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idea journal

co-constructing body-environments

vol. 17, no. 02

2020

the journal of IDEA: the Interior design +
interior architecture educators' association



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body-environments



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**the journal of IDEA: the interior design +
interior architecture educators' association**

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1. Objects

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- (b) being an authority on, and advocate for, interior design/interior architecture/spatial design education and research.

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**co-constructing body-environments:
provocation**

Presenters at *Body of Knowledge: Art and Embodied Cognition Conference (BoK2019)* hosted by Deakin University, Melbourne, June 2019) are invited to submit contributions to a special issue of idea journal "Co-Constructing Body-Environments" to be published in December 2020. The aim of the special issue is to extend the current discussions of art as a process of social cognition and to address the gap between descriptions of embodied cognition and the co-construction of lived experience.

We ask for papers, developed from the presentations delivered at the conference, that focus on interdisciplinary connections and on findings arising from intersections across research practices that involve art and theories of cognition. In particular, papers should emphasize how spatial art and design research approaches have enabled the articulation of a complex understanding of environments, spaces and experiences. This could involve the spatial distribution of cultural, organisational and conceptual structures and relationships, as well as the surrounding design features.

Contributions may address the questions raised at the conference and explore:

- + How do art and spatial practices increase the potential for knowledge transfer and celebrate diverse forms of embodied expertise?
- + How the examination of cultures of practice, Indigenous knowledges and cultural practices offer perspectives on inclusion, diversity, neurodiversity, disability and social justice issues?
- + How the art and spatial practices may contribute to research perspectives from contemporary cognitive neuroscience and the philosophy of mind?
- + The dynamic between an organism and its surroundings for example: How does art and design shift the way knowledge and thinking processes are acquired, extended and distributed?
- + How art and design practices demonstrate the ways different forms of acquiring and producing knowledge intersect?

These and other initial provocations for the conference can be found on the conference web-site: <https://blogs.deakin.edu.au/bok2019/cfp/>.

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introduction: unknowingly, a threshold-crossing movement

Julianna Preston

Executive Editor

idea journal

It is in this special issue that the editorial board holds true to our promise to expand the horizons and readership of *idea journal* while reaching out to associated and adjacent art, design and performance practices and drawing connections to seemingly distant disciplines. The articles in this issue have provenance in a 2019 conference event, Bodies of Knowledge (BOK), which was guided by a similar interdisciplinary ethos. With an emphasis on cultures of practice and communities of practitioners that offer perspectives on inclusion, diversity/neurodiversity and disability, this conference, and this subsequent journal issue, aim to increase knowledge transfer between diverse forms of embodied expertise, in particular, between neuroscience and enactive theories of cognition.

This brief description suggests that there are shared issues, subjects and activities that have the potential of generating new understanding in cross-, inter- and trans-disciplinary affiliations and collaborations. My experience in these modes of inquiry points to the importance of identifying what is shared and what is not amongst vocabulary, concepts, pedagogies and methods. Holding these confluences and diverges without resorting to strict definition, competition or judgement of right and wrong often affords greater understanding and empathy amongst individuals to shape a collective that is diverse in its outlooks, and hopefully, curious as to what it generates together because of that diversity.

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The breadth of the knowledge bases represented within this issue necessitated that the peer reviewer list expanded once again like the previous issue. It was in the process of identifying reviewers with appropriate expertise that the various synapses between scholarly and artistic practices became evident. It is these synapses that shape sturdy bridges between the journal's existing readership, which is predominantly academics and students in interior design, interior architecture, spatial design and architecture, and the wide range of independent scholars and practitioners, academics, and students attracted to BOK's thematic call for papers, performative lectures and exhibitions. At the risk of being reductive to the complexity and nuances in the research to follow, I suggest that the following terms and concerns are central to this issue, aptly inferred by its title, 'Co-Constructing Body-Environments': spatiality; subjectivity; phenomenology; processual and procedural practice; artistic research; critical reflection; body: experience. All of these are frequent to research and practice specific to interiors. In this issue, however, we find how these terms and concerns are situated and employed in other fields, in other ways and for other purposes.

