 1982; *Rosalie Gascoigne: Sculpture 1975 - 1982*, National Art Gallery, Wellington; *Creating Australia: 200 Years of Art 1788 - 1988*, Art Gallery of South Australia & tour, 1988; *Rosalie Gascoigne - Colin McCahon: Sense of Place*, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Sydney, 1990; *Rosalie Gascoigne: Material as Landscape*, 1997, Art Gallery of New South Wales and the National Gallery, Canberra.

Gascoigne's three works in this show, subsumed in the artist's mind under the title *Frontier*, suggest at the most literal level a ruined settlement, taking light from the sky and the dried-up earth. The work's materials, sun-baked plywood and galvanised iron ('a very elegant material') nonetheless possess a non-pictorial integrity. The work's life derives from the quality of its constituent parts, which function as compressed metaphors for their place of origin as well as for Australia's interior, while its dispersed display speaks of 'big air', the vaulting spaces of the sky and the outback (Quotes from R. Gascoigne, interview with author, Canberra, 19 May 1998).

Frontiers I, II, III, IV 1998
four painted corrugated galvanized iron panels on wood
110 x 330
courtesy Roslyn Oxleyg Gallery, Sydney

Frontier V 1998
painted corrugated galvanized iron panel on wood
116 x 120
courtesy Roslyn Oxleyg Gallery, Sydney

Outback II 1996
25 painted plywood panels
430 x 340
courtesy Roslyn Oxleyg Gallery, Sydney



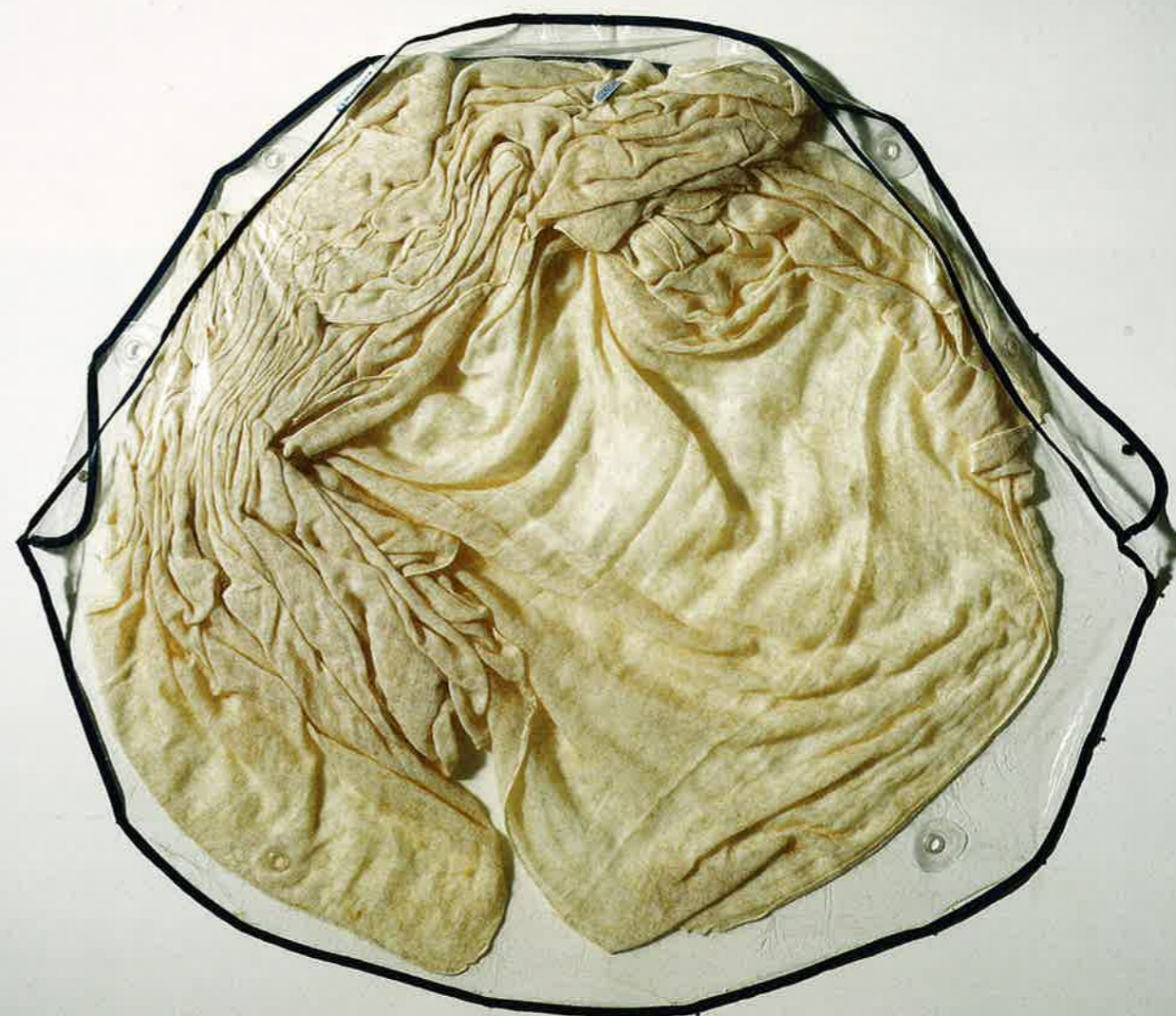
Antony Hamilton

Antony Hamilton was born in 1955 in Euroa, Victoria, studying at the South Australian School of Art 1976 - 78. He subsequently worked for a time at the service station at Eucla, South Australia, the site of the Nullarbor Nymph hoax in 1972. He then lived in Adelaide and at Kangarilla in the Adelaide Hills, studying anthropology informally for a period at The University of Adelaide. He has participated in several camel treks in the South Australian outback, for example along the Strzelecki Track to Cooper's Creek. Seeking to live in a dry, bare environment he purchased a stone railway workers' cottage at Beltana, to the west of the northern Flinders Ranges, in 1989, settling there in 1994.

Hamilton has been included in a number of curated group exhibitions over the last decade, including the *Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art*, Art Gallery of South Australia, 1990; *Virtual Reality*, National Gallery of Australia, 1994; *Wool in the Australian Imagination*, Greenway Gallery, Hyde Park Barracks, Sydney, 1994; and *Still Life Still Lives*, Art Gallery of South Australia, 1997. He has held six solo exhibitions over the same period: *The Velvet Target*, University of South Australia Art Museum, 1995; *Weebubbie Dream of the Kangaroo Girl and Other Works*, Contemporary Art Centre, Adelaide, 1996; *Raddle Man*, Arkaba Station, Flinders Ranges, 1997; and exhibitions at Anima Gallery (now Robert Steele Gallery), Adelaide, in 1984, 1987 and 1988.

Rock the Cradle, 1998, conflates two stories with outback settings, one true and one false – the Azaria Chamberlain case and the Nullarbor Nymph hoax – into a statement about the claims of actuality and mythology. The title of the work suggests 'a rocking back and forward between truth and untruth', as well as containing a punning reference to Uluru (Ayers Rock) (A. Hamilton, interview with the author, Adelaide, 14 July 1998).

The depression in the muslin indicates an absent child, and the dingo hair suggests evidence of either devouring or nursing – in the artist's mind most probably the latter, thus keeping the story 'open'. Like Frederick McCubbin's *Lost*, 1886, Hamilton's work also refers to much older stories of a child's absorption into nature, of reversion to a nurturing wilderness.



Rock the Cradle 1998
muslin swaddling cloth, dingo hair, plastic pram apron
irregular oval form, approximately 93 x 106
courtesy the artist