

# The transplanted bush: dislocation, desire and the domestic

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# **The Transplanted Bush**

**Dislocation, Desire and the Domestic**

**Sally Clarke**

**Ph.D. Fine Arts**

**2008**

**College of Fine Arts, UNSW**

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<p><i>The Transplanted Bush: Dislocation, Desire and the Domestic</i> takes as its theme the idea of the Australian bush and seeks new ways to represent it within the traditions of Australian figurative landscape painting. The research identifies ways to disrupt the bush brand, a paradigm that has played a significant and romantic role in the construction of Australian national identity, as a rallying point for nationalist sentiment and to sell Australia to the world as a unique tourist destination. The bush, as a space that is anti-city, an idea that generally relies on a British genealogy, and one that is constructed according to hetero-normative strategies, is significant in the creation of Australian identity because it is widely regarded as the real Australia. Real in this context has somehow become distorted to mean those parts of our nation that make us distinct from the rest of the world, while continuing to reflect the values and aspirations of a dominant culture and its 'heroic' history of colonising and domesticating a strange land.</p> <p>The overriding focus of this investigation has been to determine to what extent it is possible to reconceptualize the bush brand so that it can accommodate new themes of identity, particularly in relation to gender and sexuality. This research adopts the position that the bush is an idea that has relied heavily upon myths, legends and mono-cultural perspectives for its construction and, as a result, is open to negotiation. Consequently, this investigation takes place at the very heart of the bush paradigm, within its grand master narratives, by engaging with its symbols and signifiers. It reviews the ideological and representational role played by the traditional model of Australian figurative landscape painting, and considered how it can be reinvested with new signs, symbols, motifs, colours and ideas. By developing and introducing a new vocabulary of signs and symbols that erodes the distinctions between the bush, the urban and the domestic, this research disrupts the internal logic and coherence of the bush brand.</p>		
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# Introduction

## Brief Description of Research Project

*The Transplanted Bush: Dislocation, Desire and the Domestic* takes as its theme the idea of the Australian bush as I seek new ways to represent it within the traditions of Australian figurative landscape painting. My research project aims to disrupt the *bush brand*<sup>1</sup>, a paradigm that has played a significant and romantic role in the construction of Australian national identity, as a rallying point for nationalist sentiment and to sell Australia to the world as a unique tourist destination. The bush, as a space that is anti-city, an idea that generally relies on a British genealogy, and one that is constructed according to hetero-normative strategies, is significant in the creation of Australian identity because it is widely regarded as the *real* Australia.<sup>2</sup> This is despite Australia being one of the most highly urbanised countries in the world, a land that was occupied and managed by Indigenous populations for at least forty thousand years before white settlement, and one that has and continues to rely on many cultures, genders and races for its development. *Real* in this context has somehow become distorted to mean those parts of our nation that make us distinct from the rest of the world, while continuing to reflect the values and aspirations of a dominant culture and its 'heroic' history of colonising and domesticating a strange land.

The overriding focus of this investigation will be to determine to what extent it is possible to reconceptualize the bush brand so that it can accommodate new themes of identity, particularly in relation to gender and sexuality. My research adopts the position that the bush is an idea that has relied heavily upon myths, legends and mono-cultural perspectives for its construction and, as a result, is open to negotiation. Consequently, my investigation takes place at the very heart of the bush paradigm, within its grand master narratives, by engaging

with its symbols and signifiers. It reviews the ideological and representational role played by the traditional model Australian figurative landscape painting, and considers how it can be reinvested with new signs, symbols, motifs, colours and ideas. By developing and introducing a new vocabulary of signs and symbols that erodes the distinctions between the bush, the urban and the domestic, I aim to disrupt the internal logic and coherence of the bush brand. In order to achieve this, the body of paintings created for this research project must be identifiable as representing the 'the bush'. It is through this disruption that I aim to obscure the specificity of representation that relies on distinct categories of identity, and, within my own paintings, diffuse the formidable role of the bush brand's persistent ideologies.

### **Research Project Objectives**

The aim of my research project is twofold. Firstly, I set out to convey a sense of estrangement from the brand. I never felt that the bush was a place where I belonged, even though the idea of *the bush* has played such a significant role in the formation of Australia's collective identity. There is nothing within the grand master narratives employed to describe the bush that either reflects my own identity or the diverse range of cultures that I observe around me. My expectations and ways of seeing are too conditioned by the urban environment. It is this estrangement, this sense of not belonging to a place where I am supposed to belong, and how to represent the bush in contemporary Australia that emerged as one dilemma for my research. How can I contribute, through my own research and observations, to what artist and theorist, Ian Burn, suggested is the *idea* of Australia as it has been described through notions of *the bush*? How can my own identity as a white, urban, feminist lesbian shape the way that I image the bush? What multiplicities exist within my own gaze?

Secondly, my aim is to reconfigure and disrupt the representational terrain that is now understood to be the bush, to the point where popularly held notions of the bush become unintelligible. Through a process of idealisation by urban artists such as those from the Heidelberg School, the bush has historically been represented within a dualistic paradigm: as a space distinct from the urban

landscape, where gender is described in two distinct and cohesive identity categories of male/masculine and female/feminine, and where themes of white and predominately British culture, is privileged above all other forms of cultural representation. The aim of my research is to critique and diffuse the specificity of these representations by integrating into the bush brand, ideas and signifiers derived from its Australian other, the urban and domestic spheres, and through a process I call ‘myth muddling.’ My research collapses these spaces and ideas to erode the bush paradigm as such a formidable cultural force in the construction of Australian national identity. My aim is not concerned so much about redefining Australian identity, but rather to disrupt and playfully ‘refurbish the brand’.

My research therefore can be summarised into the following objectives.

The visual component applies strategies to:

- conduct my investigation from within the bush brand and the traditions of Australian figurative landscape painting.
- convey a sense of estrangement from the *bush brand*.
- destabilise the internal logic and cohesion of the bush brand by introducing a range of symbols, signs and ideas derived from urban culture and the domestic space.
- diffuse the specificity of representation within the bush brand.
- image the bush as an artificial and theatrical space to emphasise performative and fictional qualities that comprise the bush brand.
- muddle bush myths with less desirable or incongruous themes or motifs to further challenge idealised representations of the bush brand.

The written component will:

- define the bush paradigm.
- analyse the evolution and limitations of the bush paradigm in the construction of Australia’s collective identity.

- establish that the Australian *bush*, as much as being a real space, is an imagined space, a negotiable idea that continues to play a significant role in the formation of Australia's national identity.
- consider the identity categories, particularly gender categories, constructed in relation to the bush and their performative value.
- discuss the relationship between the bush, urban space and the domestic and how these spaces can and do intersect.
- identify, develop and interpret a system of symbols and signs to enable them to be read within the visual component.
- describe and interpret the paintings created for this research project.

### **Rationale for Research**

The idea of representing and interpreting the bush may seem dated in the context of contemporary Australian art because historically, the bush paradigm has been built upon a cocktail of idealism and prejudice that, in my view, has no place in Australian society today. Yet, in contemporary Australian culture, heroic and idyllic references to the bush abound. On a recently aired episode of *Compass*, for example, where host Geraldine Doogue interviewed a group of six white bush women, the view was expressed and agreed upon, that people of difference (that is, those that did not sit within the white heterosexual paradigm) were welcome into bush communities, as long as they didn't try to change anything! The bush brand is not only reflected in isolated interviews such as the one mentioned above, but also in numerous examples throughout Australia's cultural institutions and national celebrations. This, I believe, calls for a renewed critical response because the ideologies that embodied in the notion of the bush in the past continue to persist today.

The work of a number of artists, including Gordon Bennett, Rosemary Laing, Narelle Jubelin, Fiona Lowry and Guan Wei, has successfully altered the way we perceive the Australian landscape and how people interact with it. While all of these artists have dealt with themes that have implications for the future life and composition of the bush brand, a space remains for original research to be conducted within the brand from a queer perspective.

## **Methodology**

This section will describe how I intend to disrupt the internal cohesion and logic of the bush brand.

- I will undertake my interrogation from within the very heart of bush brand. This will prevent my research from simply becoming an investigation of what constitutes Australian identity and enables my interrogation to engage directly with the ideology of the bush brand.
- To undertake my interrogation of the bush brand my paintings must be recognisable as the bush. This will be achieved through the identification and employment of signs and symbols that define the bush brand. Firstly, the horizon line is incorporated into each painting (bar two) to immediately locate my work within the landscape genre. Figures and motifs are then appropriated from well-known paintings of the bush or images accompanying stories about the bush whether from, for example, media articles, television, movies or the internet. The portrayal of bush icons such as the gum tree, kangaroo and emu will further consolidate the relationship of image with the bush brand. The final exhibition title and some of the painting titles will also embody references to the bush.
- To disrupt or destabilise these representations of the bush I identify and integrate signs and symbols derived from urban culture and the domestic sphere. These include, for example, fabric patterns, the use of arbitrary colours that do not necessarily reflect the natural colours of the bush, and motifs from consumer goods. I investigate and develop the meanings of these in the written component of this research project.
- I weave a queer (urban<sup>3</sup>) discourse into my paintings in the following ways. Firstly, I incorporate the colour pink, as a colour symbolic to the queer community, into every painting I produce. Secondly, as a form of drag, I relieve figures and forms of their details and 'dress up' their silhouettes in incongruous attire that diffuses the coherence of their original identity.

- I express my own estrangement from the brand by creating disquieting landscapes where dismembered limbs and stumps of gum trees take on human qualities.
- I have chosen to employ humour as the dominant form of expression, as a method of engaging with the viewer.

## Chapter Summaries

In Chapter One, *The Australian Bush: Lie of the Land*, I develop notions of what *the bush* is and how representations of the bush have evolved throughout the history of Australian culture and landscape painting. I discuss the role of *the bush* in forming a national identity unique to Australia and how this has been challenged in recent decades. I examine the proposition that *the bush*, like landscape, is an *idea* and that its representation is always open to negotiation. In Australia, a predominantly urban culture, *the bush* has remained something of an idea that has been constructed within an urban context. How has the bush, its legends and the *idea* of Australia been represented through the genre of Australian landscape painting? What attributes form this notion of the bush and how negotiable are they? Is contemporary Australia still defined in this way? Do notions of the bush play any part in the formation of Australia's collective identity at the beginning of the twenty first century? How can this be reflected in the imaging of the Australian landscape in contemporary Australia?

In Chapter Two, *Gender Performance in the Australian Bush*, I take a closer look at the way gender relations have been represented in Australian landscape painting and bush mythology. How has gender been performed in the bush and how has it been represented in images? Is there a disjunction between reality and representation? Historically the Australian landscape has been a gendered space dominated by the visions, desires and dreams of the male explorer, pioneer and artist. This portrayal has been formed by the construction of cohesive hetero-normative gender binaries, which have been challenged by the ongoing discoveries of marginalised histories and the construction of fiction such as *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* which *camp*s up the masculine journey into the 'wilderness.'

In Chapter Three, *Life and Limb* I discuss a selection of key signs and symbols attributed to the Australian landscape that I have employed in my paintings. In addition I identify signs from the domestic space and urban themes and consider whether they can resonate with potential new meanings when integrated into my new visual interpretations of the bush. I discuss the possible symbolic meanings of the most persistent motifs within my works: The Phantom Limb, The Shadow, The Artificial Horizon, and the Cut-out.

In Chapter Four, *Out There from In Here: Domesticating the Australian Landscape*, I consider ways in which the traditionally feminine sphere of the domestic space can intrude on the commonly accepted notions of the bush and how the bush itself has become domesticated. How are visions of the Australian landscape filtered into the home and how does the 'home' mediate the way we imagine the bush? Within Australia's evolving culture is a new definition of the bush emerging and if so, how might this be visually represented? The domestic space is moving through the bush at an ever-increasing rate. The domestic is now contained within bush campers: the *Jabiru*, *Winnebago*, *Swagman* and *Jackeroo* - suburbia on wheels. How does the domestic affect our perception of the bush? How does it mediate our experience of the bush?

In Chapter Five, *Shades of Pink, Layers of Desire*, I discuss the application of pink within art and culture, as a way of locating my use of pink within a contemporary urban and domestic context. It is through this research that I link the colour pink to the body, throwing light on its association to sexuality and femininity. In addition, I discuss the work of several of my early precursors, Charles Conder, Sydney Long and Lister Lister, who employ pink in their representations of the bush, and what meanings or associations may be read into these.

In Chapter Six, *My Pink Bush and the Lost Limb*, I describe and analyse the content of the paintings I created during this research project. I discuss series

of works and some key individual works produced for the exhibitions *My Pink Bush and the Lost Limb*, *In Part* and *The Transplanted Bush* and consider how they critique commonly held perceptions of the bush paradigm.

The final chapter, *Back and Beyond*, provides a summary of how I went about meeting my objectives for this research project. After restating what the bush brand is, I reveal how I developed my own system of signs and symbols to disrupt the ideology and iconography of the bush brand. I review the way I have approached the objectives set out in the Introduction and consider if the outcomes of my research project have been successful in reconceptualizing the bush brand, particularly in relation to sexuality and gender.



## Literature Review

For many artists it can be a difficult prospect to identify the many sources that have influenced the production of their artworks. In this matter I feel I am no exception. During the process of constructing my written and visual thesis I have scoured innumerable books, images, web sites, newspapers, television shows, news bulletins and movies, all which have contributed to the development of my research. Nevertheless, having said this, I will identify what I consider to be the main sources that have informed the development of my thesis.

In relation to the construction of the landscape I have particularly relied upon the ideas of Australian artist and theorist, Ian Burn, historian and theorist W.J.T. Mitchell and popular art historian Simon Schama. These writers explore the way landscape is a cultural construction, an ideology, and one that is constructed by and serves a dominant culture. *The Artificial Horizon: Imagining the Blue Mountains* (2002) by Martin Thomas, as a localised revision of recorded history, offers an interesting model from which to examine the construction and fluidity of Australian history. Ross Gibson's *Seven Versions of Badlands* (2002) provided a new model for exploring our relationship to Australian history and landscape. Using the Capricorn region near Rockhampton as an example, Gibson examines how some places become known for being bad, and the process by which this makes other places appear good. He considers the implications of these relationships. This approach has assisted me to consider the role paintings and other images play in the construction of the Australian landscape and what types of landscapes we choose to associate with the Australian collective identity.

From the 1970s researchers began to acknowledge differences beyond the masculine paradigm of Australian identity. While dated, Kay Schaffer's *Women and the Bush: Forces of Desire in the Australian Cultural Tradition* (1988) offers a specific commentary and critique on gender relations in the bush and raises the profile of women's experiences in the bush. This publication, along with Lucy Frost's *No Place for a Nervous Lady: Voices from the Australian Bush* (1984), began to address the omission of women from our cultural histories. More recently and specific to landscape painting discourse is *Strange Women: Essays in Art and Gender* (1994), edited by Jeanette Hoorn. This book presents essays that address the representation of women in Australian art and also assists in raising the profile of some women artists. Sue Rowley's essay *The Journey's End: Women's Mobility and Confinement* on gendered space and the limits of women's mobility in the bush is particularly relevant to my research, as is John Pigot's essay on the life of Hilda Rix Nicholas. Numerous monographs have now been produced that throw light on the individual lives and careers of women artists. Lucy Frost has also contributed an interesting essay 'Beyond the Bush Paradigm' in *Imagining Australia: Literature and Culture in the New New World* (Edited by Judith Ryan and Chris Wallace-Crabbe)(2004). It explores the tendency in Australia to refurbish the bush paradigm to make it more palatable, rather than identifying an alternative model on which to base Australia's collective identity. Many feminist writers have addressed the gender issue in the bush and played an important role in revealing the histories of women in the bush. This research has relied upon a process of retrieving largely unpublished materials such as diaries and letters, which were written in the private lives of women. Kaye Schaffer's *Women and the Australian Bush* and Lucy Frost's *No Place For a Nervous Lady* offer insights into the private lives and thoughts of women in the bush. The representation of women undertaking and being imaged in landscape painting has been well documented and analysed by a number of publications, the most relevant to my project being *Strange Women* (edited by Jeanette Hoorn) which examines issues such as the enclosure of women and the life of Hilda Rix Nicholas.

Judith Butler has provided a useful method of understanding identity categories in *Gender Trouble* (1990), *Bodies that Matter* (1993) and *Undoing Gender* (2004). While specifically referring to *gender*, her analysis can be applied to all processes of identity development and performance. Her analysis argues that even the sexed body is a negotiable construction. Her theories have been applied within an Australian context by David Coad in *Gender Trouble Down Under* (2002), research that examines the paradoxes of masculinities in Australian culture. David Coad examines how masculinity has crossed the gender divide and, as such, draws attention to other unrecognised characters of Australia's past including the wiry bush women about whom Louisa Lawson wrote.

In spite of the popularity of pink in art and culture today, very little research has been undertaken on this increasingly ubiquitous colour. During my period of research, Barbara Nemitz edited *Pink: The Exposed Color in Contemporary Art and Culture* (2006). This is a welcome and timely resource to my project. Some of the propositions, such as the relationship of pink to flesh and the erotic put forward by the contributors, affirmed some of the ideas that I had been developing in my own work. The book, however, is disappointing since, apart from one reference, it does not recognise the significance of pink to the queer community. This, I believe, is a major oversight. Nevertheless, it is an attractive volume that provides a beginning to further research into this fascinating colour and the phenomenon of its wide appeal.

Other texts that are relevant to my research are those that informed the development of the system of symbols and signs embodied within my paintings. *Volatile bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (1994) by Elizabeth Grosz aims to break down dualistic understandings of, for example, the body and mind and the body and objects within a feminist framework. My discussion of the phantom limb, for example, references her research. *The Body in Pieces: The Fragment as a Metaphor for Modernity* (1994) by Linda Nochlin was influential during the early development of my project, allowing

me to begin considering the metaphorical possibilities in the representation of tree fragments.

### **Art Review**

My research frequently makes references to the work of historical Australian figurative landscape painters. My project engages with the portrayal and gender of human figures, fauna and flora and, as a result, I glean motifs from monographs of Joseph Lycett, S.T. Gill, Eugene von Geurard, Hans Heysen and the members of the Heidelberg School: Tom Roberts, Frederick McCubbin and Arthur Streeton and Charles Conder. Russell Drysdale and Sidney Nolan are important figures in the development of Australian landscape painting and, as such, their ideas have had considerable influence on the development of my ideas.

Contemporary artists whose subject matter falls within the same field, and whose work encourages me think to differently about the relationship between landscape and identity include Guan Wei, Gordon Bennett, Rosemary Laing, Narelle Jubelin and Fiona Lowry. Often I find particular works or series of works by artists more relevant than the overall output of any one particular artist. Artists of interest who reconstruct Australian history as represented in iconic landscape images include Dianne Jones and Greg Leong. Of particular relevance are their re-representations of *Shearing the Rams* (1890) by Tom Roberts.

Popular and media culture, politics and national celebrations also inform my work, as this seems to be where the bush paradigm continues to flourish. Movies such as *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, *A Cry in the Night* and *Wolf Creek* all contribute to new understandings of what the bush is, what happens in it and how we define our relationship to it. I find the perception of the bush in media and political culture to be a more abundant source in many ways than the work of other artists, as the imaging of the bush in the landscape genre as such is a generally outdated and discarded practice. Reinterpretations of the

Australian landscape have probably made a greater headway in the areas of photography, digital media and installation.

### **The Internet**

The Internet can be regarded as an unreliable research tool, nevertheless, I found it to be extremely useful particularly when topics addressed within this thesis could not be located within any published materials.

# 1 The Australian Bush: Lie of the Land

“It was I who insisted on the capital B for “Bush”.”

Henry Lawson<sup>10</sup>

This chapter examines what the bush is and the role that the bush paradigm plays in the construction of Australian national identity and as a rallying point for nationalism. Despite being a late nineteenth century construction, references to *the bush* in Australia continues to flourish today, most noticeably in the media and politics. It is a term popularly employed in the Australian vernacular and is used generically to describe any space in Australia that is not a city. While nineteenth century representations of the bush continue to be reiterated within Australia’s cultural and political institutions, painting the bush landscape in conventional naturalistic styles has all but become a discarded practice in post-modern Australian art. This discrepancy between the popular use of the term ‘bush’ in popular and political culture, and its out-dated representation as bush in contemporary art intrigued me enough to re-visit the phenomenon of the bush and all its connotations. What is this thing called *the bush*? Why does it play such an important role in any definition of Australia’s collective identity and has the notion of the bush changed to suit contemporary notions of nationhood? Once the parameters of the bush and what actually happens there are considered, it begins to emerge that the bush is and has been many things to many people, both real and imagined.

In this chapter I set about defining the bush and identifying its signifiers in order to re-imagine the bush, as a powerful yet often fictionalised force, into less intelligible images by introducing signifiers from the urban and domestic domains.

## 1.1 The Ideology of the Bush Brand

*The bush* is bound closely to the notion of *landscape*. The bush is a *type* of landscape or even as Ian Burn, the late Australian artist and theorist, suggested “encased within the landscape”<sup>11</sup> with its own distinguishing and evolving symbols and signifiers. As such, a definition of landscape will provide an insight into the underlying function of the bush. Simon Schama, popular English art historian, suggests that:

“Landscapes are culture before they are nature; constructs of the imagination projected onto wood and water and rock ... But it should also be acknowledged that once a certain idea of landscape, a myth, a vision, establishes itself in an actual place, it has a peculiar way of muddling categories, of making metaphors more real than their referents; of becoming, in fact, part of the scenery.”<sup>12</sup>

Bernard Smith, Australian art historian, similarly describes landscape not as a physical fact, but rather an image created by “a relation between man and nature which springs from what he sees and what he dreams.”<sup>13</sup> A European vision of the Great Southern Land, now known as Australia, began long before it was ‘discovered’ by Captain James Cook in 1770. Great hopes were pinned on this land: it had all the trappings of Arcadia, and promised to be an antidote to all Europe’s shortages and social ills. This idealisation continued after white settlement. For example, convict artist Joseph Lycett (ironically convicted of forgery), was required by Governor Macquarie to produce idyllic images of the colonies to send back as report cards of success to Britain; members of the Heidelberg School produced romantic images of the Australian bush which celebrated the heroism of Australia’s white pioneers; early twentieth century landscape painters depicted domesticated pastoral scenes which no longer dealt with the ‘exotic’ Indigenous population, flora and fauna, but with landowners very much at home and in control of the Australian landscape. It was not until artist Russell Drysdale began producing his social realist images of the bush during World War II that the trend of idealisation of the bush was disrupted.

Further to Schama and Smith's understandings of landscape is historian and theorist W.J.T. Mitchell's description of landscape as a *process* "by which social and subjective identities are formed."<sup>14</sup> It is within this paradigm that I seek to understand representations of the bush. The bush is a negotiable idea and an unbounded and, often, imagined place employed to define identities, yet it is represented through landscape imagery as though what is seen is real or natural. The bush, like landscape, is a process of cultural practice and, as part of landscape, not only signifies or symbolises power relations but also serves as an "instrument or agent of power."<sup>15</sup> Within the paradigm constructed by W.J.T. Mitchell in relation to landscape, the representation of the bush functions as an ideology whereby "it naturalises [and reiterates] a social and cultural construction, representing an artificial world as if it were simply given and inevitable."<sup>16</sup> The artificial world of the bush, labelled by cultural historian Lucy Frost as the *bush brand*, operated as a rallying point for Australian nationalism and identity in the late nineteenth century and has recurred in various configurations throughout the twentieth and twenty first centuries. Historically, it has relied on a limited representation based on an Anglo-Celtic genealogy, male labour and hetero-normative themes, and tends to be celebrated and advanced by the culture it mirrors. The bush, as a process by which identities are formed, has to date been formed in Australia upon the *grand master narrative*, a construction of Australian history and culture legitimised through Australia's cultural and political institutions, that takes white, heterosexual male identity as its central theme.

Ian Burn suggested that *bush* was a British term imported to Australia as early as 1803 but one that developed a local characterisation to describe sparsely settled areas which operated as a kind of 'anti-city.'<sup>17</sup> Its origins may go further afield to the importation of the Dutch term *bosch*, a colonial idiom which, according to Australian cultural historian Martin Thomas, refers to anything that is not 'park' or 'wood'.<sup>18</sup> Due to the effects of a depression, cities in both Australia and Europe had submerged into a state of squalor toward the end of the nineteenth century. This, coupled with the influential trends of nationalism in Europe along with Australia's approach toward Federation in 1901,



encouraged social, political and cultural institutions to locate a paradigm for Australian identity that was distinct from Europe and independent from Britain and which offered the trappings and optimism of a new world.

The solution to bringing the separate colonies together lay in the space between: it was the bush, a space romanticised in the stories of Henry Lawson and Banjo Paterson and the paintings of artists such as Hans Heysen and the Heidelberg School that provided the glue that ensured their cohesion. The formlessness of the bush had already offered the promise of transformation and prosperity, inspiring European pioneers to take the journey to its interior and to the other side in search of arable land, resources and new sites for settlement. Federation provided the space into which the dreams and aspirations of a new nation could be projected. Through the process of exploration, pioneering, cartography and even literature and painting, the bush gradually became de-natured and ‘reprogrammed’ into the possession of a new culture intent on establishing its credentials as heir.