This is healthy exercise. To stretch one's reach, literally and metaphorically is to travel the distance between the me and the you, to be willingly open to what might eventuate. Imagine shaking the hand of a stranger—a somatic experience known to register peaceful intent, respect, courage, warmth, pressure, humour, nervous energy, and so much more. This threshold-crossing movement is embodied and spatial; it draws on a multitude of small yet complex communication sparks well before verbal impulses ensue. This significant bodily gesture sets the tone for what might or could happen. Based on my understanding of the research presented in 'Co-Constructing Body-Environments,' I propose that this is a procedure in the Gins and Arakawa sense that integrates theory and practice as a hypothesis for 'questioning all possible ways to observe the body-environment in order to transform it.'⁰¹ I call this as *unknowingly*—a process that takes the risk of not knowing, not being able to predict or predetermine, something akin to the spectrum of 'throwing caution to the wind' and 'sailing close to

the wind'. My use of the word 'unknowingly' embraces intuition where direct access to unconscious knowledge and pattern-recognition, unconscious cognition, inner sensing and insight have the ability to understand something without any need for conscious reasoning. Instinct. The word *unknowingly* also affords me to invoke the 'unknowing' element of this interaction—to not know, to not be aware of, to not have all the information (as if that was possible)—an acknowledgement of human humility. I borrow and adapt this facet of unknowingly from twentieth-century British writer Alan Watts:

This I don't know, is the same thing as, I love. I let go. I don't try to force or control. It's the same thing as humility. If you think that you understand Brahman, you do not understand. And you have yet to be instructed further. If you know that you do not understand, then you truly understand.⁰²

Unknowingly also allows me to reference 'un' as a tactic of learning that suspends the engrained additive model of learning. Though I could refer to many other scholarly sources to fuel this concept, here I am indebted to Canadian author Scott H. Young's pithy advice on how to un-learn:

This is the view that what we think we know about the world is a veneer of sense-making atop a much deeper strangeness. The things we think we know, we often don't. The ideas, philosophies and truths that guide our lives may be convenient approximations, but often the more accurate picture is a lot stranger and more interesting.⁰³

In his encouragement to unlearn—dive into strangeness, sacrifice certainty, boldly expose oneself to randomness, mental discomfort, instability, to radically rethink that place/ your place/ our place, suspend aversions to mystery—Young's examples from science remind us that:

Subatomic particles aren't billiard balls, but strange, complex-valued wavefunctions. Bodies aren't vital fluids and animating impulses, but trillions of cells, each more complex than any machine humans have invented. Minds aren't unified loci of consciousness, but the process of countless synapses firing in incredible patterns.⁰⁴

In like manner to the *BOK2019* conference which was staged as a temporally infused knowledge-transfer event across several days, venues, geographies and disciplines, I too, ingested the materials submitted for this issue in this spirit of unknowingly. The process was creative, critical, intuitive, generative and reflective—all those buzz words of contemporary research—yet charged with substantial respect and curiosity for whatever unfolded, even if it went against the grain of what I had learned previously. For artists, designers, architects, musicians, and performers reading this journal issue, especially academics and students, this territory of inquiry may feel familiar to the creative experience and the increasing demands (and desires) to account for how one knows what one knows in the institutional setting. 'Explain yourself,' as the review or assessment criteria often states. If you are faced having to annotate your creative practice or to critically reflect on aspects that are so embedded in your making that you are unaware of them, I encourage you to look amongst the pages of this journal issue for examples of how others have grappled with that task such that the process is a space of coming to unknow and know, unknowingly.

Figure 01:

Meeting the horizon; A still image from *Shore Variations*, a 2018 film by Claudia Kappenberg that reimagines *Waning*, a 2016 live art performance by Julieanna Preston. <https://vimeo.com/user11308386>.

There are a few people I would like to acknowledge before you read further. First, huge gratitude to the generosity of the peer reviewers, for the time and creative energy of guest editors Jondi Keane, Rea Dennis and Meghan Kelly (who have made the process so enjoyable and professional), for the expertise of the journal's copy editor Christina Houen and Graphic Designer Jo Bailey, and to AADR for helping to expand the journal's horizons.

Okay, readers, shake hands, consider yourself introduced, welcome into the *idea journal* house, and let's share a very scrumptious meal.

acknowledgements

I am forever grateful for what life in Aotearoa/ New Zealand brings. With roots stretching across the oceans to North America, Sweden, Wales and Croatia, I make my home between Kāpiti Island and the Tararua Ranges, and in Te Whanganui-A-Tara/ Wellington. I acknowledge the privilege that comes with being educated, employed, female and Pākehā, and the prejudices and injustices that colonialism has and continues to weigh on this land and its indigenous people. I am committed to on-going learning and practicing of Kaupapa Māori.

notes

- 01 Jondi Keane, 'An Arakawa and Gins Experimental Teaching Space; A Feasibility Study,' *INFLeXions* 6 (2012), accessed 29 October 2020, http://www.inflexions.org/n6_keane.html.
- 02 Alan Watts, *Creating Who You Are* (Video) (n.d.), accessed 29 October 2020, <https://vimeo.com/76888920>.
- 03 Scott H. Young, 'The Art of Unlearning' (2018), accessed 29 October 2020, <https://www.scotthyoung.com/blog/2018/04/12/the-art-of-unlearning/>.
- 04 Young, 'The Art of Unlearning.'

embodiment of values

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abstract

Relational, multi-modal conversations between the authors' experiences of a damaged environmental site occur through different knowledge systems including life sciences, art, agriculture and environmental science. The authors respond to the risks of the dramatic impact of the loss of water flow in the Barwon River, Victoria, Australia. This is a river that flows through the Indigenous lands of Wathaurong, Gulidjan, and Gadubanud country from the Otway Ranges and near to one of Deakin University's campuses. Early in this century, groundwater extraction dried a swamp wetland, generating toxic levels of acid and heavy metals which generated a major fish kill in 2016. Loss of water led to the aquifer site at Yeodene Swamp revealing great depths of peat that, when burning, follows underground peat layers (an unknown river path) and emerges to ignite new above-ground fires.

These issues and experience of dwelling in this part of Victoria inspire our embodied thinking, conversations, and art. They have prompted us to be ambitious in our actions—even provoking us to develop campaigns. Our value and respect for this place in the most holistic sense—geographic, experiential, spiritual, historical and biophilic—inspires us to come together to contextualise and apply responsibility, accountability, ethics, morality, justice and integrity. We respond to the question: What does embodiment of values look like in this context? Having brought this story into the 2019 *Body of Knowledge Conference* through walks and conversations by Gardiners Creek at Deakin University's campus in Burwood, we have explored it further in this co-authored article.

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embodiment, water, relationality, conversation, ecology, Victoria, Australia

introduction

One of the explicit intentions of the 2019 *Body of Knowledge Conference* was to 'emphasise the lived-experience of research alongside dialogue and exchange.'⁰¹ The conference site became a place to walk along the creek that runs through Deakin University's Burwood Campus, using conversation as an exploration (for us and conference participants) to consider our place, responsibility, and roles, generated from an experience of environmental damage. The conversations started at the conference between the authors and conference participants continue to connect artists, accountants, educators and landscape architects in dialogue.

Each of the four authors contributing to this article lives across the south-west region of Victoria. This article draws upon their experiences being in and with their material, social and cultural aspects of place, but also interconnected through their lived experiences in the natural environment. Academic and cognitive scientist Edwin Hutchins, in his essay, 'Cognitive Ecology,' asks:

How will the elements of the ecology that are outside the skull ever come to have relevance to the neural processes that take place inside the skull? The convergence of approaches under the rubric of cognitive ecology is already suggesting an answer. Activity in the nervous system is linked to high-level cognitive processes by way of embodied inter-action with culturally organized material and social worlds.⁰²

The authors have assembled their involvement and actions in order to write this piece, acknowledging that their stories and conversations stem from and build into a responsibility to place.

Figure 02:
Damage Done. Malcolm Gardiner,
2011.

To show what embodiment of values look like in this context, two of the authors, Stewart Mathison and Malcolm Gardiner (the farmer and the local activist), conflate their writing to maintain a first-person dialogue in this conversation. Their combined voice is followed by that of Jane Bartier, an artist/researcher learning of new connections and knowledge systems in a community she has recently moved to. Shelley Hannigan is an artist/educator who shares her representation of experiential embodiment with place as a resident of this region for over two decades. Images provided by the authors emerge from thoughts, feelings, and lived experiences of being in and reflecting on this region and supplement the four conversations developed during the conference and in the months after.

Embodied research is a way of acquiring and producing knowledge; the three texts

accompanied by the images (presented below) show how our uncertainties arrive at points of activism. In various ways, we have found such places or sites for activism through science, land care and artistic practice.

Figure 03:

Four authors assembling. Shelley
Hannigan, 2020.