The bush paradigm operates as a rallying point for Australian nationalism. Notions and representations of the bush embody particular ideologies that influence the way we read, understand, identify and interact with the Australian landscape as a social and cultural space. Such ideologies can determine, or at least influence, who has the right to access such space, owns that space and consequently, who is excluded from that space. The manner in which the bush is represented through images and literature can impact on an individual’s or group’s *sense of belonging* to a place. In Australia where considerations of landscape have historically played a central role in the construction of a national collective identity, an individual’s (or group’s) relationship to the bush and its ethos can be a measure of their *Australianness*. Lucy Frost observed that “*the bush* is a nineteenth century paradigm for constructing national identity, a paradigm frequently evoked during the 1970s and 1980s within a noisy public debate about *who* was Australian.”<sup>19</sup> Today, in the early twenty-first century, references to *the bush* continue to abound in definitions of Australian identity.

Nationalism can take many forms, but in Australia it primarily celebrates British settlement as the foundation of the nation, particularly during conservative periods of Australian political history. These aspects of nationalism carry colonial values which are embodied within early Australian landscape painting and which also manifest in racist forms such as the Immigration Restriction Act 1901 (The White Australia Policy) and demonstrated more recently in the 2006 Cronulla riots in Sydney, where whiteness carries a measure of *Australianness*. Many Australian flags, which of course bear the Union Jack, were being waved around on that particular day. It is not uncommon to observe juxtapositions of the Australian flag and Australian landscape paintings in political contexts such as Parliament House in Canberra.

The representations that influence the way we understand the bush and the Australian landscape, and therefore our position in relation to it, are those that circulate within the public domain of the nation's social, cultural and political institutions at any given time. The cultures that dominate these institutions operate in ways to preserve and reinforce their power and one avenue through which this can be done is through the control and regulation of art as a way of representing a nation. In the late nineteenth century this control lay in the hands of not only the political institutions but also an urban intelligentsia. Their ideas were channelled through widely attended art exhibitions, as well as published in the highly influential magazine *The Bulletin*, edited at that time by J.F. Archibald. *The Bulletin*, otherwise known as the *Bushman's Bible* by the rural workforce, had the phrase *Australia for the White Man* stated on its masthead until Sir Frank Packer took control in 1960 and installed Donald Horne as the Editor.<sup>20</sup>

From 1911 through to 1972 the Federal government exercised greater control over what art was considered suitable to represent Australia both at home and particularly abroad through the establishment of the Commonwealth Arts Advisory Board. The role of this board was originally concerned with "votes

for historical memorials for representative men”<sup>21</sup> but later expanded to include the selection of art for the national collection and art exhibitions travelling abroad. Historian Sarah Scott’s research for her essay *Imaging a Nation: Australian Representation at the Venice Biennale, 1958* (2003)<sup>22</sup>, reveals that from the outset the board comprised of a selection of men from powerful positions within the conservative art establishment. In the 1950s, the committee took a sharper turn to the right when Robert Menzies personally selected the committee and gave himself the right to veto any decisions they made. Menzies and key supporters such as art critic Lionel Lindsay (author of *Addled Art*, 1942) held the view that the Heidelberg landscape tradition was the art form to represent the nation both at home and abroad and rejected any claim that European modernism had a place in Australian cultural life. Such views carried racist sentiments that Sarah Scott resembled to fascist Germany’s embrace of the ideal landscape in the 1940s. Modernist art was regarded as the import of refugee impostors and victims. Menzies and his supporters sought an art that was not only accessible to the growing middle class in Australia but also legitimised their place as the true Australians whose roots lay in heroic bush narratives.

Fast forward to 2004, when an important example of the significance of landscapes as agents of ideology was again played out in Parliament House in Canberra. Ross Cameron, then Liberal Member of Parliament, and several of his influential colleagues successfully mounted a campaign to alter the new Australian Parliament House art collections policy, going against the original intentions of the architect: to develop a “contemporary collection which would reflect society back to the decision-makers of the nation.”<sup>23</sup> Instead, Cameron argued for a collection that honoured Australia’s history “from the shoulders of the giants we stand while we look to Australia’s future.”<sup>24</sup> One anonymous comment contributed by a Member of Parliament to the review conducted by the retired Director of the National Gallery of Australia, Betty Churcher, stated: “We need more portraits and landscapes, it’s time to discard political correctness.”<sup>25</sup> In an interview with reporter Jeremy Thompson on the 7.30 Report on ABC television in 2004, Ross Campbell referred to a landscape

painted by Penleigh Boyd as “an authentically Australian landscape ... with this attraction of being the vacant field out of which the National Capital emerged” (**figure 1**).<sup>26</sup>

These early landscapes are attractive because they continue to reiterate the early achievements of white pioneers to which contemporary Australia owes its debt. They remind the viewer just how much British culture has transformed the land firstly from a ‘wilderness’ to a sheep paddock, then into a nation. Omitted from early landscape painting is the representation of the presence and contribution made by a diverse range of cultures. Betty Churcher recommended the reproduction of Australian portraits and landscapes to expand the choice of images available to parliamentarians.

The landscapes that hang in Parliament House in Canberra and indeed in any of Australia’s public and even corporate buildings impart particular ideologies. Throughout the time John Howard served as Prime Minister of Australia, he appeared on numerous television news bulletins shaking hands with overseas dignitaries or being interviewed in front of, if not the Australian flag, then one of the many pastoral landscapes that now hang on the walls of Canberra’s Parliament House (**figure 2**).

This strategy operated as a form of product placement or ideology placement, instilling in the mind of the viewer an association of the values embodied within the pastoral landscape with those of the former Prime Minister and his culture. It indicated a particular relationship between the aspirations of the dominant culture and place.

To illustrate this point further I will now discuss two images that embody the relationship between the Australian landscape, nationalism and the conveyance of the view that Australians are indebted to British culture as pioneering and nation building. The first is an image of John Howard, prior to becoming Prime Minister of Australia, at home with his two boys (**figure 3**).

Of particular interest to this research is the landscape image pinned to the Australian flag in the top left hand corner of the photograph, which establishes a link between the landscape, British values and nationalism. Below, lounging in the recliner, are the heirs of the nation, the two sons of John Howard. This image cannot be read as an ordinary family photograph; it is a politically orchestrated and selected image encoded with a nationalist agenda.

To further establish the role of landscape as ideology I provide another example of the way landscape operates as an ideological placement within opportunistic political photographs. This is an image of a ceremony in John Howard's office where he, as Prime Minister of Australia, accepted the return of Kingford-Smith's wings, which had been taken into space on board the space shuttle *Discovery* with Australian born astronaut, Andy Thomas (**figure 4**).

The landscape, possibly one painted by Arthur Streeton, sits behind Andy Thomas' head in the form of a halo, perhaps as a tribute to the new frontier man. The image forges a direct path from the early Australian pioneers of British extraction to Australia's contemporary pioneers, also of British extraction. Andy Thomas has the expression of a saint, unlike the uniformed man to the right who appears somewhat diminished by the smaller frame. The British and conservative values are also further reinforced by the positioning of the *Chesterfield* lounge in the foreground which took the place of Paul Keating's contemporary furniture suite when Howard took up the position as Prime Minister. The relationships developed between people and objects in images such as this are surely beyond coincidence.

The appearance of landscape images in Australia's parliament houses, court houses, art galleries, journals and history books are regulated by the dominant culture and reinforce particular understandings of who owns and controls the land. All state and national galleries in Australia house static historical galleries, replete with colonial landscape paintings that celebrate and reiterate the conquests and dreams of early and nineteenth century white and predominantly male Australia. A short stroll around the historical galleries in the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney, for instance, soon illustrates

this point. In a chronological format the galleries to the right hand side of the foyer area, articulate the construction of a nation; from a land where Europeans observed the exotic as in *Bush Landscape with Waterfall and an Aborigine Stalking Native Animals* (1860s) by John Skinner Prout (1805-1878, lived in Australia 1840-48) to paintings in the following gallery such as *The Prospector* (1889) by Julian Ashton and *The Gloucester Buckets* (1894) by Arthur Streeton (1867-1943).

The bush brand is reiterated to the Australian public in every State and National Gallery around the country. It is reiterated through historical programming on our television sets, movies, through national celebrations and bush music. Neil MacGregor, in the forward to Gombrich's book *Shadows: The Depiction of Cast Shadows in Western Art* (1995) stated: "It is a sad truth, ... that most of us can see only what we have already learnt is likely to be there"<sup>27</sup>. And so it is, through the selective creation and reproduction of images and publications, that as a nation we construct and remember the past from which modern day Australia emerges. The paintings of life in the bush produced toward the end of the nineteenth century adopted a naturalistic style popular in England and France at that time. The naturalism with which they were painted makes the content convincing as historical documents of a significant pioneering era. Yet, it has been argued by many authors, including Ian Burn and Leigh Astbury, that these landscapes were nothing more than constructions that encapsulated the romance of the bush ideal and made heroic those men who toiled to domesticate the 'wilderness.' Images of the bush operated as an idea of Australia that proved extremely popular during a nationalistic period. This theme was echoed in Australian landscape painting, which embodied the popular icon of the gum tree right through to the 1930s in what Bernard Smith described as "the plein-air technique of Roberts and Streeton degenerated into a cheap mannerist trick taught in every art school."<sup>28</sup> While these paintings encapsulated a sense of the bush and life within it, they only offer a singular cultural perspective. The genealogy of the figures depicted in the famous paintings of Arthur Streeton, Frederick McCubbin and Tom Roberts is British

with male and females performing gender specific roles in relation to the land and home.

Many artists choose to create landscapes but not all artists have their work accepted and supported within Australia's cultural structures. An image that mirrors the ideology of the dominant culture is most likely to be accepted and reiterated through Australia's cultural institutions, rather than images that transgress or critique the dominant ideology. In pluralistic societies such as Australia, marginal cultures are absorbed into the structures that support the dominant culture so that they can be regulated. The hanging of a painting by Gordon Bennett in the Art Gallery of NSW, for example, in one way acknowledges that voices of dissent to the dominant ideology exist, but it also operates to diffuse the brevity of such a painting by absorbing this dissent into its very structure.

In a recent essay Lucy Frost reveals how she unwittingly played a nationalist agenda when she wrote *No Place for a Nervous Lady: Voices from the Australian Bush* (1984). While she acknowledges the important contribution the book made toward making space for the voices of a gendered difference to be heard, she now recognises that by situating the voices in "the bush" she was simply refurbishing the nationalist agenda of the 1890s, making the paradigm of the bush more palatable by being more inclusive: "Difference accommodated within the paradigm, strengthens the brand by refiguring the icon."<sup>29</sup> There are some fixtures within the bush brand, however, which so far, have remained stubbornly non-negotiable. In a book review published in the Sydney Morning Herald, Guardian reviewer Jane Housham stated: "When building a brand ...it's essential not to veer wildly from the qualities that have already proven popular in the product."<sup>30</sup> The qualities of the bush brand include the romantic origins of the bush narrative, which traces British genealogy and the values inherent in the bush ethos. It is the culture based on this British genealogy that determines how inclusive this brand will be.

The late nineteenth century paradigm of the bush brand continues to be cited and reiterated in the early twenty first century as a way of uniting a nation and selling Australia to the world. The bush brand was reiterated during the opening of the 2000 World Olympic Games in Sydney, with scenarios re-enacted from well known Australian bush legends including the *Man from Snowy River* and the Ned Kelly story, while giving the appearance of being more inclusive through the performance of a traditional Indigenous smoking ceremony. More recently in 2007 at the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) the leaders of the participating nations were dressed in designer *Drizabones* and given *Akubra* hats: quintessential bush attire and quintessentially Australian. The bush as brand continues to be alive and well within the Australian film and television industries with larger than life ‘personalities’ such as the late Steve Irwin and the Bush Tucker Man and a host of Australian movies set in the bush, including *Crocodile Dundee*. Recent productions, such as *Australia* directed by Baz Luhrmann and starring Nicole Kidman and the ABC television series *Rain Shadow* starring Rachel Ward, take women as their central characters yet remain steadfastly rooted within the Anglo-Celtic narrative. This indicates a shift in the way gender is perceived in relationship to the land, yet it is one that nevertheless relies on the sexiness of the central characters. This mono-culturally specific interaction with the land has been disrupted in more recent years through the airing of productions such as *Go Bush* hosted by Cathy Freeman and Deborah Mailman, *The Adventures of Priscilla*, *Queen of the Desert* and *Rabbit Proof Fence* into mainstream media. These are productions constructed by the mainstream, however, and as a result pose no threat.

Historically, those that control Australia’s political and cultural institutions have played a significant role in shaping what it means to be Australian by extolling particular identity categories and excluding others. *Keating: The Musical* caricatured this process by donning former Prime Minister John Howard (the Statesman) in a succession of cut-out outfits which defined prevailing ideas of what it is to be Australian: Howard in a green and gold tracksuit: ‘*The Sportsman*’; Howard in a combat outfit: ‘*The Digger*’; and



Howard in his Akubra hat: *'The Bushman'*. This rather 'blokey' interpretation of *Australianness* is difficult to dislodge from our political and cultural shopfronts. It illustrates what we are culturally forced to celebrate in the Australian character through our media, public holidays and events. Everyone is invited to participate, to romance with the past and our legends: to keep these ideas of Australia and Australianness alive. This flavour of celebration was particularly evident during the conservative Howard era of politics from 1996 to 2007.

Images of the bushman emerged as early as the mid-nineteenth century in the illustrations of S.T. Gill. The notion of the bush as an idealised space or a sparse space populated by battlers and heroes, however, did not appear until it was brought to life in the stories of Banjo Paterson and Henry Lawson and in the paintings of the Heidelberg School, a loosely bound group of artists who, toward the end of the nineteenth century, painted ideal bush scenes on the outskirts of Melbourne. The images of the bush that have proved so popular since Australia's federation days, images grouped under the title *The Golden Age of Australian Painting*, marked the end of the Australian landscape as an exotic space, to a space claimed by European culture, an idea that served the ideology of an emerging white nation. The idealised images of the bush were created through a process of selection and omission. The landscape paintings that have become iconic of this period were no longer preoccupied with coming to terms with an exotic space and people, rather as a claimed space and uniquely Australian. Images of exotica, of Aboriginal people and the strange flora and fauna recorded by the Europeans in earlier decades were displaced in favour of white pioneers, pastoralists, bushrangers and impressionistic light. This ideal was taken further by the post-World War I pastoralist painters who had an even greater motivation to depict Australia as a proud and independent nation, a stark contrast to war ravaged Europe. At this time imagery turned to gentle, sun bathed golden pastoral scenes, an Arcadia peppered with stock and images of the heroic pastoralist.

There is a view that continues to be held by some Australian landscape painters, that interpretations of the Australian landscape must carry absolute authenticity, suggesting that an authentic image emerges from a profound relationship between nature and the artist as neutral mediator. When Hans Heysen began his now famous landscape paintings in the Adelaide Hills in 1904, he made it his goal to “seize upon the underlying rhythms of nature.”<sup>31</sup> One hundred years later, Australian landscape artist John Wolseley re-articulated this approach to Australian landscape painting in the first of a series *Painting Australia* televised on ABC Television on 27 March 2007.<sup>32</sup> Wolseley was employed to guide three emerging ‘talents’ from Bendigo, Victoria in the creation of a landscape image. In the bush setting of Ballestedt Goldmine, near Bendigo, Wolseley proffered the following advice: the role of the landscape artist is to detect the “deep underlying rhythms ... and ... patterns that connect the living world ... and ... work in collaboration with nature.”<sup>33</sup> He stated: “some artists really want to see what’s going on in a place. Others just want to copy other artists.”<sup>34</sup> Of particular relevance to my research, however, was his directive to the emerging talent that there must be “no imported ideas.”<sup>35</sup> This suggests that true artists have the ability to shed any preconceived notions of the bush; that they can somehow detach themselves from their cultural and social experience. This idea not only relies on romantic notions as to the role of artists in responding to the landscape but it also obscures the role landscape plays in the construction of ideology.

This romantic tendency to seek authentic images of the Australian bush and to reject imported ideas, again harks back to Australia’s so-called *Golden Age of Painting* in the 1890s, when the work of ‘home grown’ artists such as Arthur Streeton (1867-1943), Tom Roberts (1856-1931) and Frederick McCubbin (1855-1917) were (and still are) celebrated for embodying what was considered to be a truly unique and authentic representation of an emerging nation’s life and landscape. Yet what were their paintings if not conventions of naturalism and impressionism imported from Europe and inventions of the bush completed in studios within the urban environment? The mythologies and heroism

surrounding the artists that produced these paintings are as equally dense as the mythologies that inform the content of their work.

## **1.2 The Great Divide: The Bush and the City**

There is no doubt that the bush describes real space, but any effort to define where its edges lie soon stimulates disagreement. Martin Thomas claims that any place in Australia that is not a city can be regarded as bush.<sup>36</sup> However, as Australia's suburbia spills out into what were once farming districts, as the land becomes increasingly divided into hobby farms and week-end escapes, wineries and olive groves, as city folk peruse Farm Gate Trails, craft shops and tea houses, this boundary between city and bush becomes increasingly blurred. The Maple-Browns, a well-known family who farmed sheep near Goulburn for six generations, decided to sell their property *Springfield* in 2004 with some family members relocating to the Western slopes of NSW because they felt their district had fallen within Sydney's 'orbit.'<sup>37</sup> 'Orbits' form the shadowy bands between Australian cities and the bush, and in this case signify a sprawling contamination of the bush by the city. Recent generations of this family witnessed the transition of 'their' bush into what they perceived as the city orbit. Originally lying on the Cobb and Co. route between Braidwood and Sydney, the property received many visitors, wanted and unwanted. Recent accounts of the property's history include an encounter with Bushranger Ben Hall and his Gang at the gate of the property by family members in 1865. Amongst the recorded guests were explorer William Hovell and gold pioneer Edward Hargraves. During the 1950s and 1960s the family prospered as a result of the wool boom when wool accounted for fifty percent of Australian exports. Bushrangers, stagecoaches, explorers, pioneers, gold and sheep are all aspects of the bush that the celebrated legends of Australia are built upon. But when in 2004 the Maple-Brown's sold up and handed their private museum of artefacts to the National Museum in Canberra, it marked the end of a bygone era. It marked the end of the bush and the entry of *Springfield* into the 'city orbit', a zone where the land was, as Jim Maple-Brown described it, "worth more as residential property than for farming."<sup>38</sup> 'Residential' brings with it an

influx of new arrivals and the erosion of the bush ethos by hobby farms, suburban sprawl and housing estates.

Australia has always been a predominately urban society, yet the amount of land occupied by the urban environment is far outweighed by the vast and varied terrain that is often referred generically as *the bush*. The bush is a place lived in; it is a place imagined and it carries an ethos. It contains rural properties and towns; it separates our state capitals. Canberra, our federal capital, is sometimes referred to diminutively as 'The Bush Capital' or 'a big country town.' The bush clings to the coastlines, it encompasses remote and isolated spaces that are sparsely populated and vegetated; it can be lush forests and it can be dry sclerophyll. In the narrative of Australian identity *the bush* is a term often applied generically to whatever is not city and to spaces also known as 'The Outback', 'Beyond the Black Stump', 'Woop (itty) Woop', 'Back of Bourke', the 'Never Never', 'beyond the beaten track', or 'Back of Beyond' to describe remote regions of Australia. These terms are commonly employed in the Australian vernacular to describe sparsely populated regions, their roots belonging to the days of European exploration and pioneering. Some may argue that the bush ends where these other spaces begin, but there appear to be no hard and fast rules. The 'outback' for instance is fast gathering its own currency as a dangerous place to strangers, particularly as the ominous signifiers of murder, isolation and disappearance are generated and reiterated by movies such as *Dark Angels* and *Wolf Creek*, that exploit isolated events such as the disappearance of Azaria Chamberlain and Peter Falconio.

What happens in the bush fuels the mystery of the bush. The bushland and arid zones of Australia remain largely impenetrable to the city dweller, due to rugged and parched terrain and the consumption of vast tracts of land by private property. It has become a place where planes go down, where walkers become disorientated and lost, where human remains and shallow graves are found, a place that children wander into from the edge of cities, a place that explodes into summertime infernos, where the bodies of stolen cars are dumped, where marijuana crops are cultivated and sometimes detected. More recently it has

become the site where, it has been rumoured through the media, Muslim extremists have been training for the Jihad. In short, the bush provides a site to hide, conceal and disappear. It is isolated, lawless and feared.

While the bush in the early twenty-first century can carry many negative connotations it also continues to carry the status of being an idyllic place where the city dweller can escape the everyday constraints and pressures of city life. The 'bush idyll' like the much-researched 'rural idyll,' "frames the countryside as a restorative resource for body, mind and soul."<sup>39</sup> 'To go bush' is a term applied to this escape from the city: its regulations, traffic jams, office politics, smog and general hustle and bustle. It suggests a slow pace of life, a communion with nature and a change, no matter how temporarily, of lifestyle and perhaps even identity: the bush can offer a site where one can get away from the constraints of the city and *be oneself*. There is no pressure to conform to urban dress codes and formal social etiquettes. The armoury constructed for 'superficial' urban relationships can be shed in favour of 'genuine' and intimate relationships offered by *the small community*. In the bush one is able to escape the routines of high density living and get in touch with primal needs and basic survival skills: collecting wood, lighting fires, hunting, listening to animal calls, peeing behind trees and enjoying all the benefits that the land provides. The bush reminds us that our favourite cuts of meat were once cows and sheep; it offers us fresh air and night skies filled with stars; it puts everything in perspective by reminding us how small we are when confronted by the great forces of the cosmos.

Many city dwellers dream of and some pursue the 'tree change', a move to the bush, an interpretation of which was portrayed in two ABC Australian television series *Sea Change* and *Always Greener*. The transition is often based on romanticised notions of life in the bush whether it be in a country town or a farm, and it is not uncommon for tree changers to return to the fold of city after just a couple of years. Gone are the concerts and entertainment, the café and restaurant strips, the theatres, multiculturalism and shopping malls. For many city dwellers, 'the change' also involves a lot of commuting from country to

city and for some people the bush can simply be boring. This was the subject of an article *Two Go Mad in Tassie* by Kendall Hill that appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald's Good Weekend in August 2007. The listing of the house purchased by Hill and his partner advertised 'Privacy and Space' that, according to Hill "was a siren call to sardined city dwellers like us."<sup>40</sup> After one month of romantic improvisation in the bush setting however, "privacy and space began to morph from fantasy to tedious reality."<sup>41</sup>

Visits to the bush come relatively infrequently to most urban dwellers and when one does experience the bush, it normally manifests in a highway experience, of driving *through* the bush in the cabin of a car. The bush can become a *non-place*, a space between one destination and the next, a space passed through. The extent to which one engages with the bush is often limited. Ian Burn describes the highway as a liminal space, as an experience so faint that no sensation is experienced. As a highway experience the bush is characterised by roads, trucks, service stations and the drone of the car engine; everyone is a stranger, to each other and within the landscape, they are according to Burn both placed and displaced within the landscape.<sup>42</sup> The fast motion of the motor vehicle demands the driver pay attention to the road. Entry into the bush from the road is limited to what the eye can see, and the fence that defines private property restricts entry beyond the highway. The terms 'Trespassers will be Prosecuted' or 'Keep Out. Private Property' regularly grace the fences and gates of rural properties as a way of consolidating this demarcation, and carry a hostile sentiment to strangers. The bush is an inaccessible space. This impenetrability limits the city dweller's experience of the bush but offers scope for the urban imagination.

### **1.3 Mateship and Murder**

The early bush ethos encompassed an Australian way of life: hardship and labour endured through the bonds of mateship. It was an antiauthoritarian and egalitarian ethos shared amongst men and developed in reaction to the British class system and laws that regulated life in the settlements. This ethos travelled to Gallipoli with the diggers and continues to be celebrated as uniquely

Australian. The ethos is embodied within the word *mate* that has penetrated the wider Australian vernacular as a symbol of friendliness and reliance. Its usage indicates an acceptance of the Australian way of life and values.

It is an affront to the national collective consciousness when the bush ethos of mateship is not adhered to. Alarm bells ring in the media and in our political institutions. Within the bush itself the bonds of mateship have begun to unravel in recent times as the consequences of years of drought grip the land, and water becomes a scarce commodity. In the Lower Murrumbidgee region, for example, fierce competition for bore water and, as some farmers perceive, the inequitable withdrawal of water licences by State and Federal governments under the guidance of powerful farming lobbyists has increased tension between landowners. Deborah Snow, journalist for *The Sydney Morning Herald* writes of the people who live in the lower Murrumbidgee region: "Folk around here pride themselves on independence, toughness, and a close-knit sense of community. Or did."<sup>43</sup> Now once harmonious relationships have been tainted by intimidation and threats such as "Wait for the next fire season, pal."<sup>44</sup> When John Anderson was leader of the National Party he promised to resolve the problems of water management and take a "decisive step away from ... the pitting of Australian against Australian."<sup>45</sup> Pitting farmer against farmer is a cultural crime against *Australianness* and it is a crime being perpetrated from city-based politicians and manifesting in the bush.

In the late nineteenth century the bush was an idealised place in spite of a depression. This depression, however, was experienced in the city as well as the bush. It was perceived that to be poor in the bush was more dignified and desirable than in the city: a viewpoint expressed in the poetry of Henry Lawson and romanticised in the paintings of Frederick McCubbin, for example. In Australia today, however, the bush is wrecked by drought, unemployment, diminishing communities as young people seek work in the cities, limited medical services, racial tension between the white and Indigenous communities in Dubbo and Alice Springs, for example, and high suicide rates. The cultural fabric of bush, as it has been idealised, is coming apart at the seams. Parts of the bush may continue to be a desirable place to live, but the wealth generated

by the Australian cities offers the essential promise of an income where once farmers on the land generated this wealth. Mining also provides the promise of high wages in the bush, but this income is generated by large and often foreign corporations and does not carry the romantic sentiment of the struggling farmer. This perception of the bush in crisis is certainly not new and has been addressed in the paintings of Russell Drysdale in the mid-twentieth century and more recently by Gordon Bennett.

The nineteenth century ideals of bush mateship are overlaid with more recent events for which the bush is becoming increasingly associated, giving rise to a distrust of strangers and ‘blow-ins’ from the city. The bush has never been considered a safe place, it is a space long associated with lawlessness and it is now a place associated with some of the most widely publicised crimes in Australia. Crimes and wars that have been perpetrated against Indigenous Australians do not occupy an equivalent place in the mainstream imagination, probably because they are perceived to be committed toward the ‘other’, thus evoking a lesser degree of identification and empathy within the collective consciousness. Places within the bush that have become the sites of specific crimes become tainted. The Belanglo State Forest just off the Hume Highway in New South Wales, for example, will always be associated with the 1980s ‘backpacker murders’ carried out by serial killer Ivan Milat. And who will drive down the Stuart highway in the Northern Territory without passing a thought as to where Peter Falconio’s remains might lie? In light of these crimes and the multitude of others that have been committed in the bush, which traveller on one of Australia’s many isolated roads wouldn’t entertain at least a momentary thought, that they could be next? Events such as this shape the way the bush is feared and the way we interact with it. The bush becomes a collaborator in crime.

#### **1.4 Disruptions of the Bush Ideal**

As Australia approached Federation the population was beginning to react against the imposition of British law and culture, artists grappled with new ways to describe Australia. During a particularly nationalistic period that lasted



well into the first half of the twentieth century, writers, politicians and artists turned to the bush to forge a new identity. The Heidelberg school emerged as one the leading proponents of the *real* Australia. Tom Roberts, Arthur Streeton and Frederick McCubbin, while heavily influenced by imported ideas of naturalism and impressionism, nevertheless became known for the development of a uniquely Australian palette, one prescribed by the vegetation and land of southern Victoria. Their subject matter straddled a number of themes relating to life in the bush, some of it sentimental, some of it heroic, as a culture soon to be emancipated asserted its progress and uniqueness. 'Exotic Australia' was replaced with self-assured figures of Anglo-Celtic origins and depicted Australia in the process of nation-building: farmers, pioneers and shearers were glorified; there was no place for the depiction of dispossessed Indigenous people.

Landscape painting reflects the evolution of these ideas and in fact, through imagery, made these developments appear as though they were real and natural. The bush became the site upon which these identities were constructed. Its representation is idealistic and artificial.

The notion of the bush, as a process, has evolved, carrying new meanings and associations in contemporary Australian art and culture, in spite of some aspects remaining unchanged. The imaging of the Australian bush has not remained static. Its representation in paintings has evolved from optimistic days of settlement and colonial development, to images of drought and despair through to contemporary images reflecting a myriad of human relationships to the land.

Arguably one of the most significant European artists to shift the idealised bush paradigm as a romanticised and heroic space was Russell Drysdale (1912-1981). Drysdale shocked the Australian public with images of a desolate Australia, stretching from the desert regions to Sofala, an old prospecting town just a few hours from Sydney. Unlike his precursors Drysdale depicted an unflattering drought-ridden landscape, littered with the remains of defeated

European settlements and reintroducing images of Aboriginal people, albeit dispossessed. Twisted corrugated iron sheeting, ominous trees stumps and animal carcasses punctuated dry expanses of land, casting dark shadows in a disquieting style reminiscent of European surrealist artist Giorgio de Chirico (1888-1978). Far from representing an idealised notion of Australia, Drysdale's bush overcame the pioneers and the settlers to leave in their place the wretched and the hopeless. These were images of a failed conquest, images that Australians were not receptive to in the wartime 1940s.

More recently, a number of contemporary Australian artists including Gordon Bennett, Guan Wei, Fiona Lowry, Rosemary Laing and David Keeling have produced work that, while not directly addressing questions as to what constitutes *the bush*, nevertheless operates to redefine how this space is read and imagined. Through the interpretation of contemporary events and as a result of changing cultural trends a number of Australian artists are exploring the Australian landscape from fresh perspectives that disrupt the way the bush has been imaged.

There is much scope for the British genealogy of the bush to be challenged and for the bush to be re-imaged from a broad range of perspectives, including from Indigenous artists and migrant artists from non-Anglo-Celtic backgrounds. This has occurred through the recognition of the significance of Indigenous art. While many ethical problems have emerged between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in relation to the profiting and cultural ownership of such art, it has nevertheless raised the profile of indigenous issues and the significance of the relationship they have to the land. Less marketable in mainstream Australia, however, recognised by Australia's cultural institutions, is the work of indigenous artists such as Gordon Bennett and Fiona Foley, who directly critique colonisation, the relationship between black and white or life in communities that are reeling from the consequences of dispossession.

Gordon Bennett, through the medium of paint, employs a post-structuralist, post-modernist strategy to confront the viewer by dismantling the white veneer

that conceals the violence inflicted upon the indigenous population throughout the colonial and post-colonial history of Australia.<sup>46</sup> The consequences of dispossession are visually articulated within images such as *Bounty Hunters* (1991), *Daddy's Little Girl 2* (1994), *The Nine Ricochets (Fall Down Black Fella, Jump Up White Fella)* (1990) and *Untitled* (1989), an image of six 30 x30 cm panels that provide images accompanied by the words Dismay, Displace, Disperse, Dispirit, Display and Dismiss, chronicling the process of colonisation. The men heralded as heroes and pioneers in the history of white landscape painting are transformed into bounty hunters and rapists in the paintings of Gordon Bennett. Bennett fills in the blank spaces created by the euro-centric idealised bush landscape and pastoral painting of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with a host of uncomfortable home truths.

Similarly, Dianne Jones, a member of the Nyungar nation in Western Australia, is concerned with the misrepresentation and invisibility of Indigenous peoples in the history of Australian art. Her strategy is to reconstruct this history by placing her own image within iconic Australian photographs of, for example, Max Dupain and David Moore or in iconic paintings such as Tom Robert's *Shearing the Rams*. This is a similar gesture to that of mixed media artist Greg Leong, who also disrupted *Shearing the Rams* in his *Singing Quilts* series (2002), exhibited in Gallery 4A Sydney in 2002, by replacing the Anglo-Celtic shearers with Cantonese shearers. On the pressing of a button, an accompanying version of *Click Go the Shears* was sung in Cantonese.

The history of migration to Australia offers a host of other stories and interpretative possibilities that also challenge Australia's white history. In this respect the work of Guan Wei (1957) is significant, because he looks back to create what might have been. In 1990 Guan Wei left Beijing to set up an art practice in Sydney, Australia. His paintings and installations explore narratives connecting Australia and China. While Guan Wei's images do not specifically address the notion of the bush, he constructs representational mythologies that undermine the European conventions that have governed the way we read the

Australian landscape, that is, through the nineteenth century bush paradigm. For a start, Guan Wei employs the techniques of traditional Chinese representation as a way of seeing the landscape. His process of integrating fact and fiction to create narrative sequences varies from the landscape narratives of the nineteenth and early twentieth century by questioning the ideologies that have been reiterated in the past with whimsy and humour, rather than imposing any desired ideology on the viewer. Works such as *Unfamiliar Land* (2006), *A Passage to Australia* (2003) and *Other Histories* (2006), for example, provide alternative cultural perspectives on Australia's collective history. *Other Histories* (2006), for example, was inspired by the discovery in 1879 of a small figure of the Chinese God of Longevity at the base of a tree in Darwin.<sup>47</sup> While there has been much historical and scholarly speculation as to its origins, it may be evidence of a landing of a Chinese vessel from the voyages of Zheng He (1371-1432) in the early 15th century. The possibility of such a visit has occupied a very low profile in accounts of what is a predominantly white history of Australia, and would have held no place in accounts of national identity in the late nineteenth, early twentieth century. The revelation of this discovery and its entry into Australian collective knowledge has the power to at least disrupt the way Australians perceive their history as a linear process that began with Europe's imaginings of a Great Southern Land and Captain Cook's subsequent discovery in 1770. Significantly, both *A Passage to Australia* (2003) and *Other Histories* (2006) were painted out after being exhibited at the Hamburger Bahnhof Museum in Berlin and Sydney's Powerhouse Museum. This gesture seems to refer to the process by which some histories enter the collective consciousness while others are forgotten.

For a number of years Australian artist Fiona Lowry has chosen Belanglo State Forest in New South Wales as her subject matter, producing a range of landscape and figurative landscape paintings in air-brushed black and white and high key, acidic fluorescent colours. The name of this forest entered the collective consciousness as the site where, between 1989 to 1992, one of Australia's most notorious serial killers, Ivan Milat, murdered and dumped the bodies of seven young tourists and backpackers. An otherwise insignificant

site shot to national prominence through the media as hundreds of police scoured the bush terrain for bodies and evidence. Lowrie's interest in Belanglo lies with the way events influence the way a site is read, how it becomes framed by its past and how it becomes charged with new signifiers, an idea articulated so well in Ross Gibson's *Seven Versions of Badlands*.

The work of Australian photographer Rosemary Laing, has also played a significant role in the way land in Australia is perceived. Laing's photographs are preoccupied by the way humans interact with the landscape. They take the form of interventions that rely on incongruous juxtapositions that question how we can develop new, meaningful relationships with the land in contemporary Australia. Of greatest interest to this research are her series of images *Groundspeed* (2001) and *One dozen unnatural disasters in the Australian landscape* (2003), in which domestic furnishings such as carpet and Ikea furniture are placed within the 'natural terrain' of the Australian landscape to create an incongruous relationships between inside and outside, reality and artificiality. In *Groundspeed* (2001) Laing employed professionals to install carpet on a rainforest floor in the Moreton National Park. The work refers to the way Europeans have come to terms with a strange land and how artists such as John Glover attempted to impose Arcadian perfection on the 'untidy' Australian bush. In outback Australia near Balgo, Laing constructed a pile of Ikea furniture, covering it with red dust to unify it with the land. In this work she creates a monolith similar to Uluru but one constructed from European furniture, thereby reflecting the legacy of European colonisation.

David Keeling has been seeking new ways to represent the Tasmanian landscape beyond the cliché of the sublime, by considering the impact of human activity on the land. He acknowledges that everyone perceives the landscape differently and that images often tend to be a manifestation of desire. Despite the surreal appearance of Keeling's paintings, they are firmly rooted in actual experiences and observations. The kind of sublime landscapes depicted by earlier artists such as Eugene von Geurard are disrupted by strange juxtapositions of domestic objects against the backdrop of the landscape. In the

*Garage Sale* series, for example, domestic objects within the Australian landscape have been created with the illusion of three dimensions, casting shadows to confirm their reality. Keeling seeks to interpret the interaction of culture and nature, which gives rise to some unusual and almost surreal juxtapositions of the domestic with the landscape. Keeling has also investigated the relationship between the natural and artificial, as in *Through the Trees* (2001) and *Waterfall* (2001), where he painted onto canvas, the illusion of folding fabric, on which landscape scenery was originally printed. In spite of the juxtaposition of the domestic with the landscape there is no sense that the work aims to comment on anything beyond the imposition of culture on nature and the way nature becomes infused into culture. There is no evidence, for example, that a critique of gender relations exists within the work.

Australian artist Narelle Jubelin, who now lives and works in Madrid, has produced some of the most interesting and subversive artworks in response to geographical exploration, colonialism, imperialism and national identity.<sup>48</sup> Jubelin works with great awareness as to implications of scale, materials, the role of the camera in colonisation and the many issues surrounding representation, particularly of Aboriginal people. Working from photographs, Jubelin translates images of iconic, heroic and dominant themes into the feminine and comparatively low-ranked craft of petit point. To further diminish the power of such images she works in tiny stitches, produces images of minute scale and then locates them within dark heavy frames. Through this strategy Jubelin subverts some of the grand master narratives that belong to the bush brand.

The abovementioned artists provide an artistic context in which I form my own response the bush brand. These interpretations have entered the public cultural domain bringing with them new meanings and signifiers and offer ways in which to reassess our relationship to the bush. The notion of the bush has evolved as Australia developed as a multicultural post-colonial society, one that has also, to some extent, acknowledged the rights of Indigenous Australians. The bush is a language, an ideology that evolves from the human experience of

imagining it, living within it and representing it.

## 2 Gender Performance in the Australian Bush

In this chapter I specifically examine the construction and representation of gender within the bush brand and explore methods by which I can construct paintings that disrupt the dominant hetero-normative representations of gender in the Australian landscape. The work I produce aims to queer the Australian landscape by collapsing the signifiers of gendered bodies and spaces. As they become ambiguous and indistinguishable, assumptions made about gender are, of course, challenged. As demonstrated later in this chapter, disruptions of gender have and do occur in the bush, but the issue at stake is the visibility of these disruptions in both real life and in representations of the bush within Australia's cultural and social institutions. The representation of national identity operates as a mirror of a dominant and conservative culture and obscures the relationships that a diverse range of marginalised cultures have experienced within the Australian landscape. The bush paradigm has been constructed to sell an idea of what is quintessentially Australian and to define Australia from the rest of the world. While many of its defining features remain fixed, it is a paradigm that offers possibilities of gender refurbishment. The original colonial model continues to be reiterated on a permanent basis in Australia's National and State Galleries, parliament houses and courts and through other cultural institutions such as the media. It is a model that polarised and distilled gender into 'natural' heterosexual categories. Even today the representation and visibility of other gender categories beyond the heroic male labourer and the subordinate pioneer woman do not enjoy any significant visibility, if any.



The strategy I adopt within my paintings is to disrupt the hetero-normative representations of gender categories by collapsing signifiers and symbols from gendered spaces, objects and bodies to create, in essence, *landscapes in drag*, where the gender of the subject becomes unclear. This echoes the strategy employed within the queer community to use clothes as one device to challenge gender boundaries. Clothes form one of the most direct ways to challenge gender categories, because they have been one of the most visual methods by which to define gender. Disruptions to gendered clothing and the adoption of certain behaviours all tend to raise questions about the subject's sexuality. By appropriating cut-outs of figures from well-known paintings or from my own documentation of the landscape, I relieve the figure of many of its original, defining characteristics from which it has been constructed and enter into a process of reconstruction. The figure (or form) is reduced to a silhouette and is ready to receive a new identity. (This new identity does not only have to be based on gender; it can also borrow signs and symbols from other cultural contexts). Some of the silhouettes I appropriate may be recognisable from well-known Australian landscapes, and the viewer may feel they are in a position to assume the gender of the figure. The process of assuming the gender of a body, however, is a process I attempt to counteract in the construction of my paintings. The silhouettes are transposed onto the canvas then filled with patterns or illusions of surface from the feminised domestic realm. This process destabilises the relationship between inside and outside, artificiality and reality, depth and surface, distinctions through which, American queer theorist Judith Butler argues, "the discourse of gender almost always operates."<sup>49</sup> The reconstruction of gender points to what Butler describes as the performative value of gender that has long been employed with gay and lesbian communities to parody the 'natural' construction of "an original and true sex."<sup>50</sup> By infusing the silhouettes with pattern and domestic surfaces and obscuring the original's assigned gender, I aim to confuse the abovementioned distinctions articulated by Judith Butler as they are performed in the bush brand.

The 'natural' categories of compulsory heterosexuality identified by Judith Butler have long been disrupted within the Australian landscape. These

disruptions are obscured both in life and in its representation, because they fall outside the 'natural' forms of sexual attraction. The representation of gender and sexuality is complex and is reliant upon the employment of various systems of codes that can be open to misinterpretation. 'Queerness' does not necessarily have any physical manifestations and queer artists don't necessarily produce identifiably queer art. My aim is less to produce paintings that are identifiably queer than to erode and make less distinct the hetero-normative gender categories. In saying this, however, my work does contain signs and symbols that are queer. In this chapter I am going to specifically examine how gender has been constructed in the representation of the bush and explore options as to how this hetero-normative production of gender has been and can be disrupted.

Why is it even necessary to collapse the hetero-normative gender categories in representations of the Australian landscape? The answer lies in the need to normalise by making visible, queer deconstructions of the polemic gender categories that are articulated within the bush paradigm. *Mapping Homophobia in Australia*<sup>51</sup>, a report undertaken in 2005 by the Australia Institute, reveals that the bush or rural regions of Australia can provide a hostile environment for anyone who lives outside the categories of compulsory heterosexuality. Gay, lesbian and transgender people often conceal their identities for fear of retribution. This has a significant and destructive impact particularly on the lives of young people in the bush who identify as gay, lesbian or queer. Suicides and depression are reportedly high in this group because they are not accepted in rural communities, and many gays and lesbians eventually leave the bush in favour of urban environments. A number of services, networks, and many school programs have been developed to counter the isolation experienced by the gay/queer community in rural regions. These include *Pink Mountains* in the Blue Mountains, *WayOut* in Kyneton, Victoria and the annual *Chillout* festival in Daylesford, Victoria. This kind of support remains fragmented and often opposed by the mainstream communities in which they are located. Queer culture remains obscured within the bush and even more so in representations of the bush brand. Adam Sutton, the well known Australian gay cowboy, has recently co-authored *Say It Out Loud: Journey of a Real Cowboy*<sup>52</sup>, a book that reveals that many gay men and lesbians live in the bush as farmers, shearers,

truckies, cowboys and jillaroos and remain closeted and invisible. It is publications such as this that can possibly contribute to the reassessment of culture within the bush paradigm and normalise queer culture. The invisibility of queer culture in the bush is an issue that has been addressed in movies and literature to some degree but not yet, in any significant way, within the genre of Australian landscape painting. This, coupled with the representation of gender generally, is what I seek to address within my own work.

## **2.1 The Gendered Bush**

Judith Butler, in her analysis of the construction of identity, argues that gender categories are performative and become accepted as real or natural through the process of citation and reiteration.<sup>54</sup> Butler's analysis of performativity suggests a fabrication and therefore a negotiability of gender identity categories and even sex itself. Through the reiteration of performative roles that have been constructed, first and foremost by language, the representation of gendered figures in the landscape and even the landscape itself becomes naturalised. Hetero-normative gender categories operate as a particular ideology that attempts to dictate ideal gender relationships.

Before the advent of photography one fundamental function of painting was to *represent*. The popularity of naturalism amongst artists at the turn of the twentieth century however meant that painting continued to carry the authority of representation, of standing in as a visual document of Australia's heroic pioneering narrative. The bush brand was an ideal constructed at the end of the nineteenth century. It has been historically characterised by strong masculine labour and defined by hetero-normative gender categories, where women are marginalised and placed as subordinate figures in relation to men.<sup>55</sup> Kay Schaffer, author of the 1988 study *Women and the Bush*, states:

“ ... the Australian tradition takes male identity as its theme. The experience of actual women as historical figures is muted. The idea of the feminine, however, is embedded in metaphors of landscape and has been noted as an absent presence in the metonymic relations of man to the land and to mateship, the bush, freedom and egalitarian democracy. Woman within this tradition

has been displaced as an object which man fears and desires. The principal form of displacement has been in terms of the landscape. The bush – variously represented as funereal, absorbing, pliant, passively resistant, actively destructive, barren, cruel, wretched, a wilderness, a wasteland – has been the alien and alienating other against which man has struggled to forge an identity.”<sup>56</sup>

The placement of the heroic male as the central figure within the Australian bush emphasizes his masculinity because he is contrasted against a feminised nature. While the bush was prescribed as “no place for a nervous lady”<sup>57</sup> it was often, as part of the landscape, framed in feminine metaphors. In this paradigm the feminisation of the Australian land, flora and fauna would therefore emphasise the masculinity of the journeying or labouring man. It is a paradigm that is continually reiterated and reinforced within Australia’s public galleries and institutions, and provides an impression of how we are to understand the development of a nation and to which gender we owe this debt.

During the Heidelberg era artists created a dualistic system of representation based on the ideal relationship of the feminine, passive woman who occupied the domestic interior and the active, masculine male who laboured and journeyed within the bush landscape.<sup>58</sup> These images constructed expectations and moral codes as to how bodies should perform in the bush. They prescribed the type of environments that particular bodies should occupy, what tasks they undertook and what types of clothing they wore. Nineteenth century representations of the body that journeyed out into the bush, is muscular and stoic, clad in the typically masculine attire of trousers, shirt, boots and floppy hat: a stark contrast to the feminine frock. The attire and codes of behaviour imposed on women and particularly the ‘ladies’ ensured their vulnerability in the bush as illustrated in Tom Robert’s *A Summer Morning Tiff* (1886). This painting portrays a finely dressed young woman coming to her senses on the edge of the ‘wilderness’ while her male lover continues to tend to his horse in the full knowledge that she is confined within her bush prison. Within this painting is a punitive moral code: abandon your man’s side and you will end up in the perilous wilderness. The painting psychically regulates women’s dependence on men. Sure enough, in the companion piece to this work

*Reconciliation* (1887) the woman is returned to her lover's arms (seemingly different characters, perhaps suggesting this scenario is not an isolated occurrence), albeit a little faint after her traumatic experience of teetering on the edge of oblivion. If the female is represented beyond contained domesticated spaces then she is located within the vicinity of a man's protective orbit. In Frederick McCubbin's *On the Wallaby Track* (1896), for example, the woman leans on a tree exhausted and comforting a child, while the responsibility of survival lies with the male as he pitches the tent and lights the fire. This relationship clearly defines the woman as feminine and passive and the male as masculine and active.

S.T. Gill introduced the idea of the Bushman to Australian landscape painting as early as the mid 1800s. It was not until the last two decades of the nineteenth century, however, that the colonial stereotype of what cultural historian David Coad describes as the *hypermasculine* Australian bushman, was constructed and widely celebrated in Australian culture.<sup>59</sup> The hypermasculinity that these bushmen share, he argues, is characterised by a disrespect for authority, heavy drinking, swearing and brawling exhibited by, for example, the bushrangers, and later manifesting in the behaviour of the larrikin at the turn of the twentieth century and the ocker in the 1970s. While such characters are deeply embedded within the national psyche and celebrated in the poetry of Henry Lawson there appears to be little celebration of this rebellious behaviour during the pre-federation 'Golden Age of Australian Landscape Painting.' Painters idealised other, perhaps sentimental, forms of masculinity: the hero as the solitary pioneer, the bush labourer and family provider. Even the bushrangers are depicted as behaving in gentlemanly ways toward the opposite sex, as is portrayed in *Bailed Up* by Tom Roberts. Julian Ashton and critics Sydney Dickinson and James Smith published their own guidelines as to how figures should be characterised by painters: "It should be the ambition of our young artists to present on canvas the earnestness, vigour, pathos and heroism of the life around them."<sup>60</sup> This heroism took a decidedly masculine form. Yet today the great paradox of Australian culture is that these historical figures have come to be celebrated alongside contemporary figures such as female impersonators (Barry Humphries and Reg Livermore) and drag

queens<sup>61</sup> a phenomenon that, David Coad argues, has its roots in the convict days:

“Australia’s past as a penal colony, mateship and Outback frontierism not only encouraged same-sex practices but actively discouraged heterosexuality. Furthermore, prostitution with Aboriginal women and even bestiality were not uncommon practices for Australian Bushmen, just as venereal disease was a huge problem with diggers from the First World War.”<sup>62</sup>

Australian landscape painting rarely takes the cross-dressing male as its subject, apart from Sidney Nolan’s *Steve Hart Dressed as a Girl* (unsigned, undated but around the period of 1946-47).<sup>63</sup> Steve Hart, a bushranger member of the infamous Kelly Gang, far from living a queer life however, was more intent on masquerading as the opposite sex to deceive the law. In spite of this absence of representation, it is relatively common in rural Australia to hear anecdotes of the ‘strange’ man/men or woman/women who live down the road. Indeed, in the rural district of Goulburn where I grew up in the 1960s, a cross-dressing man who lived alone in a big ‘spooky’ house up the road occasionally visited my mother. The school that my sisters and I attended had an active and visible lesbian culture. Such stories, however, will forever remain obscured in the form of anecdote and hearsay.

Representations of masculinity within the Australian landscape painting remain focused on the various configurations of male identity. Both women who pass as men or women as masculine hero are anathema to the narrative of the bush brand, despite the accounts of their existence being recalled by Louisa Lawson, author Eve Langley and amateur historian Eve Pownell. The masculine woman does not conform to the hetero-normative requirements of sexual attraction and indeed raises questions as to her sexual orientation. I will examine this form of representation a little later in this chapter.

The idea of performativity relies on the ability of the subject to construct new identities by changing costumes, taking on new modes of behaviour, by altering their environment and with whom they associate, even altering the body itself. The concept can accommodate a complete overhaul in identity, though equally

it suggests that identity is constructed as a regulatory and normalising practice. As a concrete entity, the body can function with an identity but this identity can transform or be rewritten at any chosen moment. The representation of the body in images, however, freezes the body in time and can be employed as historical artefacts, as evidence or a moral code as to how gender was, is or should be constructed. The reproduction of landscape images in history books and museums adds to the belief that these images are records of the way life was. While discrepancies exist between reality and what is represented, it is the enduring representations in art galleries and textbooks that prevail within the collective memory.