Figure 03 is an image of an artwork that expresses the way embodiment can be understood to include an individual's embodied cognition and the ways in which it is fundamentally linked to natural, social and cultural ecologies—an ecological psychology through materials, objects and tools in the artmaking process.⁰³ The image symbolises the relationship of people to land, in an ecosystem of earth, woodlands,

and waterways that overlap and intertwine. Through our interconnection as researchers and authors of this paper, we find our own spaces or clearings and allow others in to share and learn. We become deeply aware of our group and our larger communities, thinking together in a way that links our embodied awareness to a collective in a shared environment in what has been described as 'social cognition.'⁰⁴

swamp visit

Influenced by philosopher Karen Barad's visit to Australia and her passionate outline of activated responsibility and accountability in her field of quantum physics,⁰⁵ Duxbury's proposition of affected engagement,⁰⁶ and relevant holistic place theories including those by Casey,⁰⁷ Bachelard,⁰⁸ Rose,⁰⁹ and Malpas,¹⁰ we consider the impact on this location, shared in the narrative accounts of the authors below. Inspired by these writers, we go beyond the site that has generated the discussion.

Yeodene Swamp is the headwater of the Barwon River in the Otway Ranges. This is situated approximately two and a half hours drive south-west from Melbourne, or one and a half hours south-west from Geelong, in the state of Victoria, Australia. The water flows from this aquifer site north across

the Victorian volcanic plains, then east through Geelong, and southwards into the Great Southern Ocean at Barwon Heads. The swamp is isolated from visitors and not signposted. It leaks into our imaginings and our practices, forcing out conversations where our listening and seeing keep the damage to the aquifer alive. The walk there in October 2018 involved ambling in the bush amongst tall old trees before we arrived at the swamp. Walking into the swamp was difficult as there was no shade, the weather was hot, and we were clambering over fallen logs on uneven ground that was soft and boggy.

Figures 04 – 08 take us to the swamp and form a flow of damage as recorded between 2007-2011.

The soil here was exposed and was rusty or deep black sludge.

Figure 04:

Damage Done II. Malcolm Gardiner, 2011.

Our visit to Yeodene Swamp confirmed the spectacular changes from the acid sulphate soils triggered by the water loss. There is evidence here from fallen logs of once healthy trees. These have perished as a result of the soil damage (Figures 06 and 07).

Figure 05:
Acid soil. Malcolm Gardiner, 2011.

Figure 06:
Into the soil. Malcolm Gardiner, 2011.

Figure 07:
Damage Done III. Malcolm
Gardiner, 2011.

As we moved away from the swamp into our daily lives, we asked: How do our uncertainties arrive at and prompt points of activism, and what are the pathways through which humans find such places?

This led to another (appropriately long) question relevant to our lives in this complex world: How do we translate embodied place-based research into situations, contexts, and spaces that yield experiences for the BOK 2019 conference participants and readers, where activism becomes useful to decipher calibrations of engagement connecting us?

In recent times, it was community action that interrupted a regulator's role, where the community responsibly went to government prepared to identify initiatives, seeking ambitious options. This included a *subterranean national park provocation*¹¹ that is being written to submit to parliament.

In the following sections, each author, from their unique set of experiences, embodied knowledges, memories and hauntings, has gathered their experiences of place that are of the here and there, and act within the ecosystems of which humans are a part. Figures 04-07 allow us to perceive the environment through the eyes of Malcolm, a community water activist who has written extensively on the Otway water system and who knows the swamp, river flows, soil and vegetation impacts from deep, historical perspectives. Malcolm's photograph of water coursing (Figure 08) highlights the movement and energy of water caught in time, allowing us to focus on this aspect of our region and

connect it to its arterial waterways that are connected to where everyday life happens, including rivers on Deakin university campus at Burwood.

Figure 08:

Water Coursing. Malcolm Gardiner,
2007.

**stewart mathison and malcolm
gardiner share the context to their
activism for yeodene swamp and wider
water issues**

Malcolm Gardiner and Stewart Mathison combine their experience of their Yeodene Swamp water activism. Stewart states,

I have lived in a community that I was born in for seven plus decades. Agricultural and scientific knowledge systems provide the context to my farming life and continue to be the strongest lenses by which I consider the damaged landscape. Two years ago, when the river dried up in my community, this harsh reality of a dry river shifted my thinking to revisit the stories I had been hearing, but not listening to, over many years.