## **2.2 Women Performing as Landscape Artists**

Although widely challenged since the 1960s and 1970s, occupations have been divided on the basis of gender, with the role of the artist being no exception. The practice and content of landscape painting has historically been propelled by the male imagination, providing a phallogentric perspective of the landscape that reiterated images and stories which place the male as hero and woman as object of desire or performing a domestic role. When women participated in the creation of paintings in the nineteenth and early twentieth century they were considered amateurish, an observation that was largely confirmed because they were excluded from the fine arts training necessary to pursue a professional career as artist.<sup>78</sup> Alfred Daplyn, for example, made it clear that there was no shortage of the 'fairer sex' painting in the open air but it was the 'hatted' artist who achieved greater depth by seeking out his subjects alone. Women, he asserted, tended to paint in groups.<sup>79</sup>

Women were actively discouraged from painting the landscape and any suggestion of women regarding their painting as a 'professional' practice was treated with contempt. Regulation of the profession was undertaken in an overt and aggressive manner and women were put in their place: men were landscape painters; women were dabblers.<sup>80</sup> Hilda Rix Nicholas (1884-1961) caused great consternation amongst her male peers because she had the audacity to venture out to paint the landscape in what she regarded as a professional capacity, performing what was considered a masculine role. She defended her

right to be an artist claiming: "... I feel I am the man for the job."<sup>81</sup> While Hilda Rix Nicholas displayed a number of ideological shortfalls that manifested in nationalistic tendencies and the subscription to the white Arcadian view of the pastoral landscape, her works did challenge the gendered conventions of representation by incorporating women into the bush ethos. In her mind she had to regard herself as a man to succeed. Her brazen disregard for the conventions as to who participated in the landscape tradition, however, ensured her place on the outside of both gender categories and a subsequent lack of success in the art world: eventually she retreated to the role of wife and mother.

In the post-modern era, gender presents as an irrelevant qualification to becoming a professional artist. Almost fifty years after the career of Hilda Rix Nicholas was nipped in the bud by prejudice, women artists, such as the late Rosalie Gascoigne (1917-1999), have enjoyed considerable success and innovation within the landscape tradition in spite of their gender. The entry of women into professional art careers, in addition to the recognition of indigenous artists and artists from non European backgrounds, has had a profound impact upon the ideologies and people represented as central figures within landscape painting by offering new perspectives of landscape and representation. While an artist's gender does not prescribe who or what they paint, there has certainly been a tendency of an artist's gender to impact upon who is represented in the landscape and how this representation takes place. This is indicated by some of the earlier women landscape painters, discussed further in Section 2.4, to place women as the active and central figures within the landscape. To date, however, little impact has been made on Australian landscape painting traditions by artists who could provide a queer perspective.

### **2.3 Gendering the Backdrop**

In the Director's Forward to *Landscape Confection*, a companion publication to an exhibition curated by Helen Molesworth in the USA in 2005, Sherri Geldin states that: "the term *landscape* is often defined as scenery, with all the theatrical connotations of a backdrop."<sup>83</sup> The attraction of this definition is that it focuses the gaze on the performance of the figures within the landscape. While it usefully draws the connection between landscape painting and theatre,



the definition underestimates the dynamic role 'scenery' also performs in the construction of social and cultural identities, and how it too becomes gendered. Landscape is a process of cultural production, of representation that involves an exchange whereby all the components of an image, whether objects, land features or human figures, interact to form a cohesive ideology that, in the Australian narrative of landscape painting, reinforces hetero-normative gender categories. In Australian landscape painting the tendency has been to define masculine identity in contrast to the feminine landscape, functioning in a way in which the figure defines the gender of the scenery and the scenery defines the gender of the figure. Representations of the Australian landscape have been constructed by artists within specific cultural contexts and reiterate identity categories. These categories have been disrupted in late twentieth century early twenty-first century painting and research.

Accompanying the representation of men and women in the landscape is the representation of gendered space and objects. Subjects are gendered as part of a regulatory process in which images play a role by reinforcing heterosexual categories. As part of this regulation places, spaces and objects become gendered either to reinforce certain behaviours or to act as a contrast to reinforce difference. As mentioned above, the gendering of spaces and objects can emphasize the gender of the subject. While the landscape is feminised to emphasize the masculinity of men, the domestic space is feminised and completely absorbs the woman: she becomes a part of the domestic ensemble, which emphasises the masculinity of the man when he is king of his castle.

Judith Butler argues that gender, even sex, is constructed through language. If language alone has the power to construct the gender, even the sex of a subject, it also has the power to construct the gender of objects and spaces. Ian Burn regarded the landscape as a text that imparted particular ideas.

In *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (1993), Butler questions the limits of the body. Elizabeth Grosz in *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism* (1994) was also concerned with how the body extends both psychically and physically to manifest in ways that go beyond flesh, bones

and skin. If there are no limits between bodies then equally, there is no limit between bodies, inanimate objects and the environment in which they are located: these too are open to constructions of gender and sex. Inanimate objects, such as utensils, can become gendered through their relationship within the circuitry of specific gendered behaviours where the gender of an object is ascertained by its function in relation to the user. The object, for instance, may operate as a reflection or extension of the user's body, it might be an object that submits to the body, or it may perform what is perceived as being a submissive role to another object. Not all objects are gendered, but some clearly have collectively agreed upon genders.

The backdrop becomes just as psychically and physically constructed as the bodies that are represented within it. For artist Alfred Daplyn (1844-1926), the lack of any logical structure of the bush, particularly its trees, provided enough reason for him to equate it with the feminine. Gum trees, in the way Daplyn understood them, were graceful but unpredictable: "The branches shoot out from the trunk at all manner of unexpected angles, and go twisting and turning at their own sweet will, seeming to rebel against all laws that control the growth of branches in general."<sup>84</sup> He continued on to apply a gender to the eucalypt: "And the foliage - how gracefully it hangs in feathery clusters, not giving much shade, it is true, being more ornamental than useful, and in as much resembling a fine lady, which the Eucalypt may be said to personate in the world of trees."<sup>85</sup> This reflected a general tendency at this time to regard the eucalypt as useless and the bush as untidy. For these very reasons nature and the land are usually gendered as 'she', and those who explore and tame it as 'he' by many commentators on the Australian landscape. This process of gendering however was a discretionary one. When artist Hans Heysen, who exercised a greater appreciation of the Australian bush, began to transform the majestic 'old man' gums of the Adelaide Hills into paintings and drawings, they took on the robust qualities of the pioneer men who heroically toiled away to domesticate the land.

## **2.4 Women in Loose Trousers**

The increased visibility of women interacting with the land beyond conventional representations in post-colonial Australia, particularly through the

mediums of film, fiction and historical research, disrupts the rigid assumptions of gender relations in the bush. While these interactions are not always read positively they nevertheless begin to reinscribe the way the land is read, experienced and remembered. The story of Lindy and Azaria Chamberlain, for example, has been inscribed into the history of the Australian outback despite it being a story that demonises the ‘bad mother’, firstly being accused and sentenced for killing her child, then, when acquitted, of taking her child into the unsafe environs of the ‘wilderness’. Such stories, while often operating in the negative, nevertheless give rise to debate and challenges to such charges. The more these stories are reiterated, the greater impact they have on refurbishing collective understandings of the bush paradigm: these stories write women into bush narratives, performing a wide range of roles that draw on both masculine and feminine attributes. The efforts of the Women’s Land Army in World War II; Robyn Davidson’s journey with camels across the top end; the enduring prominence of Indigenous women artists such as Emily Kame Kngwarreye and Gloria Petyarre; Sarah Henderson’s personal struggle to ‘run the station’; Gina Rinehart’s inheritance of her father Lang Hancock’s mining interests; Eve Langley and her sister passing as men to find work; Elizabeth Jolley’s construction of a lesbian relationship in the bush in her novel *Palomino*; Anthropologist Olive Pink’s (1884-1975) political activism for Aboriginal rights and the cultivation of native plants; the 2007 ABC series *Rain Shadow* starring Rachel Ward and Victoria Thaine as veterinarians, provide examples of women, events and fiction that contribute to the public reshaping of the way gender is constructed and imagined within the bush brand. The representation of the woman in the bush geerally relies, however, on the subject maintaining feminine and hetero-normative attributes so that her sexuality is not thrown into question by the masculine role she has taken on.

David Coad, cultural historian, cites early examples of women performing masculine roles within the Australian landscape. Louisa Lawson (1848-1920), for example, in the late nineteenth century recorded the life of the *bushwoman* as a typically Australian phenomenon. They were “distinctly unfeminine, ... thin, wiry, flat-chested and sunburned, leathery, withered [and] sundried.”<sup>86</sup> The bush women were able to work just as hard as the male drovers, boundary

riders and shepherds and led “almost masculine lives.” These women, according to Lawson, “were tough, emotional, capable and active; they chop wood, know how to handle a stock-whip and break in a horse, even swear on occasion.” Their daughters according to Lawson inherit “the iron strength of character, the patience, endurance and self-repression necessary to take the place of their mothers who work till they die.”<sup>87</sup> It has been suggested, in fact, that Louisa Lawson created the leading character employed by Henry Lawson in *A Drover's Wife*, a character to be later depicted by Russell Drysdale (1912-1981) in *The Drover's Wife* (1945).

Russell Drysdale was perhaps one of the first significant Australian artists to create a new expression of gender in his depictions of women in the bush in addition to reintroducing the Aboriginal subject. The women he portrayed had been shaped by the bush environment and lacked the feminine grace attributed to the young desirable ‘ladies’ depicted within nineteenth century and early twentieth century landscape painting. Drysdale’s women lost the shapeliness of their predecessors to become overweight and lumbering, but nevertheless frocked, figures. This unflattering depiction of women in the bush created uproar amongst the Australian public because it was an image they did not want to be reflective of their culture. The representation of these bodies did not conform to the normative processes of the bush brand and sexual attraction, and were disintegrating into a form that Judith Butler might describe as “false, unreal and unintelligible.”<sup>89</sup> Such images may not even register within the brand until these roles have been reiterated, performed and represented through ritualised processes that provide the eventual effect of naturalisation of those unintelligible bodies in that space.<sup>90</sup> In the case of Drysdale’s images this is reflected in the significant position that his work now occupies in Australian landscape history.

The research of art historian Geoffrey Dutton reveals that Russell Drysdale further shattered the ideal of the feminine woman in the bush with his image *Woman in the Landscape* (1948) who had lost everything “except the strength of her sex.”<sup>91</sup> In 1949 the painting was awarded the Melrose Prize in Adelaide and bought by the National Gallery of South Australia. The public was

outraged, an outcome predicted by Professor Joseph Burke: “It will not be popular. It may shock some people because it is not a pretty picture. But Art should be criticism of life and not a sugary imitation of it.”<sup>92</sup> The first letter in response to the painting was submitted to *The Advertiser*, threatening that for the sake of the Commonwealth it would be necessary to prevent the picture from being shown in Europe or England because of the effect it would have on the immigration policy: “... any decent person would abhor the idea of his wife or mother appearing like the picture in a few years after arrival in this country.”<sup>93</sup>

Prior to Drysdale’s controversial representations of bush women, lesser-known artist Hilda Rix Nicholas had already begun to reinscribe women’s role within the bush. These were women of the landowning class, portrayed as feminine and attractive, but nevertheless, dressed in the masculine attire of jodhpurs, shirt and floppy bush hat: this was an indication of the emergence of the ‘new woman’ in the bush. *The Fair Musterer* (1935) and *In the Bush* (1927) by Hilda Rix Nicholas could be some of the first images of women wearing the unfeminine attire of loose trousers and straddling and handling horses.

The formation of the Australian Women’s Land Army (AWLA) in July 1942 had a significant impact on the stability of the gender categories during World War II. Documentation of the labour that women undertook on the land during World War II has been compiled in *Thanks Girls and Goodbye* (1987),<sup>96</sup> a film directed by Sue Hardisty and Sue Maslin and further developed in the subsequent book, edited by Sue Hardisty.<sup>97</sup> The documentation relies on the personal recollections and private diaries of some of the women who participated in the AWLA. Due to a shortage in male labour women were, through necessity, required to perform the work on farming properties normally undertaken by men. This contribution to the war effort, which also included dangerous work in the munitions factories, was an opportunity for many women to discover their capabilities in what was a male dominated workforce. When the men returned, however, there was an energetic public campaign to encourage women back into the home, to pursue their traditional roles of wives and mothers, so that the men who returned from war service could resume their

roles as workers and providers. The period from the 1950s through to the 1960s is widely regarded as being the time in post war Australia when the gender divide of home and work most clearly crystallised into two distinct categories, as women were expunged of masculinity. It was a period that celebrated the role of woman as feminine housewife and nurturer of the family.

Apart from two paintings produced by Grace Taylor (1897-1988), an artist and Field Officer in the AWLA, the work undertaken by the AWLA has not been captured in the narrative of Australian landscape painting. The works by Grace Taylor remain within the amateur tradition and are stored in the Australian War Memorial, functioning primarily as historical references. Along with images produced by Hilda Rix Nicholas, the images produced by Grace Taylor are among the few to punctuate the Australian landscape painting tradition with women wearing trousers or shorts. The masculine attire appears to have encouraged the artists to emphasize the femininity of the women. The first, *Land Army Girls on Cotton* (1945) depicts a group of women, uniformed in khakis, picking cotton in fields in Queensland. The work was physically demanding, poorly paid and the women worked long hours. The women portrayed in Taylor's image are idealized and heroic to emphasize the importance of their work, while endowing the fore grounded women with feminine attributes such as shapely, bronzed legs and blonde locks. Historian Catherine Speck, quotes the artist Grace Taylor as saying: "credit was never adequately given for the major contribution made by women under the most trying of circumstances."<sup>98</sup>

Another painting produced by Grace Taylor is *Smoko Time With the AWLA* (1945). This image depicts a team of women at rest beside the cotton field, protecting themselves from the heat of the day under a large tarpaulin. Uniformed, relaxed in various poses, conversing and lighting up cigarettes: these women were unambiguously performing what had been constructed as masculine roles of mateship. Speck comments that the women are "... every bit 'at home' in the landscape as the generations of men before them had been in the bush."<sup>99</sup>

Women are recorded to have passed as men in Australia in order to obtain work or to travel through the bush without hindrance. In her book *Australian Pioneer Women*, amateur historian Eve Pownell recalls the story of the young Englishwoman Harriette Walters who, in the 1850s, made a decision to follow her husband to the Australian goldfields.<sup>100</sup> Arriving in Australia three weeks before her husband, Harriette Walters cultivated the look of an “English lad” by cutting her hair and donning “loose trowsers, full, blue serge shirt, fastened round the waist by a leather belt, and a wide-awake [a particular style of hat]” to firstly obtain work on the docks and later to make her way safely to the goldfields.<sup>101</sup> Many decades later Eve Langley, author of *The Pea Pickers*, reveals how she, with her sister in their teens during the 1920s, passed as men in order to obtain work as they travelled around country areas looking for seasonal employment.<sup>102</sup> They worked, ate and slept in the same quarters as the male migrant workers and became known as the ‘trouser women’ because they wore wide-legged trousers, silk shirts and sweaters and took on the male names of Steve and Blue. Eve Langley assumed the name and identity Steve because she loved the story of bushranger Steve Hart. When police eventually confronted ‘Steve’ and ‘Blue’ for masquerading as boys, Steve refuted the charge by claiming, “No, we are masquerading as life. We are in search of a country.”<sup>103</sup>

Phil Pursor, Editor of *Just Racing*, has been researching a more recent example of a woman who passed as a man within the Australian landscape.<sup>104</sup> Bill (Wilhemena) Smith (1886-1974) trained horses and worked as a jockey in Far North Queensland during the 1940s and 1950s, an occupation that was forbidden to women until 1975. It seemed she had lived all her working life as a man, previously working as a seaman and miner. While there were a few in the small racing communities around Cairns and the Tablelands who suspected that Bill was a woman, her sex was not confirmed until she was admitted into Herberton Hospital at the age of eighty eight, two weeks before her death in 1974. Bill (Wilhemena) Smith never undressed or showered in front of other jockeys, preferring instead to wear her racing silks under her clothes. She rarely engaged in conversation with anyone, but when she did, was so softly spoken and shy that those in the racing industry nicknamed her ‘Girlie’ and

those in the small settlement of Innot Hot springs where she retired called her 'Granny'. Smith first confided her story to a nurse (who has chosen to remain anonymous for professional reasons) at Herberton Hospital who, in turn, produced a portrait (**figure 5**). In the portrait Smith is depicted as a smiling 'lady-like' woman against a backdrop of landscape scenery. Evidence of Smith's male persona was all but erased, perhaps as an effort by the nurse to restore Wilhemena with some 'feminine dignity.' Smith's teeth were corrected from the black stumps that they were to straight pearly whites. The portrait in fact reveals nothing of the subject apart from what she may have been if she had chosen to live the life of a feminine woman. The portrait reinvents the gender of Bill Smith, who was originally invented by Wilhemena.

With the land serving as a metaphor for the female body, and the exploration and farming of the land being constructed as a male activity, the female body on the land could suggest metaphorically, an 'unnatural' relationship between women, a fear compounded when women wear loose or baggy trousers, an attire that would immediately raise questions about their sexual orientation. This relationship threatens to undermine the natural heterosexual gender roles prescribed by the regulatory institutions as they have been constructed in relation to the land. Historically, women have been represented in painting as being contained within the domestic sphere, so there was no risk of them cavorting with the wilderness. Confined by the institution of heterosexuality some women had no other choice but to dress up to make their way into the male domain of Australia's open spaces.

The passage of women and queers through the country, even the projection onto this space as seen through the television, offers the opportunity for alternative identities to be projected onto the land and for new forms of language to evolve to describe this space. Cultural historian David Coad, in *Gender Trouble Down Under*, cites *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* as a significant contrast to historical interpretations of masculine expeditions into the outback. In this movie a queer party of friends venture into the wilderness, leaving behind a trail of ravaged discourses and bewildered



bush men and women. While the film is pure fiction, it now occupies a space in the landscape of Australia's cultural life, even being celebrated in the Closing Ceremony of the 2000 World Olympic Games in Sydney. Since 2006 it has been celebrated further in the popular stage show *Priscilla* at the Lyric Theatre in Sydney. Here a public discourse on queer and the Australian landscape was entered into rather than being contained to the private lives of queers already living in and travelling through the bush. Urban decadence in the form of fluorescent feathers, wigs, high heels, pouting lips and mascara contrast against what had been framed as a space for heroes and battlers.

The most recent opportunity to showcase Australia's collective identity was at the 2000 World Olympic Games in Sydney. The opening and closing ceremonies of the 2000 Games revealed the various configurations of the male gender category as it had been constructed and modified through Australian fiction and popular culture. This contribution to the idea of Australian identity in early and contemporary Australia continued to carry all the hallmarks of male desire and identity, in spite of the best efforts toward an inclusive representation of identity. The opening ceremony focussed on nation building and was dominated by scenarios drawn from the *hypermasculine* bush paradigm. These scenarios included adaptations of *The Man From Snowy River* and Sidney Nolan's *Ned Kelly* series, the building of a homestead from corrugated iron sheeting, wood chopping and whip cracking. The Australian dance troupes *Tap Dogs*, *Hot Shoe Shuffle* and *Steel City* combined to dramatically tap out the sounds of a nation under construction in their masculine, metal-capped work boots. Perhaps to add balance or to emphasize the white and masculine heroics of nation building, the contrasting scenarios of three hundred and fifty indigenous women performing a smoking (cleansing) ceremony, Nicki Webster floating in her pink bathing costume as a 'girl hero' and the 'colour interaction' (feminine) of a multi-cultural society were also performed. Once the Games of the XXVII Olympiad had officially opened, Vanessa Amorosi paid tribute to Australia's nation builders and participating Olympian athletes with *Heroes Live Forever*. In contrast, the Closing Ceremony focussed predominately on 'urban inventions' of Australian culture. It was loud and brash, and incorporated a "Parade of Icons", including

references to *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* and Sydney's drag queen culture, a contribution, a Powerhouse Museum Collection Search claims, that reveals the influence of the late Peter Tully as Artistic Director of *The Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras*.<sup>109</sup> The parade employed self-mockery, a form of humour supposedly unique to Australians, to present an equally unique cast of personalities, celebrities and attitudes as a contemporary and creative antidote to the heroic and masculine pioneers and bushmen presented in the opening ceremony. The serious business of representation was over: it was party time. As David Coad suggests it may be Australia's past that establishes the right conditions for such a paradox to exist today, however the foregrounding and rewards for the performance of Australian masculinities belie other credible alternatives except within inner city enclaves.

## **2.5 Gender Estrangement**

Philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard states that "estrangement would appear to be a precondition for landscape"<sup>112</sup>, simply on the basis of the different materialities of the body and the land. Beyond the existence of this, albeit debatable, universal precondition, estrangement is further experienced by degrees. The experience of estrangement is dependent on the power relationships that come into play upon the land and in its representation, a view reinforced by Gillian Rose: "... estrangement may be an innate quality of landscape, an effect of its bringing together of inside and outside, or representation and material matter. But it is also very often an effect of power."<sup>113</sup> The sense of belonging is mitigated by how one's identity is reflected by that space or in representations of that space.

Lyotard also suggests that, "Estrangement procures an inner feeling of being outside."<sup>114</sup> One method of avoiding this feeling is through the cultural process of myth making. Myth making is an attempt by a person or group to avoid the feeling of estrangement. Estrangement can occur as a result of the difference in the perception of land and its representation. Men have participated in the formation and perpetuation of the myths contained within the bush brand, as a way of rationalising their belonging, to eliminate this feeling of being outside.

The culture that benefits from the perpetuation of these myths does not question them.

Estrangement emerges as a result of hegemonic practices that attribute particular performative expectations upon bodies and genders. The construction of the bush brand, places the theme of white male identity at its centre and the female figure as a subordinate to it. Women are estranged from the heroic themes of the bush brand because they are excluded from participating in the masculine tasks prescribed within representations of the landscape. The traditional tools that women are associated with, brooms and scrubbing brushes, are made specifically for interior surfaces and spaces.

### 3 Life and Limb: Realities and Mythologies

The aim of my research is to disrupt the bush brand as it has been represented in the Australian figurative landscape tradition. To achieve this I combine signs and symbols derived from the bush brand with those from its *other*, the domestic and urban spheres, into paintings that remain identifiable as ‘landscapes’. As a subtext to this integration of vocabularies I incorporate a system of signs and symbols that refer to the process of mythologising that takes place within the genre of Australian landscape painting. The role of these signs and symbols is to question the authenticity or the truth of the scenarios portrayed in my paintings. These signs and symbols include the stump and the dismembered limb, the inclusion or absence of the shadow, the artificial horizon, the cut-out and the employment of artificial materials. In this chapter I will explain the commentary that these devices provide in my work.

#### 3.1 The Stump and the Dismembered Limb

The gum tree stump and limb are the two most recurring motifs in my paintings. They are appealing motifs because they resemble parts of the human body and can therefore be employed to resonate with psychological, social and cultural meanings. In addition, the gum tree or eucalypt as it is otherwise known, while now growing in many parts of the world, continues to signify its origin, the Australian landscape, as well as the values associated with the bush brand. The Heidelberg School is celebrated for representing the first European artists to become attuned to the unique characteristics of the bush, an important artistic development that helped to define Australia from the rest of the world. Artist Hans Heyson, who was acquainted with the Heidelberg artists but based

near Adelaide from 1903, thrust the gum tree further into icon status. He observed the difference between gum trees and the trees of Europe stating that:

“In Europe the great masses of foliage first attract the eye, here the limbs and trunk, which on account of their proportion and colour, make themselves felt, and one thinks of the foliage as a secondary matter.”<sup>116</sup>

While the gum tree grows in both urban and bush environments, it is the image of the gum tree in the bush that forms one of Australia’s most enduring icons. This is hardly surprising. The gum tree is ubiquitous in its natural environments, it is found in over six hundred varieties from statuesque to stunted and gnarled. Some have delicate barks that peel off like banana skins while others have rough dark bark that breaks off in slabs. The trunks and branches can twist and contort, can be muscular and robust or tall and slender. Many possess porcelain white skin that blushes in springtime, while others appear clad in loose skin which folds and wrinkles under armpits and around swollen openings.

Ian Burn suggests that the process of attributing trees with human characteristics is a way of de-naturing nature,<sup>117</sup> a process evident, for example, in the work of artist Hans Heyson. Heyson’s painted gum trees display a range of anthropomorphic possibilities and are often described in terms usually reserved for people such as “majestic, dignified, lordly, regal, heroic.”<sup>118</sup> These qualities, Ian Burn suggested, were reflective of Australia’s robust and heroic pioneers. The process of de-naturing is a physical and psychical process of transforming what was once considered exotic and strange into a reflection of the self or one’s culture: it is about seizing control of something that is unfamiliar, feared or even despised to reduce sensations of alienation or estrangement.

In my work, I participate in this process of de-naturing and employ the stumps and limbs of the gum tree, not to reduce sensations of alienation or estrangement, but to enhance them. I express my own alienation from the bush brand. The stumps and limbs are painted pink to heighten the association to the body, which, in their fleshy forms, stand eerily within the landscape. These

stumps and limbs also embody a sense of perversity and repressed sexual desire. The landscape becomes the object of repressed sexual desire as artists and journeymen frame the hills, valleys and trees in sexual metaphors (see also section 5.6 Pink and the Erotics of the Australian Landscape).

The representation of gum tree stumps was one way of representing the settler's triumph over nature. The gum tree was despised in many ways for being untidy, for not providing sufficient shade and for being an awkward structure for the wood-sawing mills. Clearing forests of trees in favour of pastoral land, townships and goldfields, clearly placed the settler in command of the environment. On the edge of the deforested spaces lies the 'wilderness', a dark and forbidding labyrinth concealing the unknown, threatening to reclaim its territory or to consume those who venture within it. It was a place into which convicts escaped only to die, where men set out on journeys of discovery never to return and later where children strayed and became lost.

From the perspective of Freudian theory, the representation of tree stumps could also indicate the presence of castration anxiety in the face of the ever-present 'wilderness' that has historically been framed in metaphors of the feminine. The stump may represent the 'castrative cut' while simultaneously transforming into phallic stumps to defend against the threat. Theorist Hal Foster in his essay, *Violation and Veiling in Surrealist Photography: Woman as Fetish, as Shattered Object, as Phallus*<sup>119</sup>, cites Sigmund Freud who argued that the fetish is the result of the traumatic sighting of castration by a boy/man when he sees his naked mother for the first time. In this process the boy/man seeks out a penile object to compensate for the lack of penis in the female body as if to say: "it is not really gone as long as I have *this*."<sup>120</sup> In many Australian paintings of the bush multiple penile objects can be discovered.

The dead but more complete gum tree contains symbolic associations to time passing or even the end. Shane Frost, who, with his community, founded the Awabakal Descendents Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, suggests the dead gum tree hanging over a "kaleidoscope of ceremonies" that Joseph

Lycett painted in *Corroboree at Newcastle* (1818), possibly symbolises the demise of a tooth evulsion ceremony.<sup>121</sup> The dead gum tree commentates on the erosion of traditional ceremonies that were considered unacceptable under European laws and moral codes, thus becoming a symbol of ‘the end’. Dead gum trees and stumps often accompany subject matter regarded as sad and solemn, solitary or defeated. In my work the dead tree symbolises the diffusing of the grand master narratives that have dominated the bush brand with other, more marginal narratives. This is not a solemn occasion, however, it becomes a positive symbol of transformation.

The summary on the front inside cover of *The Body in Pieces: The Fragment as a Metaphor for Modernity* by art historian Linda Nochlin, describes the fragment as an “expressed nostalgia and grief for the loss of a vanished and unreclaimed totality, a utopian wholeness.”<sup>122</sup> Both the stump and the limb exist as the remains of a whole. The loss that the fragment presents can refer to a number of things. It can refer to the grand master narrative that focuses on one cultural account of events to the exclusion of others. To create a whole from a fragment requires an imaginative process of constructing what is absent. Sometimes this process is aided by unpublished personal journals and letters, but marginalised cultures often leave little trace of their histories on the ‘official record’ and if they do, it is not valued by the dominant culture as cultural artefact and relegated deep within the archives. The fragment can also relate to the disruption of the cohesive whole that forms the grand master narrative of the bush brand. The bush brand forms an idealised, cohesive whole that stands to be disrupted by cultural change in Australia. This disruption experienced a setback during the Howard era when, among other strategies, the government reacted to diffuse what they perceived as the development of a ‘black armband history’ of Australia and restore the grand master narratives to The National Museum of Australia and the Australian classroom. The museum was to become the engine room of national pride and identity, and dictate to the Australian population and overseas visitors what aspects of Australia’s ‘unique’ heritage are worth remembering and celebrating. The rest is, well, history.

This effort of restoration was part of a grieving process on the part of the dominant culture.

The presence of a limb indicates there is a greater and possibly living part from which it has been lost. When a person loses a limb it is said that they continue to experience psychical sensations as though the limb continues to exist as part of their body, a sensation commonly known as the phantom limb. Elizabeth Grosz, cultural theorist, suggests that the phantom limb can be regarded as “a kind of libidinal memorial to the lost limb, a nostalgic tribute strongly cathected in an attempt to undermine the perceptual awareness of its absence.”<sup>123</sup> Grosz also states that the existence of this phenomenon “testifies to the pliability and fluidity of what is usually considered the inert, fixed, passive biological body.”<sup>124</sup> The dismembered or lost limb suggests the existence of the phantom limb, which in turn operates as a sign of something that no longer exists or is absent but is missed: it is a sign of the denial of loss constituted by change or missing marginalised histories.

The individual experience of the denial of loss, expressed by the sensation of the phantom limb, can be translated to a cultural context in which change has occurred. Change is a continual process, a product of a pliable culture, and can result in shifts of power and experiences of loss. Change can, for example, take the form of the removal or addition of bodies, social structures, laws, representations and memories to create in the broadest possibility, cultural experiences of loss. The bush brand functions as a cultural phantom limb. Its proponents continue to describe and celebrate the bush according to the nineteenth century paradigm: it continues to survive by way of the nostalgic tribute through citations, reiterations and re-enactments even in a society that has substantially evolved from that paradigm. The mythologised bush continues to be represented and re-enacted throughout Australia’s cultural and media institutions as though it is not only real but the real Australia.



### 3.2 The Shadow

The shadow has been employed to various ends, both formally and symbolically, throughout the history of Western art: in painting, sculpture, photography, new media, performance and installation, with its meaning additionally being extended and exploited in filmmaking. In 1995, E. H. Gombrich curated *Shadows: The Depiction of Cast Shadows in Western Art* at The National Gallery in London.<sup>137</sup> The exhibition and the accompanying publication trace the representation of shadows from Roman times to European modernism. While identifying some general trends, Gombrich avoided any systematic arrangement of the shadow's function, instead offering a survey of the variety of functions of shadow and its treatment in painting. A short time later in 1997 and seemingly unaware of Gombrich's earlier contribution, Victor I. Stoichita published *A Short History of the Shadow*.<sup>138</sup> Stoichita's research focuses on the integral role of the shadow in Western Art and theory and examines to greater depth the interpretative permutations of the shadow that have emerged since the writings of the Greek philosophers Plato and Pliny.

The shadow is significant in the images I create both in its presence and absence, because in my paintings it functions as a referent to the slippery position the bush holds between reality and representation. In science, the shadow confirms the solidity, and therefore the actuality, of an object by blocking the path of light rays to another surface. Yet in art, in representations of the actual, shadows can be manipulated to convey meanings and associations to a divergent range of themes from the religious to horror. The shadow, in its presence or absence, can hold contradictory meanings as to the reality of that object depending on the historical or cultural lineage of meaning from which it is derived. The presence or absence of the shadow refers to the tenuous relationships held within the collective memory between reality and artificiality, belief and disbelief, truth and fiction. The shadow, or its absence, thus provides a further subtext to the images I create in response to the construction of the bush brand.

I explore a range of options in the way the shadow can be depicted, to test how it can provide a commentary within my paintings. It can be cast, for example, from an object located within the pictorial space or from one imagined beyond the picture-frame; it can take on a form unrelated to the object from which it is cast: its scale can be exaggerated or diminished; the intensity of its tone can be altered; it can exist in part; it can take on a life of its own and behave independently of its referent object; it can be completely absent even in the presence of intense light. Shadows may be cast in various directions within the same image as if to indicate the passing of time, as an effect of theatre lights or to mimic the effect of collage or digital cut and paste. In addition, the shadow can simply contribute to a disquieting mood within an image, as applied, for example, by the Surrealists, perhaps because of its historical associations with the soul and death. This latter application has been a useful device in the formulation of my series of paintings, *Dismemberments*, for example in *Dismemberments: Some Stumps To Remember Our Great Artists By*, (2004), (**figure 6**) where my aim was to create a sense of estrangement from the bush brand. The presence and absence of the shadow in my paintings not only questions the reality of the images I create but also the bush brand as a representational paradigm.

Apart from the development of the shadow as a device to create perspective during the Renaissance period, the shadow in the history of Western Art embodies numerous symbolic meanings, many of which have origins in Egyptian beliefs and Greek legends. Stoichita cites two significant legends from which the meaning attributed to the shadow throughout Western art and knowledge has emerged and permutated: Pliny's story of the Maiden of Corinth and Plato's Cave. Multiple readings of the shadow emerge from these two legends, which I engage with when constructing my own paintings.

In Pliny's tale, the Maiden of Corinth traced her lover's shadow on the (significantly vertical) wall before he departed, presumably to war, as a means of preserving him in her memory, and as such created what Pliny regarded as 'the first painting'. Not only is it 'a copy of a copy', it was also a copy of the

*other*, that is, the *other* to the maiden's gender and the *other* of the body itself. On the death of her lover, Stoichita hypothesizes; the Maiden's father constructed a clay relief, a double embodying a soul, which became a cult object placed within the local temple.<sup>141</sup> This legend can be translated into the way legends and myths are reconstructed within Australian landscape painting. The shadow represents the *other* to the actual. The shadow and the subsequent clay relief take on erotic connotations by replicating the lover (actual) while the clay relief as a cult object, begins to take on greater significance than the actual. This again refers to the way the bush brand, with all its heroic attributes, functions in Australian culture and the way it is preserved as national treasure in the country's institutions and paintings. The notion of the vertical also relates to the way paintings are hung in Australian institutions and homes to keep the mythology alive and present. The verticality of the shadow is significant because it is associated with life, that is, it keeps the memory of the lover alive. The horizontal shadow, then, could well symbolise the demise of the bush brand as such a significant force in shaping Australia's collective identity.

In contradiction to the actual function of the shadow, the captured shadow in images does not represent the real or the ever-changing shadow that accompanies who or whatever it belongs to: it remains as a memento opposed to the movement of the journey and therefore, Stoichita argues, has a propitiatory value by making time stand still while its verticality wards off death.<sup>142</sup> Stoichita observes the pervasive themes of the absence of the body (actual) and the presence of its projection (representation) throughout the history of Western painting. The shadow takes on a mnemonic role, of making the absent become present.<sup>143</sup>

The legend of Plato's cave relates to the acquirement of knowledge. Inside Plato's cave were prisoners who, chained there since childhood, had only become acquainted with the world through shadows cast onto the rear wall. These shadows were cast by a procession of wooden men and animals, thereby creating the first step in a series of falsehoods, as they passed by the opening of

the cave. When the prisoners finally escaped from the cave they could not see because of the blinding light of the sun (truth) and soon retreated back into the cave (ignorance). This myth questions the process by which knowledge is often acquired.

The majority of urban dwellers develop their knowledge of the bush through citations and reiterations of the bush brand in, for example, television, movies and newspapers, paintings and through their own, usually brief encounters while on holidays or during short-term recreational activities such as bush walking and Sunday drives. On the whole, the urban dweller gains an understanding of the bush through a series of secondary sources and media reiterations. In the urban environment, impressions of the bush are cast from the grand master narrative.

In the horror genre the absence of shadow in relation to a figure indicates a supernatural presence: ghosts and the 'undead' do not cast shadows. The appeal of this interpretation is that the lack of shadow indicates that what is seen does not exist, a comment on the role that mythology plays in the construction of Australian national identity. This tactic, of not incorporating the shadow at all, is employed widely throughout my paintings.

It is interesting, as an example, to observe the apparent ambivalence with which artist Sidney Nolan treats the shadow. Despite Australia's harsh sunlight his depiction of shadow is remarkably absent or half-hearted. This could simply be a consequence of modernist concerns where flatness becomes a dominant form of representation, no longer requiring the device of shadow to create the illusion of deep space. Yet it is also possible that the shadow plays a role as a sub-text within Nolan's representations of Australian myths and legends. Accuracy was not one of Nolan's key concerns.

### **3.3 Artificial Horizons**

Cultural historian Martin Thomas, author of *The Artificial Horizon: Imagining the Blue Mountains*, first brought the artificial horizon and its symbolism to my

attention.<sup>144</sup> The artificial horizon is a surveyor's instrument, which is utilised to submit the natural inconsistencies of the horizon into a straight horizontal line for navigational purposes. Constructed from a box and containing highly reflective mercury, it is placed on the ground so that an object, such as a star, can be captured in the reflection of the mercury. The actual object and its reflection are brought together in the sights of a sextant to create a double altitude. The space between this double altitude is halved to create the midpoint at which the horizontal line is imaginarily drawn, somewhere above or below the actual horizon line. As Martin Thomas states: "... The interfering topography is burnished into smoothness."<sup>145</sup> Through this process the "acknowledged falsehood"<sup>146</sup> of the straight line is created and "the outward gaze, whereby vision terminates at the horizon, is substituted for a reflection in a toxic surface."<sup>147</sup>

The reduction or burnishing of a natural topographical horizon into a straight horizontal line provides a metaphor for the homogenisation that occurs in the construction and mythologising of the bush brand. As a vehicle for Australian nationalism the bush brand is reflective of the attributes and achievements of the dominant culture and obscures the role that other cultures could play in the refurbishment of the brand. Disruption of the cohesive nature of the bush brand necessitates a disruption to its topography. The straight horizontal line refers to the artificiality of representation, the construction of the landscape, its ideologies and its arbitrariness.

Further metaphors can be derived from the artificial horizon as Thomas illustrates in his book. The process of reflection also provides useful metaphors in relation to Australian landscape painting. Ian Burn, for instance, argued that Australian landscape painting functions as a mirror for the nation's psyche.<sup>148</sup> The toxicity of the mercury into which the image is cast adds an ominous tone to the falsehood of representation.

Thomas considers the friction that is created by the relationship of memory being triggered by the view to the horizon, in a culture where memory is more often associated with reflection. He suggests that there is a connection between

“the blue horizon and things remembered.”<sup>149</sup> He also asks us to consider the way memory is associated with reflection in our culture, citing the polished surfaces and ponds at various war memorials as examples. This friction, he argues, is created between the outward gaze toward the horizon and the essentially inward process of seeing the world in a watery surface. A similar friction operates in Australian landscape painting where in effect the viewer sees the illusion of the horizon, but from a standpoint that in fact directs the gaze toward a flat pictorial surface and beyond that, an interior wall of a house, an office or gallery wall. I ask the question: whose house? Whose office and which gallery wall?

Phenomenologist, Maurice Merleau-Ponty describes the mirror as “the instrument of universal magic, which transforms things into spectacles, spectacles into things, which transforms me into another, and another into me.”<sup>150</sup> The landscape painting is a spectacle or performance where representations of life are fabricated, where we seek a reflection of ourselves only to find ourselves transformed into another, and others transformed into us. The horizontal line becomes the front and back of the stage to frame the performance in the artificial space of the midpoint. The topographies of real life are burnished into the Euclidean box of the landscape painting. It becomes an artificially constructed site in which an artificial scenario is performed, where identities are constructed, emotions are played out and ideologies are delivered to an audience by way of a cultural script. When I look at Tom Robert’s *Shearing The Rams* (1888-90), an image on canvas posited in the archives of Australian identity, I feel a sense of estrangement when the shearers are me and I am them.

Another metaphorical possibility of the artificial horizon is the way an arbitrary selection of an object, such as a star, is made to locate the midpoint somewhere below or above the real horizon line. Modernists, such as Piet Mondrian, employed the horizon line for what curator Tony Bond called its “pragmatic horizontality”<sup>152</sup>, a conceptual device to indicate the limit of the material world and the departure into the imaginary. The arbitrary positioning of the horizon line refers to this shifting between representation and the real. Thomas

observes that the artificial horizon in fact reveals “a major truth about the land itself.”<sup>154</sup> That truth he suggests “is a correspondence between the work of the instrument and the play of the mind’s eye. It reminds us that the meeting of vista and visitor always involves artifice. It is bathed in cultural expectation.”<sup>155</sup>

### 3.4 Cut-Outs

The cut-out has been employed widely in the fine and folk arts around the world to a range of outcomes. In Australia, many contemporary artists including Guan Wei, Sally Smart, Narelle Jubelin and Megan Keating have employed it. In contemporary Western art the cut-out has its origins as an advertising device appropriated by the Pop movement but can also be associated with the twentieth century cut and paste practices of, for example, collage and montage. The cut-out is quite literally a section of detail that has been cut out (with cutting tool or digitally) from a two dimensional plane. It is removed from its original context and can sit in a new context within a three dimensional space or on a flat surface. The cut-out implies that something has been extracted from its original context and re-located to a site where it does not belong, that it is somehow incongruous within its new surroundings. The cut-out, unlike the silhouette contains information that is usually displaced within its new context; it bears an uneasy relationship to the information surrounding it. The cut-out can maintain its illusional three-dimensional surface. The cut-out is a shape that can be emptied of its detail to become a silhouette and redressed with new attire, as in my work *On A Plate* (2008) (**figure 7**). Through the process of redressing the cut-out is the suggestion that its attire is not fixed, that its detail is always open to negotiation.

The cut-out, as an imitation, can stand in for the real, as evidenced in the United States where life-size cut-outs of members of the Maine National Guard serving in Afghanistan and Iraq are given to spouses and families to ease their longing.<sup>156</sup> The relationship between longing and the cut-out can also reference what Dawn Casey, as outgoing Director of the National Museum of Australia in 2003, described as: “the longing for the grand master narrative”<sup>157</sup> by some pockets of white culture who felt their story was lost in the 1970s and 1980s,

when historians began to unveil a more inclusive history of Australia. The grand master narrative is itself a cut-out: it distils gender into two polemic categories and is removed from the context of an inclusive history that acknowledges the conflicts between the white and Indigenous people and the contributions made by other cultures, such as the Chinese, Afghanis, Greeks and Italians. Again, by emptying the cut-out of its detail, it stands ready for new attire.

The landscape painting operates as a genus of cut-out. An impression or documentation is taken of a site; an image is constructed out of context within the artificial space of the studio and then, if it survives the processes of approval, it is hung in the sanitised white cube, cut out of life.

### **3.5 Flat Space**

In the early 1940s Sidney Nolan represented land as flat vertical space, a modernist idea imported from Europe.<sup>158</sup> This was a significant shift from the traditional illusional techniques of describing the deep space of the Australian landscape. The masculine world of Australian landscape painting had been placed on the terrifying edge between the flatness of decoration and the highly rationalised forms of modernist abstraction. Fred Williams is another significant Australian artist to employ flat vertical space. Sydney Long had of course preceded the construction of flat space in landscape painting in the late nineteenth century, but had created his work in the context of Art Nouveau, which as a result led it to being regarded as decorative. This relationship between flatness, decoration, the domestic and the landscape is all relevant to my research.

Flatness combined with a horizon line can confuse the illusion of space. Flatness also expresses compression and suffocation. How can it be possible for the wide expanses of the Australian bush, to be expressed in this antithetical way? What can it suggest? The bigger, wider and less populated the space, the more minute, isolated and internalised the subject becomes.



The flatness of abstraction and its relationship to decoration led many abstractionists to fiercely defend the intellectualism of their images from any insinuations that their work was decorative. In the 1970s however the American Pattern and Decoration Movement emerged and unashamedly developed the connections between the two, working to raise the status of the decorative.

Lucy Frost states that in the journals of the early explorers in which the narrative of Australia was established, landscape was written within a paradigm where there was an element of surprise “in the presence of the unknown, the unmapped.” In Russell Drysdale’s paintings however, the element of surprise has vanished: “In the flat landscape there is no place to be discovered.”<sup>159</sup>

### **3.6 Artificial and Theatrical Space**

Oil paint on canvas began as the traditional medium and format of western landscape painting and is rooted in natural materials. To acknowledge the artifice of the bush brand, my images have been produced in synthetic polymer paint and nylon canvas. The colour pink has also, among other reasons, been employed because it is often regarded as an artificial and deceptive colour. Pink has its own name even though it exists only as a derivative of another, red. It is also associated with make-up and rouge which conceal the blemishes of the face therefore presenting a false appearance. The mixed media works I created as part of this research employ fake wood grain floor vinyl to extend this idea into a material base. Similarly in the collage series I incorporate artificial copies of stone and brickwork, for example, which deceptively, stand in for the real.

To further emphasise the artifice of the bush brand I construct the space on the canvas to suggest a theatrical stage, the ‘white cube’ of performance, isolated from real life. There has been a long association between painting and the theatre and many discourses revolve around this relationship, which is beyond the scope of this research project. It suffices to say, however, that the theatre provides an artificial assemblage of sets, characters and costumes to create a world of fiction that nevertheless holds the potential to tap into real life

emotions and desires.

## 4 Out There From In Here: Domesticating the Australian Landscape

*Domesticate* means “to change from *wild* to a tame and cultivated state”<sup>160</sup> It also means “to make fond of home and family life.”<sup>161</sup> The domestication of space holds implications as to how the gendered and sexed body is located or imagined within or in relation to a space. Within traditional models of gender where divisions of labour occur, men domesticate and make tame external space, wild frontiers, while women inhabit domesticated, and particularly interior, space in order to maintain domestic harmony. In traditional models of polemic gender roles, which have been significantly disrupted in the Western world since the late 1960s, men lord over domestic space while women are contained within it.

Both the domesticated space of the home and ‘wild’ open spaces and features of the bush landscape are described in feminine metaphors because they have been described within historical narratives predominately from a male perspective. The feminine attributes employed to describe these spaces are ones that respectively rely upon notions of nurturing and the erotic or useless so that man can stand in contrast to them. According to the logic of the polemic gender construction (white cultivated) women cannot occupy space within the bush until it has been domesticated, that is, man must have gone before her. The landscape paintings that illustrate the bush brand, such those produced by the Heidelberg School, rely on the construction of spaces that separate the domestic from the ‘untamed’ bush in order to generate unique myths about male heroism in the Australian bush.

On the basis of *terra nullius*, which accommodated the misconceived term ‘wilderness’ in relation to Australia’s terrain, land was seized from the Indigenous populations by white colonists and ‘domesticated’ through the development and management of public infrastructure and private property: building roads, communication and energy networks: land clearing, fencing, ploughing, crop planting, irrigation and running domestic stock. The European possessed and mapped the land; it became increasingly cultivated, accessible and known to the new settlers. The land was also cultivated through its interpretation and transformation into landscape paintings: it became denatured and European. Interpretations of the land were translated onto portable supports and de-contextualized into gallery and domestic spaces: wild Australia was tamed and corralled as a symbol of cultural possession on the wall.

This chapter explores ways that urban and interior domestic spaces, spaces that have historically been constructed as being separate from or contained from the external bush landscape, intersect and merge with it. The merging of these spaces provides a metaphor for the blurring of gender categories that I aim to achieve within my paintings. This is in contrast to late nineteenth century paintings of the bush where artists such as those belonging to Heidelberg School went to great lengths to represent the bush as a space separate from the urban and the domestic in order to idealise it as a uniquely Australian space and to emphasize the masculine role of both themselves and their male subjects within the Australian landscape. Artists in the Heidelberg School succeeded in making the bush in their paintings appear distinct from city life, whereas in reality *Eaglemont*, the place in which they painted, was perched on the edge of Melbourne in what Leigh Astbury describes as “suburban bush.”<sup>162</sup> The intersection of the domestic and the urban with the bush occurs through the exchange of language and objects as well as through the processes of imagining and seeing.

The Bush mythology of Australia emerged from the imagination of an urban intelligentsia that comprised influential writers and artists such as Henry Lawson and the Heidelberg artists indicating that from the outset, representations of the bush contained an urban imprint governed by romantic

and ideal perceptions. In 2004, Helen Molesworth, then Curator of the Wexford Centre in Ohio, United States, curated *Landscape Confection*<sup>163</sup>, an exhibition that cited the work of artists who sought to establish a quite deliberate and materially experimental dialogue between the decorative and the landscape. The decorative has historically been located within the feminine realm of the domestic, and until the 1970s American Pattern and Decoration Movement, did not venture into spaces such as the landscape in any meaningful way. These strategies construct quite deliberate fusions between gendered spaces that have historically been separated. In the sections below I examine how the intersection between these historically separate spaces have occurred within the Australian landscape.

#### **4.1 Women Domesticating the Landscape**

In *Australian Pioneer Women*, published in 1959, amateur historian Eve Pownall stated that it was in fact white women who were the great ‘civilising’ force within the Australian landscape. Pownall’s statement is an attempt to disrupt accepted notions of male heroism in domesticating the Australian bush and recognize the contribution made by Australia’s women settlers. In doing so, however, she highlighted the subordinate nurturing and sexual role that women played in relation to their male counterparts. Once the men made the initial incursions into Australia’s interior, sometimes by only weeks or months, it was safe for the womenfolk to follow:

“Where there were white women, the aboriginal woman was better treated. Where there were wives, comfort and ameliorating factors came faster. What the pioneer women brought with them, though they might never consciously recognize it, was the law by which we live. When they made the first candle, swept the first floor, set the wildflowers in a tin pannikin on a bark table cut from a sapling, lined huts with illustrated News, they were not merely establishing Victorian housewifery: they were lighting the first beams of civilization in the wilderness.”<sup>164</sup>

The ‘civilising effect’ that Pownell perceived was the curtailment or redirection of male desire from the Aboriginal women (and perhaps the livestock as David Coad suggests) back to the most ‘appropriate’ object of desire, the settler woman. In Pownall’s opinion, white women brought a moral standard back

into the lives of pioneer men and clarified identity categories once again by being not only sexually desirable but also being nurturing toward their men and families. The historical entry of settler women onto the land is often framed and reiterated in this way, as playing an alternative domesticating role on wild frontiers to that of men. Eve Pownall suggests the Dutch oven should have its place on the coat of arms “for it, more than the kangaroo and the emu, supported the pioneers.”<sup>165</sup> Even in the depiction of bushranging legends the women took on the feminine domestic tasks. In *Quilting The Armour* (unsigned and undated), for example, Sidney Nolan portrayed Mrs Scillion (Margaret Kelly) within the Australian landscape quilting the interior of Ned Kelly’s head-piece of the armour.