The drying up of the river told me that the anecdotes of which I had been aware could now become the sources from which I act. Ten years ago, I wasn't verifying the stories when they came my way because they appeared singular and seasonal. What moved my thinking was the question posed by two presenters at a meeting at Landcare, a not-for-profit group of communities in Australia made up of scientists, farmers and environmentalists, who originally worked together to repair farmland that expanded to other volunteer groups who also focus on the natural environment more generally to improve or heal ecosystems.¹² These presenters, who had been monitoring the changing soil and water flows, asked, 'Why aren't you upset?' A check of river flow data

showed the river had stopped flowing four times since 1982—first for seven days, then forty-four days, then one hundred twenty-four days, and most recently, forty days.¹³

According to The Surf Coast Shire study for Growing Winchelsea, 'the scenic Barwon river... was an important resource and focal point for indigenous Australians and later European settlers and is still highly valued today.'¹⁴ The time for action began. The story of one farmer, who had experienced flowing creeks and rivers alive with fish and platypus as a child, symbolised a much wider concern: the change of flow, the fish kill, and acid water were not one story, her story, but formed the reality by which more and more work and recognition of the damage could be judged and understood.

Stewart has lived alongside the original Wurdi Boluc reservoir all his life and was literally connected to the mechanisms by which an expanding urban area was to be supplied with water. The reservoir has been enlarged in 1954 and 1990, another dam added in 1965, and the bore field started production in 1982.¹⁵ The intervention in the aquifer began as a search for water under the combined pressure of drought and a growing urban area's water needs. Government test drillings had revealed a promising site for underground water at Barwon Downs. As historian Leigh Edmonds observed, this was

geographically like a large saucer about fifty miles across with layer upon layer of different kinds of soil, some

impervious to water and some that collected it in large quantities (aquifers). Where the porous layers reached the surface, water soaked in, filling them with water that could be tapped by drilling.¹⁶

The authority was granted a licence to build a bore field to tap the aquifer, but with a very limited cap on the amount of water to be taken. The increasing population and demand for water, with water storages at only 41% in spring 1982,¹⁷ plus severe drought, saw commencement of pumping. The pumping licence was increased, the aquifer water level fell, so what had been an overflow area for the aquifer (Yeodene Swamp) was now taking in surface water.

In the summer of 1997–98, the top end of the Yeodene Swamp had a fire which was an immediate signal to the community that things had changed. At that time there had been several years of wet winters and the swamp should have been wet enough to deter a nearby wildfire. Instead, in a first in written time, the peat ignited in the top end of the swamp. As the groundwater extraction progressed and with lowering the water table further and further, the swamp slowly dried out and the acid, sulphate soil problem compounded, with apparent and visible spreading of toxins down through the swamp. We are now in a place where some 416 square miles of water system is identified as damaged.

Malcolm and Stewart explain that,

In this process we had to get our heads around the reality that water moves slowly. The underground water must move slowly, it must because it moves through porous strata. There is space for water to travel, but not as a body of water as we think of it in rivers and the ocean and not flowing in a way that we imagine water to move. We had to learn to think of water seeping through spaces in sediment, buck shot and rock, where it can trickle at a non-observable pace.

The water table is the junction between saturated strata and unsaturated strata. River flats at Boundary Creek would originally have been swampy with a high water table, often boggy, with water at the surface, where the water gradually filters through the soil. This underground water gradually flows to the river channel where it supports surface flow through summer months. Underground water comes in at all sorts of depths; it can be horizontal in our thinking and parallel to our visual horizon as well as vertical from fractured geological eruptions. Whilst mapping of underground water has been generated from the analysis of soil that is required to be collected when any bore hole is sunk, it provides a snapshot of a moving force.¹⁸

With water knowledge also came political knowledge. For this community, the river is a

great part of the town, and Landcare had been doing work on removing weeds and restoring native vegetation on the river. As the ill-health of the river was being revealed, so too were the interactions with a local council, a government minister's office, water authorities and regulators; what became apparent was that the system surrounding the river was as tangled as the river system itself. Taking the community with you and walking the river is deeply educational as you respond to the question, where does our water come from?

jane bartier, artist/researcher, writes of her community engagement with yeodene swamp