The liberation of women and the car have dramatically altered the way women interact with the Australian landscape. The land became increasingly accessible and women are no longer reliant on a male party to escort them through the bush. This alters the way the landscape is perceived within the urban imagination.

#### **4.2 Imagining the Bush from the Domestic Interior**

The idea to address the bush brand in my PhD research first emerged from within the domestic space when I was living in the Blue Mountains. The bush landscape, while constructed as sitting in contrast to the domestic space in bush mythology, enjoys a level of interaction with the domestic through the exchange and flow of objects, people, activities, ideas and imaginings of one space from another. Yet in representations of the bush, particularly those of the Heidelberg School, the domestic was encased within the bush as a separate feminine domain, a space internalized within the home, or at the very most, stretching to the edge of the home paddock. The domestic space and the women who occupied it were separated from the exterior world. The domestic, however, is constructed from an assemblage of movable parts that can be relocated or imagined into incongruous settings such as the bush landscape. My research determines whether specific signs of the domestic are recognizable once they have been transferred into bush landscapes, and whether they have

the power to disrupt the internal logic of the bush brand and the way gender categories are represented within the bush brand.

It is possible that most of us can recall an experience of entering an Australian home and observing an Australian landscape painting (or print) hanging on a wall. Within the enclosed domestic space there is, framed and safely distant, a vision of the bush: a world 'out there.' The bush is often imagined from within the domestic interior and these imaginings are mediated by the domestic interior. The cue may be the observation of the landscape on the wall; it may be a television program; it may be an article in the newspaper. The imagining may occur while lounging in the sofa, while preparing lunch in the kitchen or when showering in the bathroom. Australians dream of *going bush*, to escape the confines of their domestic routines either by going on weekend holidays to bush retreats or going on a driving holiday around Australia.

There are many ways in which domestic consumer products mimic qualities of the outdoors so that they can be enjoyed in comfort within the home. The production of outdoor scents by *Pine-O-Cleen*, for example, are designed to camouflage stale and undesirable domestic odours. Mountain breezes, the fresh air of pine and Australia's unique eucalypt forests are all contained within aerosol cans and released into the domestic atmosphere with the press of a button. The labelling on these products always offers more than the scents can achieve, but this is the function of marketing: to encourage the consumer to dream.

#### **4.3 Suburbia on the Move**

In 2005 the television program *Sixty Minutes*<sup>166</sup> aired a story about an intriguing cultural phenomenon of the twentieth century Australian tourism history: the emergence of the grey nomads, baby boomers who, on reaching the early retirement age of 55, are choosing to travel around Australia in caravans and camper vans. It is estimated that 300,000 vehicles designed for the purposes of such travel were registered in Australia at the time of the program. Collectively this forms a city of people not that much smaller than Canberra. Travel is a high priority in the *Great Australian Dream* and a trip around

Australia rates highly amongst retirees or those on long service leave. Once the preserve of the pioneer, stockman or adventurer, Mums and Dads are joining convoys of *Bush Campers*, *Swagmen*, *Winnebagos*, *Jabirus* and *Jackeroos* on Australia's roads to create what has been popularly coined as 'suburbia on wheels.' While the bush is a part of the urban imagination it has also become an extension of urban space. These travelling vans provide homes away from home, equipped with the latest navigation technology and domestic fittings; they ensure easy, comfortable living in the bush. While this mobile suburbia remains largely confined to sealed roads and designated camping grounds, the experience offers an interaction with what is often regarded as the *real* Australia. Kitchen refuse is picked over in the night by possums and dingoes, the laundry swings in the wind to the backdrop of gum trees and desert vistas and in the evenings, the folding chairs are brought out for sessions of drinking and star gazing to the sound of crackling fires. This is the life. And all the while the husband and wife teams carry on performing their customary roles.

'Been there, done that' is a highly rated credential in Australia which also encompasses a 'seen that' which involves, at least from the bush camper and the camping ground, something just a little bit more substantial than a mediated view of outback Australia provided by art or television. The windscreen mediates the visitor's view of the land. A large proportion of time on the road trip involves *looking*. Looking suggests a process of searching, of observing the relationship between things and between things and oneself. Seeing suggests a process of registration or insight. The windscreen creates a protective barrier between the looker and what is looked at. It impacts on the how the looker sees. There are significant differences between who chooses what is seen and from where it is looked at. Nothing is located within the looker's reach. Seeing can involve a process of objectification and assumptions. What is seen is understood through a framework of what is known. "To look" according to John Berger "is an act of choice."<sup>167</sup> What does the tourist look for? Is *looking* the experience? Is it the situating? Is it the being in and touching? Does the tourist look to see or does the tourist look to find? A tourist looks to find what the tourist can take, whether it is a memory, an image or a memento. An artist's way of looking and seeing is



constituted in the way they construct art works. How do urban people *see* if they have not learnt to see the way an artist learns to see? How does the tourist's looking and seeing manifest?

However real or superficial these experiences may be regarded, there is no doubt that the increase in numbers of travellers to Australia's remote regions is impacting on the way we experience and imagine these spaces. The land has become a tourist site, but a site filling up with mobile homes. It is becoming familiar within the home: the home is colonising it. While the Australian outback has always played a major role in forming Australia's identity, today it has been drawn even further into the fold of our visual culture through art, media, advertising and cinema. This formation of Australian identity also coexists and intermingles with the reality of the predominant urban lifestyle and the desire also for a sophisticated cosmopolitan identity. When urban visitors go out into the bush, they seek things that they take for granted in the environments they have become accustomed to, that is, they seek the familiar while also seeking a unique experience: good food and coffee; comfortable beds and insect free accommodation; entertainment and supermarkets that stock their favourite products. The bush holiday transforms into a negotiated route to all those places that have been developed according to what the tourist desires and needs.

When does the trip around Australia transform from tourism to lifestyle choice? Many nomads can spend months, even years, on the road. They form social networks, they meet up at camping grounds and caravan parks and they travel in convoys. When the tourist act transforms into a lifestyle choice, the domestic arrangements become increasingly sophisticated and the domestic relationship to the bush more poignant.

Having experienced the nomadic voyage in a *Brits* 4WD Campervan for just two weeks I have my own insights into the significance of the domestic while on the road. In 1994 I travelled from Darwin through Kakadu National Park, down the Stuart Highway to Alice Springs, around the Mareeni Loop to see Uluru, Kata Juta, Palm Valley and Kings Canyon and back to Alice Springs via

a meteorite site. Travelling with what is essentially a house on your back, provides an extraordinary sense of freedom: there is no requirement of the return journey or the search for accommodation. The re-creation of the domestic space within the van was compact, even claustrophobic, and spilled out of the van at any given opportunity. There was plenty of yearning for the space and comforts of home by the end of the trip. Within the caravan parks, the private spaces of home transformed into communal kitchens and bathrooms: the limits of private space contracted to sleeping arrangements. Here we could see and be seen. The vicinity around the van became the lounge room and it merged with other lounge rooms, kitchens and rumpus rooms. The camping ground became a communal home where the boundaries that exist in the suburbs were not as strictly observed. Some travellers attempt to contain the span of their living space by locating themselves as close as possible to the amenity blocks. By contracting their 'domestic space' in this way they possibly re-created the comforts and conveniences of home.

Sometimes the camping ground was clearly defined from the bush, while at other times the bush merged and there was passage and exchange between the spaces. The campervan in the bush allows for a number of juxtapositions to occur between the domestic and the bush.

#### **4.4 Interior Decorating**

A successful homemaker must develop a *good eye* for interior decorating. As a result of the proliferation of home renovation television programs and magazines, contemporary Australian (sub)urban culture has become conversant and obsessed with the art of interior decorating and current consumer trends in taste. Home renovation and decorating has become a formidable cultural and economic force in Australia. The burgeoning popular knowledge that is administered by television and other media sources affects the way we see things, our attention is focused primarily on the domestic patch and our movement on weekends becomes limited to the geographical circles between home centres and hardware stores. Formerly the domain of women, the activity of interior decorating is now often shared amongst the adults of the household. The process requires attention to the selection and arrangement of patterns,

colours, surfaces, furnishings, white-goods, crockery and manchester. In the age of consumerism, the eye is trained to continually scour the press, television, home magazines, other homes and shopping malls for up-to-date decorating ideas and tastes. Modern advertising dictates that a unifying theme must be decided upon: homemakers must choose from many themes including cottage, French chic, Heidelberg tones, tribal African, Balinese, minimalist and for those that can't decide, eclectic. Once it becomes finely tuned, the homemaker's eye can be inspired and can see the potential: it has learnt to see.

After 9/11 the term *cocooning* was coined to describe a reactive retreat into the security of the home: even greater emphasis was placed on the activity of nesting. Directly after 9/11 and the Bali bombings, the numbers of Australians travelling abroad decreased and Australian destinations, by road, became an attractive option. Australians turned inwards. This was, on the whole, a temporary reaction, but the significance that the home played in a climate of fear and its connection to travelling within Australia had been established.

#### **4.5 Exterior Decorating**

As part of my method of disruption I integrate patterns, surfaces and ideas derived from the domestic sphere into representations of the bush brand. In this section I am going to discuss just one example of a pattern, the black and white checkerboard, which appears in a number of my paintings for example *Baygon Days*, (2007), (**figure 8**). While it is possible to associate checkerboard with, for example, car racing or chess, I chose it because of its associations to the domestic sphere and its use as an interior floor covering. By providing examples of the role checkerboard has played in art I demonstrate that patterns such as this, can resonate with meanings and associations beyond their utilitarian function. This is not to say that the utilitarian or decorative role of patterns and surfaces do not also have the capacity to generate meanings and memories.

Black and white checkerboard floor tiling appears in significant paintings throughout the history of Western fine arts in various urban settings, from civic and religious spaces to Parisian cafes. Take, for example, *St Luke and the*

*Virgin* (1515) by Jan Gossert Mabuse, *Fruit dish and Carafe* (1914) by Juan Gris, *Still-Life (Fantomas)* (1915) by Pablo Picasso and *Le Gueridon* (1921-2) by Georges Braque. The space where it is most famously depicted, however, is in Jan Vermeer's intimate domestic interiors of the seventeenth century. While the checkerboard pattern depicts a detail of everyday surroundings in seventeenth century Holland, even becoming a signifier of the domestic, the checkerboard pattern also operates as a device to create a sense of perspective. As the scale of the patterning diminishes from foreground to background it provides the illusion of three-dimensional space. With the emergence of modernism and the subsequent flattening of space within the picture plane, the emphasis on creating the illusion of three-dimensional space was rejected by the avant-garde. Checkerboard, normally employed to give the effect of a horizontal surface, was simplified into a vertical layer on the picture surface: the black and white squares in the patterning maintained the same dimensions. Today, black and white checkerboard pattern is manufactured on vinyl and sold by the metre in flooring stores. It continues to be found within many contemporary homes.

Black and white checkerboard pattern is not only relevant to my images as a signifier of the urban and the domestic, but also for its capacity to produce phantom images. In *Art and Illusion*<sup>169</sup>, art historian E.H. Gombrich discusses the way in which after-images or phantom images are created to greater or lesser degrees in all pictures depending on the degree of contrasting juxtapositions that exist within the picture plane. The juxtaposition of black and white, the two most contrasting tones, is likely to produce the most striking phantom images. The appearance of the phantom in this way compounds the interplay between reality, myth and desire that is so important in my work.

There is another dimension to checkerboard that adds to its meaning in the context of the segregation of race in America, which continued up to the 1950s before it was challenged in any considerable way. "Do the Checkerboard" was a placard employed in the movie *Hairspray* (Director John Waters, 1988), a slogan appropriated from or inspired by the protest marches against racism. The call behind this slogan was to end the segregation of black and white and

intermingle the races, a radical demand at the time and one that continues to hold relevance across the world, including Australia. It is logical that grey further represents this idea of equity and equality.

#### **4.6 Waste Land**

It is not that uncommon when walking or driving through the bush to arrive upon a site where a load of domestic waste has been illegally dumped.

Mattresses, refrigerators, prams, rolls of carpet, pillows and bags of domestic refuse can grace the sides of bush tracks for substantial amounts of time before they are cleaned up. The refuse travels deeper into the bush as it is picked over by possums, birds and feral animals: without four walls, the domestic becomes uncontainable in the bush setting. Ironically, the domestic waste itself becomes a home or a source of food for the creatures of the bush. Here, the domestic has spilled out into the bush, disrupting the division that lay between them.

## 5 Shades of Pink, Layers of Desire

Within every painting I create for *The Transplanted Bush* pink can always be found, somewhere. It underlies the painted surfaces, it is infused into colour mixes and it surrounds every object if it is not already imbued within every object. My reasons for employing pink so pervasively within my work is two-fold. Firstly, I borrow a strategy from the 1970s feminist art movement to commandeer pink from its subordinate, feminine status to place it centre stage, requesting from the viewer a consideration of its potential significance and meaning. Embodied within this strategy is a parody of the gendering of the feminized landscape and the pioneering role of the masculine figure within that landscape. Secondly, I employ pink as a symbol of queer, as a way of imposing my own identity, symbolically, into representations of the bush, as a way of dissolving my sense of estrangement from the grand master narratives of the brand. By transporting the queer ideology of pink into my own work I disrupt the hetero-normative strategies that have so predominately regulated the binary gender categories in representations of the Australian landscape. Underlying my use of pink in both these strategies is the proposition that pink represents what is referred to in psychoanalytical theory as the *part-object* in its most reductive form, thereby operating as a subconscious manifestation of exposure and desire that is not limited to hetero-normative limitations of sex or binary gender construction. The linkage of pink to the notion of part-object releases pink from its subordinate position within the logic of hierarchically structured symbolic language to what Rosalind Krauss has called ‘organ logic.’ Colour is fluid and uncontainable, as is sexuality and desire.

Pink does not intrinsically possess meaning, but rather its capacity to generate meaning has been culturally and historically determined. This is evident by the

varying symbolic values attributed historically to all colours depending on, for example, what cultures, social hierarchies, customs and dress they are employed in. The meaning and symbolic use of pink remains fluid - accruing and dispelling meaning over time and cultural space - and dependent upon local, perhaps even global, configurations of power. Arthur Streeton viewed pink and yellow skies as symbolic of transience of youth and optimism; over at least the last one hundred years in Western societies pink has been widely regarded as a 'girl's colour'; pink is now regarded as a symbolic colour for the queer community; while for contemporary Thai artist Manit Schwanichpoorn, who created *The Pink Man* in 2001, intense pink operates as a symbol of consumerism. The symbolism of pink alters according to its intensity and often according to the intentions of the wearer. Some of these meanings may at first appear quite divergent however the meanings attributed to pink in art and culture have evolved, first and foremost, through its association to the body.

Within art and visual culture, artists all over the world have applied pink in their work to generate, intensify or question meanings in relation to the body, gender and sexuality. Yet pink as a highly evocative colour has not been widely researched, a fact recognized by Barbara Nemitz, editor of *Pink: The Exposed Color in Contemporary Art and Culture* published in 2006. Perhaps this is because of its close alliance with commercialism, popular culture, femininity, little girls and queer, giving it an air of apparent insignificance when compared to some of the more historically symbolic colours such as blue and red that have held significant symbolic value within religious and royal orders. Its seemingly shallow applications and associations however, belie its capacity to construct, tease out and invert particular meanings within works of art. While pink often serves seemingly banal and passive functions, it also, contradictorily, holds the capacity to infuse artworks with often subversive or confronting meanings. In its various configurations over the twentieth century, pink has transformed from a passive and feminine colour to a device that tests the limits of femininity and masculinity and sexualities. Arguably more than any other colour, pink seems to possess the power to awaken an obsessive zeal in some and to attract a hostile response in others. Its association with gender, sex and desire appears to be responsible for this. Pink is a site of projected

desire because, of all the colours, it is pink that operates as the most reductive sign of the body and its erogenous zones and therefore has been employed in confronting ways by feminist and queer artists to deal with issues involving the body and sex, or by romanticists such as Barbara Cartland, to conjure up notions of one of humanities greatest needs, love. It must be noted here, that the pinkness of the external skin is strongly associated with blushing, a sign of embarrassment when a sexually inexperienced girl is the focus of the male gaze. Because dark-skinned bodies do not blush, women with dark skin were perceived as promiscuous, a convenient perception held by colonial men, which continues to persist in societies today.<sup>170</sup>

This association of pink to the body may account for its current ubiquity in contemporary capitalist societies where the figuring of the body and sex have become major sales strategies in commercial advertising and labelling. Pink, once a subordinate, feminine colour, became subversive in the 1970s and 1980s, and now in 2008, has become so ubiquitous and broadly applied, that it could seem to have lost all meaning and associations to gender. Instead, pink continues to be steadfastly associated with the feminine.

### **5.1 Pink: Part-Object**

“Colour may be in ruins, it may be a sham but it also becomes the fantastic site for bodily projections.”<sup>171</sup> Briony Fer

Part-object is a term originally created by post Freudian psychoanalyst Melanie Klein (1882-1960), to identify components or organs of the body, breasts and lips for example, that are attracted by instincts and drives toward the part-objects of other bodies. Deleuze and Guattari later defined this relationship as ‘desiring machines,’ while Rosalind Krauss called it ‘organ logic’<sup>172</sup>, an alternative and formless system of logic overlooked by the modernist formalism that also fragmented the body. These terms, according to Krauss, describe relationships of desire, through which the energy of attraction flows from one organ to another: “The body of the subject, focused around so many separate organs and their needs and desires, interacts with the world outside of itself - the object world - in terms of the reciprocal organs that will satisfy those



needs and desires.”<sup>173</sup> These part-objects fuse, Krauss explains, through “the fantasy of introduction.”<sup>174</sup> The part-object is the goal of instinct and drive, and reduces the subject down to its component organs. As the body of the subject interacts with the outside world, it is directed by the needs and desires of those organs.

Representations of part-objects become more erotically charged when coloured pink, because it indicates a rush of blood to a site of sexual arousal, a manifestation of the physical and psychical processes of desire. As such, pink becomes a form of exposure of the part-object, and can be recognised as reduction and representation of the part-object, when no other has taken its place. A part-object does not necessarily require the assistance of pink to become a bodily site of desire, however, inanimate objects that do not take the form of part-objects, for example tree stumps, may become sites of desire when coloured pink. Pink becomes the interface between the body and its surroundings: it draws everything into the body’s field of influence. Through this process, pink collapses the boundaries between different bodies and their environment to create the body as a formless entity. Pink simultaneously occupies a space into which many oppositions collapse: male/female; feminine/masculine; madonna/whore; shocking/innocent; materiality/light and kitsch/sublime. The majority of these oppositions are social constructs, employed to define cohesive gender categories.

Part-object indicates the collapse of bodies into the one form that Krauss calls “anatomical redistribution” or “round phallicism”<sup>175</sup>, where the distinctions between male and female can no longer be made and where both simultaneously exist. Pink is an even further reduction of the body, it stands in for the body. This has been recognized by Barbara Nemitz, for example, who refers to pink as the ‘exposed color’ thus associating it with nudity, while Derek Jarman was impressed by the naked flesh of the Renaissance period: “Pink is always shocking. Naked. All those acres of flesh that cover the ceilings of the Renaissance.”<sup>176</sup> Pink operates as a site of desire, even when not accompanying explicit forms of the body. In monochromatic works such as Gotthard Graubner’s *Hautleuchten* (*Skin Glowing*) 1985, Marcia Hafif’s

*Seeigal* (from the *Seegardens Series*) 1990 or Yves Klein's *Monochrome rose sans titre* (*Monochrome Pink, Untitled*) 1962, the canvas becomes encoded as skin even with the slightest hint of pink. In this way all such representation is brought into the body's fold. The meanings attached to pink are not arbitrary, but instead, founded upon bodily systems of drives, by sexual desire. In this form of representation no body part is distinguished from the other, none are specifically sexed, there is no domination of one over the other. Pink becomes the amalgamation of all the variable parts. With pink being all these parts it becomes the ultimate site of all bodily projections. The process of reducing all things to colour by artists operates as a means of releasing the body from the material world to experience pure sensation.

Prior to the second wave of feminism that emerged in the late 1960s the imaging of the female body and indeed any body was predominately undertaken by men. The female form, particularly the nude, functioned as an object of male desire, and became further eroticized with warm hues of pink and the feminine blush on its component parts. This creates a visual manifestation of desire predominately between the representations of female components and pink, between female components and male components, and even same sex components (a subject that remained concealed and encoded until recent decades). It also established a flow of desire between the viewer and the image. Images are sites where fantasies of desire are projected and where connections, before actual fusions, between part objects are regularly enhanced by pink. Consider just one example, Rene Magritte's *Attempting the Impossible* (1928), which depicts himself constructing a new reality of a nude woman in paint. His mouth and her nipples are connected by the commonality of pink, a relationship further accentuated by the general direction of his gaze. Taking such a relationship even further is the pink sculpture created by Louise Bourgeois, *Mamelles* (1991, 2001), about which she states:

“[*Mamelles*] portrays a man [the predatory Don Juan] who lives off the women he courts making his way from one to the next. Feeding from them but returning nothing, he loves only in a consumptive and selfish manner.”<sup>177</sup>

The sculpture represents his desire and subsequent sexual consumption of the body in the form of a pink fusion of forms that collapse into breasts and lips.

The consumption of the body extends to the use of pink in consumer-culture. The body and desires of the consumer are greedy: consumer culture appeals to the rapacity of instincts and drives that fuse body components into part-objects. Consumer products become tantalizing, objects of desire, when they resemble part-objects. Pink links the consumer product to the body and its erogenous parts. There is an explosion of pink in the capitalist world because sex sells. The reduction of sex into the colour pink also makes a confronting subject more palatable for daily consumption by transforming its meaning to love. Love, no matter how much it appears to be innocent, no matter how many ways it can be expressed through such things as romance and nurturing, can eventually be traced back to its relationship to the body and sex.

The use of pink within paintings and other art objects, or indeed any constructed object or image, can be regarded as a form of flirtation. This is the connection made by Helen Molesworth between decoration and flirtation and the relationship they play together within the pictorial frame of Watteau's invented *fetes galantes*. Molesworth states "... what is flirting if not a kind of artifice? And does it not speak of both pleasure and loneliness, is it not both a come-on to the other and a cover-up of the self?"<sup>178</sup> Like the decorative, pink belongs to the domain of the interior, a realm keenly linked to all things feminine. Pink, like decoration, protects the inhabitants from the exterior world, the role of which, Molesworth argues, "... appears to be a way to stave off feelings of alienation and loneliness."<sup>179</sup> When I incorporate pink into my disruptions of the bush brand, it perhaps operates as an antidote to my alienation.

In paintings revolving around themes of love and desire, it is not uncommon to find on or spatially separate to the key subject, red or pink flowers, drapery or skies, for example. Consider Jean-Leon Gerome's *Pygmalion and Galatea* (1890) (this painting is also discussed in relation to my work *Out There From*

*In Here* (2006) in Chapter Seven) where, to the left of the pair's embrace, some red drapery hangs on the back of a chair. Its saturation as well as its contrast within the green surroundings of the room and the cool marble flesh of Pygmalion makes this folding, almost fleshy form quite significant. This fetishisation of the fabric operates as a kind of referred sexual excitation or organ exposure. Like referred pain, referred sexual excitation "proceeds from a part or organ other than the part or organ actually affected or irritated. ... The referred pain [sexual excitation] may be accounted for by the fact that nerves from the involved structures enter the spinal cord at the same level"<sup>180</sup> The referral, rather than being reproduced in another place, is reproduced in the organ of its desires which, in affect, establishes a desiring machine between the subjects in the painting, between the subjects and the things depicted in the painting, between painter and the subject matter and the audience and the subject matter and perhaps between the audience and the painter. Intentionally Gerome could be heightening the sexual tension between Galatea and the awaking Pygmalion with an arrangement of sexy props, unintentionally he could be projecting his own subconscious desires onto an inanimate object. The painting functions as an organism complete with a network of nerves and erogenous zones, the desires of Gerome displacing his sexual desire into more acceptable forms. But more than this, the painting functions as an extension of Gerome's body and anyone who encounters it.

Similarly, *Ophelia* (1894) by John William Waterhouse while displaying the subject fully clothed is symbolically undressing her and revealing her genitalia by way of the red flower. *Job* (1898) by Alphonse depicts a sex worker in pink drapery, also wearing red flowers in her hair. In making the genitals less specific and reducing them to flowers and drapery, and finally to colour patches, the explicitness of sex is reduced to palatable concepts such as love and desire.

## 5.2 Gendering Pink

During the course of the twentieth century pink increasingly came to symbolise the feminine and this, I would suggest, is in part due to the historical

correspondence of pink to the representation of woman as an object of desire and mother. Historically, women have been defined through the function of their bodies, as sites of desire and as reproductive vessels: this is nowhere more apparent than in the representation of women in Western art. The exposure and sexualisation of women's flesh in painting associated them with the colour pink. This association of the female body with pink became so bound to the identity of women that many feminist artists from the 1970s commandeered it. Pink was no longer deployed as a fetish for the male gaze, but as a tool to consolidate control over the body and its representation.

Judith Butler argues that for an internal coherence or unity of gender or sex to exist, there needs to be both a "stable and oppositional heterosexuality."<sup>181</sup> The differentiation that creates this oppositional binary gender system is accomplished through the practices of heterosexual desire. "The act of differentiating consolidates each term, the retrospective internal coherence of sex, gender and desire."<sup>182</sup> In this process of differentiation a 'gendered core' is produced by the regulation of free floating attributes, for example femininity and masculinity, along "culturally established lines of coherence." Colour is just one visual cue to aid in this process of differentiation. The creation of gender specific colours, spaces and types of clothes, for example, assists to distill gender into a binary system. The gendering of such things as objects and colours further substantiates language into concrete form to make the binary system fact or evidenced. The reiteration of this division through images, stories, application of powers of exclusion further maintains this 'evidence' and eventually constructs these attributes as 'natural.' Some time during the twentieth century, pink emerged as a feminine colour to aid in this differentiation of gender, thereby becoming bound to the identity of the female subject. In *Chromophobia*, London based artist and writer David Batchelor, in one of his few references to pink, describes the entire existence of pink as "a kind of anomaly."<sup>183</sup> He states: " 'Pink' is the only basic colour term in English that also denotes a specific part of another basic colour term, one end of 'red'."<sup>184</sup> By being singled out and occupying space outside the usual order of

things, pink occupies or shares the space of *otherness*. Women, orientalism, colour and nature all share the realm of the 'other'.

Pink has come to be associated with love, a concept inextricably linked to sex, femininity and desire. Colour has been employed, through the symbolic law of the father, as an agent to further identify and categorize women into the status of the *other* to the phallus, one that is bound to their reproductive organs and role as mothers and nurturers. The relationship that has developed between pink, gender and sexuality and its status as a motif in gender politics has led to its popular employment in societies at once preoccupied with negotiating and reaffirming gender boundaries.

Just when pink was attributed to femininity in the West is not entirely clear because of its associations with the symbolic applications of red in earlier centuries, yet there seems to be some consensus that this attribution and articulation of 'pink' evolved in the twentieth century.<sup>185</sup> It has in fact been suggested that early in the twentieth century pink was considered a boy's colour (as a diluted fierce red) and blue was better suited for girls. In 1914 an American newspaper, *The Sentinel*, advised mothers: "If you like the color note on the little one's garment, use pink for the boy and blue for the girl, if you are a follower of convention."<sup>186</sup> In the German Nazi concentration camps of World War II, where identified groups were assigned different colours, homosexual men - referred to by the Nazi officers as 'dolly boys' - were identified with a pink triangle, suggesting that by the 1940s pink had become associated with girls and femininity.<sup>187</sup>

At the end of the World War II, when men began returning to Australia, a campaign was launched to encourage women away from their non-traditional tasks, back to their reproductive and domestic roles at home. If the colours of World War II were to be imagined, it might be that we would think of the greys associated with uniforms, the steel of weaponry and the black and white film footage of bleak, war-torn Europe. War is colourless and cold, home is warm

and nurturing: what better colour to represent the home interior and the homemaker than pink as described from this American perspective:

“Rosie the Riveter of the 1940s returned to being Susie the homemaker in the 1950s. Reflecting the ‘pink-is-for-girls-mom-in-the-kitchen-father-knows-best’ mentality she was admonished to “think pink” - to wear pink lipstick, drive a pink car, or buy pink household appliances - all of which was reinforced by an all pink sequence in the classic Audrey Hepburn technicolour film *Funny Face* [1957]. The quintessential icon of femininity, Barbie, was born and much of the time she wore pink.”<sup>188</sup>

As previously noted, pink has not always been associated with the feminine and women, yet today such associations are difficult to avoid. While this sort of stereotyping has been challenged since the 1960s, a stroll through a toy department or a search on the Internet reveals that this theme persists. Yet, almost perversely, pink has also become a potent symbol of sexuality. Sexual awareness suggests a loss of innocence, and it is this capacity that pink can be employed to twist meanings. The intensity of pink appears to measure the quality of femininity, although this is not always true since the context of its application also holds a major bearing on its meaning. Pale pink draws out qualities of passivity, softness and innocence, attributes regarded as belonging to the fairer sex. Yet it can also be employed as a sign of submissiveness and offered as an erotic lure. As pink intensifies toward red or a saturated magenta it begins to accumulate the attributes of an assertive feminine sexuality sometimes associated with the ‘whore.’ Assertive sexuality is traditionally regarded as the domain of men, hence the possible correlation between a fierce red representing masculinity and red representing the whore. To venture beyond the ‘pale’ is to become provocative or attention seeking. Consider, for example, the relationship between Elsa Schiaparelli’s behaviour and her signature colour ‘shocking pink’, which she popularised in 1947. Born in 1890 in Rome, Elsa Schiaparelli (1890-1973) was unconventional in a society dominated by the church, even as a girl. She left school because, writer Josh Patner states, she was “unwilling to follow the nuns’ lessons silently”, caused further scandal by writing a book of suggestive poetry and later attended a function dressed only in a sheet that soon unravelled. On moving to Paris,

Schiaparelli turned fashion on its head, injecting into her fusion of art and fashion Surrealist influences and eccentric ideas, which appealed to the affluent but nevertheless adventurous clientele. *Shocking pink* was new and *shocking pink* drew the attention of men to the female body. Shocking pink was shocking because it was aggressive and attention-seeking, a quality not admired in women at that time under the tradition laws of normative heterosexuality.

An alternative permutation of the application of pink is its use by British romance novelist, Barbara Cartland (1901-2000). According to legends generated on the *World Wide Web*, Cartland vowed to wear pink for the rest of her life after seeing pink on the walls of Tutenkamen's tomb in 1922. Pink became Cartland's signature colour yet her usage promoted a romantic model of love where 'fair ladies' are courted by chivalrous men. While the employment of pink gave her an eccentric and liberal persona, her ideology and novels accentuated and differentiated the gender categories within a system of moral codes. Echoing this romanticism and feminisation of pink is the idolisation of *Barbie* manifesting in establishments such as the *Think Pink! Barbiemuseum* in the Netherlands.<sup>189</sup> A visit to the museums website illustrates the excessive proportions that pink can reach.

Far from being an outdated categorization, the feminisation of pink and the feminisation of objects by colouring them pink, for example, the *Little Pink Tools* for ladies,<sup>190</sup> is undergoing a huge revival in western societies in the early twenty first century. Its meanings and applications have broadened, however, with pink transforming from being an interior, passive and feminine colour, to one which has also been commandeered by transgressive personalities, queers and feminists and embraced by the commercial sector to create a new range of powerful associations and symbols.

### **5.3 Masculinity and Pink**

Despite the fact that pink has now, in the early twenty first century, also emerged as a fashionable colour for men, it continues to carry its significations of femininity. The rise in contemporary society of what has popularly been coined the *metrosexual* has seen men indulge in pink accessories and clothing.



Pink enables us to see the softer, feminine side of men. Former Prime Minister of Britain Tony Blair, Australian Federal Minister for the Environment Malcolm Turnbull, even sports reporters on commercial television have worn pink ties. Does the pink tie reveal a softer, more feminine side? Or is it declaration that they are man enough to wear it? American hip-hop artiste Cam'ron Giles, for example, has even gone so far as to make pink tough. Is the pink tie a phallic exposure?

The status of pink as an anomaly in the masculine world has been humorously emphasized in an episode of *The Simpsons* (Channel 10, 20 April 2005).<sup>191</sup> At home Mrs. Simpson opens the washing machine to find that a white wash of Homer's work shirts and underwear had turned pink because Bart threw his red hat in at the last minute. With no choice but to don a pink shirt Homer Simpson is picked up by the company's surveillance cameras, while filing into work amongst a sea of workers in white shirts. He becomes the laughing stock; his work colleagues ridicule him by feeding him donuts covered with pink icing. A distressed management casts him as an anarchist and has him arrested. Homer Simpson is subjected to a personality test. He takes the form home and due to his apathy asks Lisa, his young daughter, to fill it in. Homer is further feminized, classified as insane and denied release from the mental institution. The fact that the creators of *The Simpsons* selected pink as the point of difference in this sequence illustrates its potency as a symbol of femininity and *otherness*. Pink is a stranger in the masculine world of Homer's workplace, yet at home pink flourishes on the walls and furnishings.

Humiliation by pink has become a real life tactic to undermine aggressive masculine behaviour in a County Jail in the United States. Celebrity Sheriff Joe Arpaio who heads the Maricopa County Jail in Arizona, is well known for his controversial innovations. One of these is to force inmates to wear pink boxer shorts, use pink towels and sleep on pink sheets, which, his critics say, serves to humiliate the inmates. More recently he introduced one thousand fluorescent pink handcuffs to his inventory to be used during transport of prisoners.<sup>192</sup>

The use of pink to erode masculinity is also illustrated in the well-documented case of the pink locker rooms at Kinnick Stadium at the University of Iowa in America. Journalist Cam Lindquist states that in the early 1980s psychology lecturer Hayden Fry proposed that the locker room of the opposition team at Kinnick Stadium should be painted pink as a strategy to pacify them, as pink, he understood, had a “calming and passive effect.”<sup>193</sup> Due to the apparent success of the strategy the concept was pushed further in 2005 to not only include pink ‘innocence’ walls but also pink carpets, ceilings, lockers, showers, even ‘dusty rose’ pink commodes and urinals. Critics of the pink renovation, including the Law School Professor Jill Gaulding,<sup>194</sup> waged a campaign against the strategy saying that the use of pink “demeans women, perpetuates offensive stereotypes about women and homosexuality.”<sup>195</sup>

#### **5.4     Commandeering Pink**

The feminist and gay liberation movements commandeered pink as a way of taking back control of a colour that had been symbolically employed to identify and subordinate women and gay men. Assigned as a feminine colour, pink had become passive but under these liberation movements it became a powerful symbol of empowerment.

Artists such as Eva Hesse and Louise Bourgeois have been heralded as heroines and precursors to the 1970s feminist art movement. While Bourgeois did not necessarily operate within a feminist framework and Hesse struggled with what Kirsten Swenson, academic arts writer, described as a “private feminism”<sup>196</sup>, they were amongst the first Western artists to become significant for the way they described the experience of the female body from a woman’s perspective. The body they represented was not created by men for the male gaze but instead emerged from the system that supported those kinds of operatives. No longer was the female body an object, but a thinking, feeling, desiring and most significantly, speaking entity. Both Hesse and Bourgeois employed an autobiographical strategy to create their artworks, which enabled their work to contain powerful psychoanalytical foundations that have proved so significant in the development of feminist art.

In the last decade, the work of Hesse and Bourgeois has been re-evaluated in the context of 'organ logic' (discussed later in 5. Pink Part Object) by Rosalind Krauss and curator of *Part Object Part Sculpture*, Helen Molesworth.<sup>197</sup> The forms created in the work of both Hesse and Bourgeois disrupt notions of the self-contained body by suggesting at once the male and female form, a fusion of part objects. Interestingly, both Hesse and Bourgeois employed a significant amount of pink, thereby emphasizing the exposure of the body and, particularly in the case of Hesse's work, to construct particular parts of the body as fetishistic lures. Motifs regularly repeated in her work are the pink to red and therefore highly aroused protrusions, openings and surfaces as in, for example, *2 in 1* (1965), *An Ear in the Pond* (1965) or *Eighter from Decatur* (1965) which are all expressive of Hesse's sexuality but range from explicit to ambiguous representations of sex and sexual activity.

Louise Bourgeois exploits the 'pinkness' of the feminine and the body. Her painful childhood memories are translated into many forms and colours but amongst these are the pink dresses and fabric body parts in, for example, her *Pole* series (1996) and the pink limbless torsos of her *Couple* series (1996 -97) that capture a more vulnerable quality. They are less violent as violated, able to be reduced to abstracted forms while remaining as recognisable body parts.

This relationship between pink and the (particularly) female body was taken up with great enthusiasm during the second wave of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s. Pink was commandeered by a number of feminist artists and thrust into the public domain as part of a political strategy to seize control of discourses once used to define and control women's bodies and behaviour. Pink was employed as a strategic and confronting device to examine issues of female sexuality and desire. Historically images of women's genitalia had been discrete and controlled for the male gaze, yet during the second wave of feminism such discretions were disregarded as feminist artists claimed the female body as a site for self expression and political commentary. One of these artists, Hannah Wilke, was well known in America for her feminist commentary on gender, which involved a kind of emotional and physical self-exposure, an "aesthetic and spiritual process of undressing the body and

soul.”<sup>198</sup> For her a self-spoken female eroticism was an important contribution in a culture that did not normally welcome such discourses. She experimented with many materials including latex, chocolate, chewing gum, even her own body, to construct metaphorical sculptural pieces that referred to the body and desire. Many of these investigations took place in flesh tones or pink. *Pink Champagne* (1975) is just one example of these works. Seemingly enraptured by Wilke's work, Joanna Freud describes it in the following way:

“a heroic figure of “cunt-positiveness,” masturbation, and multiple orgasms. The sculpture is a rippling pink, petal-like, horizontal expansion of pleasure. Like all Wilke's latex wall sculptures (1971-77), *Pink Champagne* uses the liquid onto a wide plaster bed, which is then pulled into thin layers and massed into overlapping clusters, which suggests waves of sensation experienced in the excited vaginal and clitoral flesh. The casting side is chalky, the other has a shiny, sexy wet appearance that emphasizes the labial structure. *Pink champagne* is a pleasure to look at and to taste and drink, and Wilke's *Pink Champagne* is a visual treat and a multiplicity of lips, which are beautiful forms that speak of morphological sameness and difference, of plural pleasures, not only in orgasmic capacity but also in regard to the many areas of sensitivity in women's external and internal anatomy.”<sup>199</sup>

Similarly, *Nurturing Kitchen* (1972), a mixed media installation sited at *Woman house*<sup>200</sup> by Susan Frizzer, Vicki Hedges and Robin Weltsch took on fleshy-pink proportions as they employed the kitchen as “the institutional source of all mother's milk.”<sup>201</sup> Foam-molded eggs crept down the pink walls of the kitchen “gradually metamorphosing into pendulous breasts.”<sup>202</sup> The relationship created here between egg, breast and kitchen focused on the socially constructed role of woman as nourisher and nurturer and on how this ongoing role was rationalised on the basis of being biologically determined. The pink interior of the kitchen exaggerated the femininity of the space.

The work during this period was confronting, political and empowering to these women artists. It not only reveals the pleasures of self-discovery, but the necessity of work such as this reveals the darker side of women's histories. This manipulation of pink did not rest in those early decades of feminism and continues to hold currency today but also extends to the interrogation of gender categories.

Today, many women artists carry on the legacy of Louise Bourgeois, Eva Hesse and the second wave feminists. Australian Pat Brassington is one such artist who has employed significant themes of pink into her work, though she rejects this has anything to do with the feminine. Daniel Palmer's reference to her work *Charade* (2003) suggests the dwarfed figure peeking through the huge pink drapes is perhaps a mental stage that can be read from a Freudian perspective. The dreamlike, surreal and interior quality of Brassington's works leads the viewer's imagination to subconscious spaces, both hers and theirs, in strange dramas acted out between fantasy and reality, the unfamiliar and familiar, innocent and grotesque. The palette of Pat Brassington's digital media images has passed through stages of being predominantly pink. As Jo Higgins states, this application of pink "encourages associations of the visceral and the fleshy."<sup>203</sup> These private revelations from private spaces titillate the *voyeur* pink, emphasizing the erogenous zones, the flesh and the limbs. Fabrics, carpets and shoes do not escape these associations and they too become part of this interaction between bodies, the gaze and touch. The emphasis on texture and the light touch of her subjects with their surroundings perhaps emphasize the nervousness of the voyeur and fetishist as they perhaps derive a private pleasure from these forms and surfaces. Pink is carnal, pink is innocent and there is no escaping the body in her series *You're so Vein*, 2005. *Until* simply depicts a woman's ankle mutating into a fleshy pig's trotter that could equally represent a woman's labia. It is well known that ankles are regarded as erogenous zones, particularly to the fetishist, but this transformation into a beast that is fleshy and edible whose feet are delicacies to be held in the hand, nibbled and sucked carries this association to absurd proportions. In *The Wedding Guest*, formless flesh slithers like a slug from under what could be a bridal gown. Is desire the unwelcome guest here? If so, where is it headed? What crime is it about to perform? Under the laws of marriage and ownership desire should be concealed, tucked away, and preserved in holy matrimony. In this image, however, Brassington allows it to all hang out.

In Sydney's 2004 Biennial, *On Reason and Emotion*, artist Emiko Kasher, (born 1963 in Tokyo and now living and working in New York), presented a

photographic series titled *Pink*. The images, originally shot in black and white, were taken by a gynaecologist during cervical cancer tests. The images of each cervix have been tinted pink and enlarged until each is the size of the human head. The cervix is said to represent a middle ground (between the vagina and uterus) “where neither sex/sexuality nor life/reproduction dominates.”<sup>1204</sup> “The colour pink also represents two contradictory images: innocence and carnality. In Japan, it recalls the cultural icon of the cherry blossom, and at the same time the sex industry, which in Japan is called the ‘pink industry’.”<sup>205</sup>

## 5.5 Queer Pink

“At twenty I painted pictures in pink. Pink interiors with pink girls. Was this a burgeoning of my sexuality?”<sup>206</sup> Derek Jarman

Derek Jarman views his attraction to pink as a rejection of masculinity and an embracement of femininity, possibly as an early indication of his homosexuality. Along with the rainbow flag, pink has become a significant colour symbol to the gay/lesbian/transgender community. The ‘pink triangle’ employed by the Nazi’s to identify gay men was commandeered and turned upside down as a symbol of gay pride. Pink has escaped the containment of the triangle to occupy a significant position within queer visual vocabulary and as a symbol of femininity was also commandeered by lesbians, perhaps wishing to subvert butch stereotypes. The use of pink also celebrates camp and kitsch, qualities embraced by the queer community. It is not surprising then that the lesbian/gay/queer community of campaigners, services, artists and performers have relied on pink to serve as a symbol of pride and signifier of particular sexualities and ideologies. The *Pink Guide* and the American/ Canadian group *Pink Pistols*, for example, refer to the resources and organisations within the queer community that employ pink as a symbol of identity. During the succession of Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parades and Arts Festivals, references to pink abound. *Figs in Space* (2002) created by Brenda Factor and I (**figure 9**), and Lisa Anderson’s pink illumination of the Sydney Opera House in her work *Singing Up Stones* (1998), both created for the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, are just two examples that clearly indicate the significance of pink as a queer symbol.

The use of pink in the queer community has evolved to the point where pink has lost its value as a colour, and has instead come to represent a body politic and a rallying point of identification, even a marketing target group. Consider the way in which advertising appeals to the ‘pink dollar’ where pink refers to queer and not to the colour at all.

## 5.6 Consuming Pink

While pink enjoys a close association to the body Fer proposes that hot or toxic pink is more associated with the “cold scintillation”<sup>207</sup> of commercialism and commodities. Fer argues that these are the colours not of bodies but products, plastics, washing powder, rubber gloves: colours that are artificial rather than natural.

While pink has been employed directly as a device to explore issues of sexuality it has also been taken up by artists addressing issues of popular culture and consumerism which, needless to say, are fuelled by sexuality and desire. Pink is a corruption of the refined by the vulgar. Pink suggests kitsch, cheap and unsophisticated values. It is a commercial, urban and industrial colour: it is artificial and has wide applications in advertising and in the mass production of objects because of its ability to stand out and capture attention. Andy Warhol, graphic designer-cum-visual artist, drew his inspiration from consumer culture and as a result was drawn to a lurid, commercially based palette.

A committed and self-conscious application of pink in recent times has been undertaken by one of Thailand’s leading contemporary artists, photographer Manit Sriwanichpoom. Sriwanichpoom’s creation *The Pink Man* (performed by Sompong Thawee) exemplifies the relationship of pink to consumerism. Wearing his tailor-made pink suit and pushing a pink shopping trolley through civil unrest, culturally significant sites and capitalist development, *The Pink Man* is represented as an excessively vulgar and mindless citizen embodying all the traits of consumerism. *The Pink Man* is oblivious to the implications of his consumption on the heritage sites or to the events surrounding him. He tours

the world “...not to learn, but to consume: to collect exotic destinations, to shop, to show off...” says the artist.<sup>208</sup> He is ignorant and forgetful of Thailand’s own past. In his series *Horror in Pink* (2001) Schwanichpoon inserts *The Pink Man* into black and white images of Thailand’s 1976 massacre of pro-democracy students. The shocking superficial pink sits in stark contrast to the unfolding events. He looks on with a smile because such events are not recorded in Thailand’s history books or taught in schools, feeding a convenient culture of forgetfulness. *The Pink Man* states Robert Nelson “... is a baleful anomaly, ruining the atmosphere with his mundane shopping and puncturing the composition with lurid magenta, like a photographic fault, a cultural aberration yielding pure anti-poetry.”<sup>209</sup> Again pink takes on a host of negative connotations associated with the commercial, superficial and vulgar.

Many artists, particularly feminist artists, have explored the relationship between sexuality and consumerism, particularly since women were traditionally regarded as performing the role of consumer. Even today, a search on the Internet will reveal how pink is regarded as fashionable and women are encouraged to buy pink particularly in the realm of make-up, fashion and the domestic sphere. In the commercial world pink is often employed to define women in their stereotyped roles.

## **5.7 Pink and the Erotics of the Australian Landscape**

“... the best memories of the first months in the year – pink nights after hot days. I feel more than sorry that these days are over, because nothing can exceed the pleasures of that last summer, when I fancy all of us lost the “Ego” somewhat of our natures in looking at what was Nature’s best art and ideality. Give me one summer again with yourself and Streeton – the same long evenings, songs, dirty plates and last pink skies.”<sup>222</sup>

From a twenty-first century queer perspective, these flowery and nostalgic words written by Charles Conder to Tom Roberts in 1890 in response to their short-lived artist camp on the Eaglemont homestead at Heidelberg, could be misconstrued as a homoerotic sentiment. He has been described, however, as



sharing a brotherly love for Roberts and Streeton and there appears to be little evidence to suggest otherwise. Charles Conder, nevertheless, had a penchant for a bohemian lifestyle, and on his return to Europe befriended the likes of Aubrey Beardsley and Oscar Wilde and attended Baroness Olga de Meyer's lesbian salons. While he was sexually and promiscuously inclined toward women, Barry Humphries concluded, in response to a cryptic note scribbled by writer Max Beerbohm, that his "libidinous attentions were not always addressed to women."<sup>223</sup>

Conder managed a healthy libido and there is a delightfully erotic flavour embodied within his statement above, just as there is in his treatment of the Australian landscape. Arthur Streeton wrote to Tom Roberts a year or two after the Heidelberg camp: "I am afraid his flesh is against him a bit – poor old Conder and the girls."<sup>224</sup> Conder's landscapes, often punctuated with pink blossoms and skies, transformed into erotic zones both within his symbolist work as well as his earlier depictions of courting couples amongst the gum trees. These works were no doubt inspired by the regular visits of young women who attended week-end parties at the Heidelberg camp. Femme fatales, pink blossoms and innocent girls were all created under the guidance of a sensuous hand and often in the company of pink atmospheric hues. It comes as no surprise then, that his work later goes on to explore Art Nouveau, an art movement known for its erotic connotations with its curvilinear and organic forms and feminine subject matter. His knowledge and translation of Japanese art into his own work also led to it being described as decorative. Conder's work employs many of the characteristics that were used to describe the irrational: colour, the feminine, decoration, the erotic, curvilinear and organic forms. These were the kind of characteristics that transpired from the irrational space of the unconscious, characteristics that came to be explained in the theories of the unconscious of Dr Charcot, the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud and more recently in the theories of contemporary art theorists who rely on notions of the *informe* and *part-object*, such as Rosalind Krauss and Art Curator Helen Molesworth.