Experiences from both city and country living, throughout my life, have demonstrated that strong and passionate knowledge is inherent in local issues and is passed along local communication pathways. Now, within an institution-based PhD setting, the spatial challenges of engagement and communication expand to involve the roles of viewers, audiences and participants. My role as an artist is to be within the activity, where the definition of the role is enacted within boundaries of participation and contribution. My visit to the Yeodene Swamp site was not as an artist but as one participant

in a group of fifteen people, who drove, walked, and scrambled over fences to enter the swamp site in 2018. Informed by research into embodied cognition, I chose to bring my response generated from the swamp to bear on my peripatetic presentation at the 2019 *Body of Knowledge Conference*. The conference presentation was a walk, where people could amble in a loose form and take part in unprescribed conversations. This enabled my experience to be expanded by an audience already listening to and seeing with perspectives of the affected, engaged body;¹⁹ the aim was to connect the 'friends of the academy' with 'friends of the swamp.'

Figure 09:

Yeodene Swamp. Jane Bartier, 2019.

The key elements of staging this experience at the conference were the time getting to the creek, followed by the conversational interaction on the issues arising from the Yeodene Swamp damage, and the subsequent developments from this walk. The Yeodene Swamp information and experience was in the context of a positioned or placed process in which we aimed to authentically reflect on the effects of the experience of the swamp for participants and allow them to direct the discussions as they wished. We were not seeking to sign up new advocates or members for the Barwon River disaster but to engage with, learn from, and see with other participants how our engagement keeps on enacting mechanisms and techniques to create times and spaces in which we can consider what we will act on.

As an artist, as a local woman, as a person recently moved into a new community, I took the science of hydrology, histories, and fascination for the hidden at the site of the Yeodene Swamp as mechanisms for learning. For my practice, after the site visit, I began walking the uneven terrain and the length of a seasonal creek to dwell on and unravel the impact of the swamp visit.

The creek is part of the land where I live and, through repeated walking, I sought to see, listen, and to understand these newer knowledges and response/abilities. As I walked, I gathered up from the creek edges and paddocks discarded haybale twine lengths as my working material. I knotted the lengths of twine end to end. The mapped distance of the creek is some 430 metres, yet in walking the water flow lines, the knotted twine became a length of over 800 metres. I took this length of twine and wound these up as hanks close to my body; over time they became heavier and harder to be close to. As I did this, unravelling of place and time occurred, and my practice of looming was interrupted where I did not rapidly move into another sequence of making. As I travelled the creek to learn of waterflow, hanks of knotted lengths of twine that could be woven, shaped or moved under tension into new forms instead stayed with me now and hung loosely as I found my way.

Figures 10, 11 and 12:
Finding a way. Jane Bartier, 2019.

As I continued learning of the aquifer, of the geological process, of remediation plans, I developed my response—a declaration within human responsibility of protection as a last resort—to the idea of a subterranean national park, as written by Malcolm Gardiner.²⁰ A declaration over an unknown, over a space of sky, a space of land, a space of the subterranean. It emerged for me as a revelation, resonating with Bachelard's 'underground horizon'²¹ where, 'underneath the earth, action gets underway.'²² The discussion of

imaginings of water, flow, living forms, and sustainability at the 2019 *Body of Knowledge Conference* session has led to new and ongoing conversations from our viewers/audience across institutions and disciplines, where opportunity to decipher and decide on what generates an action moves apace. Within ideas of farming futures, creative accounting, soundscapes and petitions, support builds for the subterranean park.

**Shelley Hannigan, artist/educator,
writes of the biophilic and cultural
dimensions of place**

Just as Bartier's threads and material matter are gathered, selected, knotted and woven, mine are also twisted, drawn or knitted into forms that represent my embodied understanding of the experience of and with place. As a resident of Geelong for over twenty years, I have regularly travelled across the south-western region of Victoria, spent time in different natural environments, including the swamps and aquifers mentioned thus far, and engaged with many communities. Through this work, and from the point of view of an artist-researcher, I have come to know this place in diverse ways and through multiple perspectives.

From the top of the Otway Ranges which catches much of the rain for the rivers and swamps, and through my regular walks on the banks of the Barwon River, I have developed a deep connection to both the biophilic (forms and patterns of life in nature) and cultural dimensions of this place. For this paper, I am sharing artefacts that have emerged through conversations, participating in community arts projects in the region, and in my own practice of collecting artefacts, recording experiences and observations through mixed media art processes. I find, through multi-modal, experiential and interdisciplinary

investigations of place, that patterned forms emerge from movements of weather, water, growth, and even fire, and find their way into my works. Patterns from nature are juxtaposed with patterns from culture—wallpapers, knitting, repetitive forms—that capture experiences of social beings living in and with the land and waterways.

Figure 13:
Rabbit Folder. Shelley Hannigan,
2017.

Figure 13, *Rabbit Folder*, documents the Geelong rabbit invasion and introduction into the region by the Austin family of the Barwon Mansion in Winchelsea. A property originally known as Barwon Park, later called the Barwon Park Mansion, was where the rabbits were first brought to Victoria in 1859. This has had a destructive effect on the layers of landscape and ecosystem ever since.

As Malcolm Grdiner and Stewart Mathison's conversation above reminds us, water flows at different times and speeds depending on the lay of the land and inhibiting factors of waterways. In 2005, I worked with a Landcare group to nurture the Wauron Ponds creek

to improve its flow and support the riverbanks and ecosystem with tree planting. The sharing of knowledge within this community over time taught me that the riverbed upgrade did help flow during heavy rains, but also created a 'highway for foxes'—another species introduced to this region. The experience of being with this waterway and sharing conversations with Landcare volunteers and scientists on this project inspired me to develop a body of work (see Figure 14).

Figure 14:*Demise*. Shelley Hannigan, 2017.

The philosopher, Dylan Trigg, explains, 'at all times, we find ourselves located in a particular place, specific to the bodily subject experiencing that place. We are forever in the *here*, and it is from *here* that our experiences take place.'²³ As well as this experience of 'being in the moment,' I also draw on memory and imagination, and while 'there is clearly a difference between being in place and remembering that place,'²⁴ 'place-experience'²⁵ encompasses all these experiences of place

as part of our identity. Place informs us and we inform place, so place-experiences are important in shaping our identities over time. Embodied memory, imaginings, and bodily-felt experiences inform my individual lived experience and awareness of the connection of body to others and the environment and awareness of others in my shared environment. As this article reveals, when we dwell, collaborate, and create in and with place, our ecosystem is shared.

Figure 15:
Walking twine under tension along
a water course. Jane Bartier, 2019.

the assembled conversation, in summary

The distillation of our shared perspectives, artistic processes and writings about this region came together in conversations, with Yeodene Swamp at the heart of them, and are a gathering and synthesis of materials, ideas, and place/identity experiences under challenge for a damaged environment.

Figure 16:

Embodied Connections – An Ecology.
Shelley Hannigan, 2020.

Existing in our place, the four authors of this article came together to share, look, draw, note, reflect on our own and others' experiences, create and respond to each other's visual art and texts, and also delve into the sciences and research to learn what is actually happening. These experiences have required negotiating each other's language and forms of expression through art. Garrison (2014), an academic writer specialising in aesthetics, discusses these negotiations of sense (immanent meaning) versus significance (linguistic meaning).²⁶ He suggests that once the distinctions and connections between sense and significance are realised, 'we may understand how one sometimes comes to the fore more than

another, although both must be functioning for there to be minds, meanings, and knowings.'²⁷ Regarding sense or 'immanent meaning,' Garrison cites Mark Johnson: 'our bodies ... and our environments together generate a vastly meaningful milieu out of which all significance emerges ... and call this nonconscious dimension immanent meaning.'²⁸ We came together because we realised the significance of learning and improving our environment to prompt and inform renewed activism. In general, community actions, embedded in local terrain, have come out of the underground to move the surety of ownership and discipline-based solutions into contested and insecure places

where the future is as boggy as a summer high water table. Water takes its own course moving in its own time—sometimes plutonic water and surface water meet and gather as a soggy swamp, trickling, flowing, erupting, or sinking further below into aquifers. We have found from this project that because nature has informed us and we have informed each other as an ecology, ‘the cord that binds intellectual functioning with experience and nature remains unsevered.’²⁹

The interdisciplinary group effort has problematised the issues of this place by sharing our different perspectives in, under, on, and above ground environments. Engaging in this experiential and multi-modal research, the co-authors have valued sharing and interrogating embodied lived experiences, which has strengthened how we re-know our ecology. The collaboration has highlighted how humans have been responsible for hindering, interrupting, and polluting watercourses and strengthened the case for activism world-wide. This collection of writing and images created and shared has been gathered to shed collective light on how human behaviours have caused the introduction of species, climate issues, and interference with nature. Our combined work highlights the diversity and complexity of the problem that could not have possibly been gained through one single or disciplinary perspective.

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