Sydney Long (1871-1955) was another male Australian artist who seemed to have a particular penchant for pink. As the south east coast of Australia became increasingly settled from the 1880s, hardship and heroism gave way to more leisurely themes and, according to historian Joanna Mendelssohn, more feminine subject matter.<sup>225</sup> This is certainly reflected in the paintings of Sydney Long. While no stranger to the heroic masculine themes set in the bush, as evidenced by *The Valley* (1898), Long began to favour erotic and sensuous themes for which Symbolism and Art Nouveau provided the perfect framework. Consider *By Tranquil Waters* (1894), his entry toward the flat decorative style of his Art Nouveau works, where naked young boys with baby pink skins, melt sensuously into the river to cool off. His paintings developed into more fanciful erotic fantasies in flat, theatre-like settings that began to reflect, in a more confident way, the curvilinear organic line of some Art Nouveau styles for which he became best known. This sensuality of line and form was matched by the use of pink in increasing volumes of intensity. In *Spirit of the Plains* (1897) the sky, and the gum trees pressed against it, are imbued with a soft pink, matching the gentle musicality of the lone naked nymph as she leads the birds through the landscape. In *Pan* (1898), painted just one year later, the intensity of pink becomes more charged and is set in contrast to the blues and greens of the foreground, perhaps to reciprocate the mood of the naked dancing nymphs and fawns. Long's affair with pink and naked themes seems to have climaxed in the creation of his well-known *Flamingoes* (1902). In this painting naked nymphs, partly submerged in the water, appear to be offering themselves to the long fluorescent necks of the flamingoes. Long seems to have sobered up after this pink period (which coincides with his move to Europe and marriage to dancer Katherine Brennan)<sup>226</sup>, but his engagement with pink never seemed to go away. In landscapes such as *Fantasy* (1916), and even in the traditional *Oatley Bay, Georges River* (1924) pink was applied generously to his subjects yet the mood feels comparatively constrained and in case of *Fantasy* (1916), quite wooden. There is some sense of trying to recapture a past, perhaps reflecting unhappy developments in his personal life.

W. Lister Lister's oil painting *The Golden Splendour of the Bush* (1906), now on permanent exhibition in the Art Gallery of New South Wales, depicts a stand of gum trees seemingly on the edge of 'wilderness.' It is most likely that Lister Lister's articulated concerns were focused on the celebration of the uniqueness of the Australian bush, its tranquillity and the effects of light after seeing the work of Arthur Streeton. Yet within this painting, it is not difficult to detect another force at work. Either consciously or subconsciously Lister Lister's instincts and drives transform *The Golden Splendour of the Bush* (1906) into a sexually explicit image. The Australian bush, and more specifically the gum tree, becomes a site onto which Lister Lister projected his desires and perhaps his anxieties of castration in the context of the 'feminine wilderness.' *The Golden Splendour of the Bush* (1906) presents the bush as a menagerie of flesh, of twisting and turning bodies writhing on the edge of the wilderness as it submits to Lister Lister's gaze. Ian Burn also recognised Lister Lister's tendency to anthropomorphise the gum tree in what he describes as "its almost voluptuous trunk forms, leaning, twisting and straining." The fact that the trunks are rendered in pink further humanises and sexualises the image; it is raw, naked and promiscuous. *The Golden Splendour of the Bush* is constructed using the traditional western methods of describing the landscape, yet the representation of the trees also relies on 'organ logic.' Tree parts transform into part objects: breasts, buttocks, penises, vaginas and splayed legs fused to become all or the other.

## 5.8 Pink in the Blue Mountains

Pink is a colour not normally associated with the Australian bush. When I first moved to the Blue Mountains it was blue that I noticed first, because this is what is prescribed by the region's very name. Blue operates as a mysterious force in the Mountains. Its appearance has never been adequately explained and the emphasis on blue contributes to the belief that the Mountains provide an environment that is conducive to spiritual, emotional and physical healing, an urban idyll commonly assigned to regions in the bush.

Beyond this initial impression, however, it became apparent that many other colours are enmeshed within the forests, the sky and the urban corridor. In

totality, the Blue Mountains are often not blue at all but grey, green or charcoal black. The apparent 'naturalness' of the bush, perhaps emphasized by a World Heritage listing, also guides one to see Australian kinds of colours, those colours celebrated as uniquely Australian by the Heidelberg School and other naturalists: muted and dappled tones of greys, greens, golds, browns and blues. Occasionally, as if its intent is to startle, the sunlight will pluck a note of luminous red, orange, lime or yellow from amongst the tertiary layers of branches, leaves and debris.

The first time pink came to my attention in the Blue Mountains was when a group of council workers were tying fluorescent pink ribbons around some gorse bushes that they located on the vacant bush block next door: the gorse, being a noxious weed, was marked for extermination. In that environment pink stood out as an anomaly, and was specifically chosen to indicate what did not belong. At this point I made a connection between the colour pink employed in this context, the fact that the queer community had commandeered pink as a symbol of identity and my own sense of estrangement within the bush.

It took a number of seasons to realize just how much pink existed within the bush of the upper Blue Mountains, and while its appearance bears no intrinsic cultural meaning, the observance and translation of it can transform natural pink into cultural artifact. Possibly the most striking example of pink in the Blue Mountains is at sunset when driving along the Darling Causeway from the Bells Line Road to Mount Victoria. A band of pink stretched across the horizon, above the Grose Valley, over Mount Hay and toward the townships. To the west, pink clouds hover before being extinguished by the setting sun.

It took two springs and summers for me to realise the extent of pink that seasonally emerges in the undergrowth. In the Blue Mountains there are at least sixteen varieties of plants that produce anything from pale to hot pink flowers. There is the pink-combed *Grevillea sericea* and *Dipodium punctatum* or trigger plant with its pink flowered stamen rising eagerly every spring. There is the particularly elusive and little known pink flannel flower *Actinopus forsythii*, a plant evocative for its metaphorical possibilities: it only grows in the

most punishing conditions. Attempts to distil a pink dye from *Indigofera australis* have proved fruitless, as it always turned to brown. The names *Glycine clandestina* and *Hardenbergia violacea* (*False Sarsparilla*) suggest concealment and artificiality, words that have long held historical associations to pink. Pink in the undergrowth, pink on the horizon, pink clouds to the west at sunset, the pink feathery crests of *gang gangs* and chests of *galahs*: even an enveloping pink mist. And, as if there wasn't enough pink in the mountains, there's even a queer group known as *Pink Mountains*.<sup>227</sup>

## 6 My Pink Bush and the Lost Limb

Up to this point I have introduced the reader to the overriding themes of my research. This chapter is designed to provide the reader with background information as to the motivations, sources or ideas that led to the creation of individual works. This will provide the reader with extra insights in relation to particular works and into how my body of work evolved. To avoid repetition, I will direct the reader to relevant sections within the written thesis if points have been addressed already.

A large component of my research was undertaken during a three-year period from 2003 when I lived in Blackheath in the Blue Mountains. It was in this location, so close to the bush, that I first began to consider what the bush was and how I could respond to it. Prior to moving to Blackheath from Sydney, my art practice was concerned with domestic consumerism and working with a repository of ever-renewing materials and objects derived from this sphere. This enabled me to be engaged with contemporary themes of consumer culture and gender, and further expand upon the themes and ideas developed by the predominantly American, 1970s Pattern and Decoration Movement. To find myself suddenly surrounded by muted tones and the organic forms of nature was artistically and culturally alienating. I felt compelled to overcome my artistic impasse, however, and find a method of responding to the bush.

One of the first images I produced was of a pink gum tree, replete with foliage, on artificial wood veneer paper normally used to decorate dollhouses. At its base lies a fallen pink limb. The title of the work, *My Pink Bush and the Lost Limb* (2003), (**figure 10**), was employed by Brenda Factor and by me for the naming of our part of an exhibition *Out on a Limb* at Bathurst Regional Gallery

in 2004.<sup>250</sup> The title shares a similar rhythm to the Hollywood movie blockbuster *Indiana Jones and The Temple of Doom* (1984). This connection amused me because moving away from the urban environment of Sydney into, what seemed, the nether regions of the Blue Mountains seemed like my own girl's adventure.

## **6.1 Dismemberments**

***Remembering Guston*, 2004, acrylic paint on canvas, 13 x 17.5 cm.**

***Remembering Manet*, 2004, acrylic paint on canvas, 23 x 28 cm.**

***Remembering Ernst*, 2004, acrylic paint on canvas, 61 x 51 cm.**

***Some Time Later at Mrs Muirhead's Station*, 2004, acrylic paint on canvas, 13 x 17.5 cm.**

***After Knut Bull's Carnage*, 2004, acrylic paint on canvas, 25 x 35 cm.**

***Forgetting Mr Boney's Farm*, 2004, acrylic paint on canvas, 51 x 66 cm.**

***Stumps Not Far From Bathurst*, 2004, acrylic paint on canvas, 45.5 x 61 cm.**

***Carnage on the Great Western Highway*, 2004, acrylic paint on canvas, 45.5 x 61 cm.**

***The Road to Brewongle*, 2004, acrylic paint on canvas, 101 x 137 cm.**

***Some Stumps to Remember Our Great artists By*, 2004, acrylic paint on canvas, 84 x 84 cm.**

***Stumps*, 2005, acrylic paint on canvas, 53 x 65 cm.**

***Body Towers* 2005, acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 84 cm.**

The *Dismemberments* series was first exhibited as part of *Out on a Limb*, an exhibition curated by University of Wollongong academic Melissa Boyde at Bathurst Regional Gallery in 2004 (Appendix 1). These paintings formed part of a collection of artworks, including sculptures, exhibited by Brenda Factor and by me under our subsection of the exhibition *My Pink Bush and the Lost Limb*. These paintings formed the first series to articulate my estrangement from the bush brand.

The works on canvas in the *Dismemberments* series will be discussed as a whole rather than individually because they generally share the same defining

elements. These include: a limited palette of magenta, permanent green and white; dismembered limbs or stumps as the only motifs employed; a strong presence of cast shadow; flat space and a defined horizon line. The significance of pink in my work has been discussed in Chapter 5 *Shades of Pink, Layers of Desire* whereas the other motifs or features has been discussed in the relevant sections in Chapter 3 *Life and Limb*. Overall, these elements work together to create a disquieting, compressed, theatrical, de-natured and libidinous space.

*Remembering Manet* (2004), *Remembering Ernst* (2004), (**figure 11**) and *Remembering Guston* (2004) were the first paintings to be created for the *Dismemberments* series. They reflect my interest in the fragmented body and recall pre-modernist and modernist works *Bar at the Folies-Bergere* (1882) by Edouard Manet, *The Elephant Celebes* (1921) by Max Ernst and non-specific works of Philip Guston. It emerged as a result of reading a monograph about Philip Guston's life and work and *The Body in Pieces: The Fragment as Metaphor* by art historian Linda Nochlin. While my work does not take the modern fragmentation of the body as its theme these books nevertheless stimulated ideas about the body fragment, its relationship within a de-natured Australian landscape and how it can operate as a psychological device in a theatre/landscape setting. *Remembering Guston* (2004) is in fact a still life, gum tree twigs collected from my backyard and piled in the manner of a Guston painting. These three works reflected my need to look beyond the bush in order to locate methods of responding to it. These famous paintings became the tools by which to connect to the outside world, the world beyond the bush paradigm.

The next group of paintings, *Some Time Later at Mrs Muirhead's Farm* (2004), *Forgetting Mr Boney's Farm* (2004) (**figure 12**) and *After Knut Bull's Carnage* (2004), retracted to the Australian (Tasmanian) landscape and consist of appropriated stumps, fallen logs and limbs from representations of the landscape by colonial artists John Glover and Knut Bull. These tree remains operate as a sub-text within the paintings of these artists, so by isolating them I



privilege their status to consider their meanings in relationship to their new surroundings and colours (Chapter 3, Life and Limb, Section 3.1). While the bush had not been cohered as an idea or as a symbol of identity at that stage, these are spaces that were to transform at a later date, from exotic or dangerous space to the bush landscape.

*Some Stumps to Remember Our Great Artists By* (2004) is an impudent response to the grand master narrative of Australian landscape painting. Stumps and limbs have been appropriated from various well-known works from Australia's colonial landscape history to form a cemetery commemorating dead white male artists.

*The Road to Brewongle* (2004) operates somewhat as an anomaly within the series only because it, more than the others, follows the conventions of landscape painting. It is based on a digital photograph I took from a roadside near Bathurst and signals the first image created from my own documentation, from my own excursions out into the Australian bush. The peaceful rural scenery painted in soft hues of pink and pink-greys is disrupted by a dark toned, foregrounded trunk and contorted, anthropomorphic limb. This gesture transforms the work into a psycho-sexual drama and suggests my own discomfort of feeling culturally alone in a space that was supposed to be a part of my identity. This work was most consciously created as a queer landscape. It was to appear (almost) natural apart from the flush of pink infused through its surface.

*Stumps not Far from Bathurst* (2004) and *Carnage on the Great Western Highway* (2004) are also based on my own digital documentation. The sensibility of stumps and limbs isolated in empty paddocks appealed to me more than the dense forests of the Blue Mountains. They looked like isolated, lonely bodies, a sense I gained of myself as I performed my excursions out west. *Stumps* (2005) mark a transition into domestic themes. It is a modified version of *Stumps not Far from Bathurst* yet this time the stumps surface appears to be full of holes. This was a tentative step toward painting the stump

as if it was made of domestic sponge. I enjoyed the holey effect that I had achieved in this image so rather than pursue the effect of sponge to the point of realism I allowed the stump to sit in the early stages of disintegration.

*Body Towers* (2005) is based on a group of twenty small sculptures I made which were inspired by the vertical towers built by a particular genus of ant in the Blue Mountains. (It is likely I was also reading about Eva Hesse's work at that time). When the ants detect the likelihood of rain they construct tall hollow towers over their ant holes as a method of protecting the nest. The sculptures are, in fact, solid grey forms capped with a pink suction cup removed from a rubber bath mat, each one resembling either a breast or a phallus. The suction cup is adhered to the tower with dripping pink impasto paint. In the painting I have transformed the grey surface of the body to pink to provide each tower with a fleshy bodily effect. They cast shadows of unrelated human forms. The shadow is taking up a life of its own.

## **6.2 Phantom Forests**

***Phantom Forest 1* (2004), floor vinyl and acrylic on MDF, 70 x 125 cm.**

***Phantom Forest 2* (2004), floor vinyl and acrylic on MDF, 70 x 125 cm.**

***Phantom Forest 3* (2006), floor vinyl and acrylic on MDF, 70 x 75 cm.**

***Phantom Forest 4* (2006), floor vinyl on marine ply, 3 panels 30 x 30 cm each.**

The works in the *Phantom Forest* series are constructed from floor vinyl in the form of cut-out silhouettes appropriated and muddled from a variety of nineteenth and twentieth century landscape paintings and from my own documentation.

The vinyl has been cut away to reveal pink surfaces, providing a link between image and skin and the way the bush brand builds or inscribes bodies. The use of artificial wood grain vinyl and positive and negative spaces question the authenticity of the bush brand as a true representation of Australian identity. Pink also refers to femininity and queerness. In these images each figure undergoes an inversion from wood vinyl to pink paint thereby transforming what were originally masculine figures into feminine or queer figures.

The title, *Phantom Forest*, refers to the notion of the phantom limb which was discussed in section 3.1 *The Stump and the Dismembered Limb*. When a person loses a limb they can continue to experience sensations as though the limb continues to exist, a phenomenon known as phantom limb. In my work I translate what would be an individual experience of loss into a cultural experience of loss. The forest represents an expanded, collective notion of the phantom limb.

### **6.3 Crossing the Wire**

***Crossing the Wire 1*, 2005, acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 91 cm.**

***Crossing the Wire 2*, 2005, acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 91 cm.**

***Crossing the Wire 3*, 2005, acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 91 cm.**

I was driving along a road in the Megalong Valley near Blackheath when I saw a kangaroo caught feet up in a new, tightly strained, barbed wire fence: dead I assumed. I approached the kangaroo to take a photo. It was a compelling scenario: an Australian icon brought into a compromising position by European progress: the barbed wire fence. At that point the 'roo writhed and hissed in fear, but both feet had become tightly bound. The two top wires twisted as it tried to clear the fence, probably the night before.

I managed to release it from its barbed wire trap and call WIRES. This kangaroo's predicament was actually a common occurrence as mobs of young bachelors moved about during the evenings in search of food and females. The wires of the fence had been embedded in the animal's legs, not enough to draw blood but certainly enough to cut off its circulation: a night of this entanglement provided the animal with little hope of survival. Indeed, the animal died several days later in the care of WIRES.

*Crossing the Wire 1* and *2*, image an Australian icon at once vulnerable and elegant in its last days. I deleted the fence so the animal appears suspended above the ground. The scenario is surreal and disquieting to reflect the interaction between my urban values and what I perceived as the brutality of

the bush. *Crossing the Wire 1* is also slightly perverse, the kangaroo is fetishised and the anus of the animal becomes somewhat of a focal point.

*Crossing the Wire 3* transforms the animal into a shape filled in with the pattern of a green domestic sponge. The kangaroo and the sponge have merged into a flat decorative motif. To the upper left of the kangaroo the skin of a gum tree peels back to reveal some more sponge, and to the lower right some balls of sponge seem to protrude from the surface, like some growths I observed on the leaves. This was an experiment of integration between the bush and the domestic.

#### **6.4 Domesticated Landscapes**

***Pine-O-Cleen Dream*, 2006, acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 91 cm.**

*Pine-O-Cleen Dream* is the first painting in which I have incorporated motifs from the packaging of domestic products, in this case from the label of a bottle of *Pine-O-Cleen* antiseptic, a cleaning agent found in many Australian homes. This image shares similarities to Richard Hamilton's collotype and screenprint *Soft Pink Landscape* (1980)<sup>251</sup> that depicts two young women in a soft pink dream-like forest setting while in the foreground sits a roll of *Andrex* toilet paper (soft pink). The intrusion of product placement into an otherwise fantastical communion between two young women and nature cheapens the image. The composition for the painting *Dismemberments: Some Stumps to Remember Our Great Artists By* (2004) has been recreated but modified to include a partial pinecone, a sparkle of cleanliness and a pine tree rendered in sponge effect. The reference to antiseptic can be read in a number of ways. The placement of fragments of a products label design immediately references the commercial sector and the way it intrudes on our visual life; it also references the mediating role of the domestic when we imagine the bush; the reference to antiseptic refers to the way notions of the bush and the Australian Landscape have been contaminated by 'unAustralian'<sup>252</sup>, 'black armband' politics.

***The Girl's Lost Bucket, 2006, acrylic paint on canvas, 51 x 61 cm.***

In colonial nineteenth century landscape paintings it is not uncommon to locate images of young girls (and boys) and women carrying buckets or pales in the course of their domestic duties. In my work, this refers not only to the domestic role of women but also to the sexuality of women as represented by the vessel, a theme popularly employed in, for example, seventeenth century Dutch domestic paintings. The bucket, and therefore the girl, has roamed beyond the limits of the home paddock, into the company of a cut-out bushranger and dog. The silhouettes of these figures have been re-dressed in the illusion of domestic sponge, compromising the masculine gender category of the human figure. The bucket has been partially filled with tree limbs (phallus or fingers?), suggesting a loss of innocence as a consequence of wandering into the wilderness. The feminine girl in the feminine wilderness throws her sexuality into question as she defies the expectations of her gender category and undertakes a journey into the masculine grand narrative. (Note the bucket is lost, not the girl). The imaging of innocent women is hard to sustain in contemporary images of the Australian landscape.

The theatricality of the space combined with the appropriation of figures from Australian landscape paintings, 2006, refers to the fictional construction and pliability of the bush brand as I set about muddling the myths.

The girl's lost bucket also appears in *At Home by the Pink Lakes (or Winnebago Dreaming)* (2006), discussed later in this section.

***Phantom Robbery, 2006, acrylic paint on canvas, 51 x 61 cm.***

Phantom Robbery re-presents a partial representation of the scenario in *Bailed Up* by Tom Roberts along with a silhouette from another painting depicting a young woman in a home paddock. The figures are painted in the domestic patterning of black and white floor tiling. The feminine figure in the foreground is dominant, attracting the gaze of the passenger confined within the carriage. The pink ghostly stumps show signs of arousal as they become flushed with pink. The normally central masculine events of the robbery have been diffused. This is achieved through their placement in the background, their decontextualisation from the rest of bushranging posse, and for being

painted white in contrast to the dominant black. The contrast between black and white gives rise to phantom images (Chapter 4, 4.5 *Exterior Decorating*).

***Phantom Rider 1*, 2006, acrylic paint on canvas, 71 x 91 cm.**

***Phantom Rider 2*, 2006, acrylic paint on canvas, 51 x 61 cm**

The black and white rider in this painting converges with the landscape, which is also painted to imitate black and white tiling. The masculine figure in both paintings is feminised by the domestic vinyl and converges with the feminine landscape. This aspect of the paintings imitates vinyl on vinyl works created earlier in the project. The silhouette of the rider in *Phantom Rider 1* is derived from my documentation of a monument on the Great Western Highway in Blackheath celebrating a mythical bushranger called Govett who plunged over the cliff to his death in the Grose Valley after being chased by the police. Govett was in fact a surveyor, and a small wishing well, at Govett's Leap, celebrates his achievements. The rider in *Phantom Rider 2* has been appropriated from *Bailed Up* by Tom Roberts.

***Out There From In Here*, 2006, acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 119 cm.**

The title of this work refers to the way we imagine the Australian landscape from the comfort of the domestic space. The black and white patterning inspired by vinyl floor covering indicates the mediation of the domestic space. This patterning occupies the surfaces of the two figures in the work, the emu and the dog, both appropriated and modified from Joseph Lycett's *View upon the South Esk River, Van Diemen's Land* (1823) and *Two Aborigines hunting emus* (1820). I wanted to include an emu into my work both because this bird is so quintessentially Australian, an icon of the Australian bush, and because I saw my first emu 'in the wild' in my drive in 2006 from Sydney to Adelaide. When I saw the first emu walking along the roadside near Balranald I could not believe my eyes: it appeared like a theatre prop, it was the artifice of the bush brand mediated by my windscreen. The invented world of the bush brand figured so large in Australia's collective, but largely urban, imagination that the reality of these giant birds appeared as artificial and unintelligible. Television told me these extraordinary birds lived in the wild, but I really didn't expect to see one. The shape of the emu has been appropriated from Joseph Lycett's *Two*

*Aborigines Hunting Emus* (1820)<sup>253</sup> apparently an image based on hunting activities around the Newcastle area where they were once a good source of food. There is documentation to indicate that Awabakal hunting parties were known to take Europeans on hunting trips. The European hunting dog, appropriated from Joseph Lycett's *View Upon the South Esk River, Van Dieman's Land* (1823)<sup>254</sup> also refers to the European presence and the hunting trips that eventually wiped out these birds and other fauna from this and other regions.

The stump in the foreground is based on one that I photographed alongside the Barrier Highway between Wilcannia and Cobar in NSW. It is a soft pink, phantom-like structure. At its base however is a rush of blood, similar to the one experienced by the statue of Pygmalion that came to life when Galatea touched her (see *Shades of Pink, Layers of Desire: Pink part Object*). The statue is brought to life by Galatea's desire and the artifice of the statue becomes reality. Sometimes what is constructed within the bush brand can appear and be real: a shock for the urbanite. Perhaps I fell in love with this bush ideal; perhaps I desire it.

***At Home by the Pink Lakes (or Winnebago Dreaming), 2006, acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 122 cm.***

I could not decide which title to give to this work, so it now has two titles. This image draws on my own documentation gathered on a return drive I undertook from Sydney to Adelaide. On the way to Adelaide I encountered the *Pink Lakes* near Underbool ('Pink Lakes Country') in South Western NSW. The fact that there was such a phenomenon as a 'pink lake' astounded me: it seemed too queer for words. I had to investigate. I was a little nervous about taking the dirt road to the lakes on my own. It was a further fifteen kilometres into the middle of nowhere, my mobile phone was already out of range and I hadn't told anyone about my deviation. I felt vulnerable. I envisaged being pursued by beer drinking, gun brandishing *yobbos* in V8s, but when I arrived at the end of the road, however, there was no one. There were just salt lakes in a stark landscape, which at the time of my visit were predominantly dry and soft pink

in colour. The surrounding saltbush was in a deep magenta bloom. To find pink on such a scale within the Australian landscape and in such an isolated space was astonishing and encouraged me to consider its symbolism. It was softly feminine and it was queer, hence my usage of the term *At Home* in the title of this work. *At Home* refers to how comfortable I felt in this space because it provided a point of identification. *At Home* refers to the historical associations of feminine pink and the domestic. *At Home*, however, also refers to the phenomena of the mobile home that is enabling the concept of home and house to be literally locating itself into some of the most isolated regions of Australia. The mobile home imaged in this painting was documented at a rest stop on the Barrier Highway between Broken Hill and Wilcannia on my return trip to Sydney in June 2006. The mobile home ensemble included a *Winnebago Alpine* mobile home of considerable size and a trailer carrying a small four-wheel drive vehicle and a bicycle.

*At Home by the Pink Lakes (or Winnebago Dreaming)* also refers to one of the great Australian dreams: to travel around Australia. This popular dream is having a significant impact on the cultural life of the bush although one that is contained on route to the most spectacular sights of Australia. The movement of mobile homes through the bush creates an interface between suburbia and the bush.

The girl's lost bucket reappears in this painting. See *The Girl's Lost Bucket* above.

***Baygon Days, 2007, acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 122 cm.***

This image features a seated figure and rifle leaning on a fallen tree. Beside the figure sits a dog. In the background there is a four-wheel-drive vehicle, several tree stumps and a curious decorative motif hovering in the sky.

*Baygon Days* is a tableau constructed from motifs selected from imagery created by Joseph Lycett, product packaging and an Internet image of serial killer, Ivan Milat. The space is flat except for the pronounced horizon line, which defines the land from the infinite distance of the sky. The ambiguity of



spatial relationships continues with the combination of cut-outs and the illusion of three-dimensional objects. The image details of Ivan Milat and the four-wheel-drive vehicle are concealed and feminised by the domestic realm in the rendered black and white tiling, a design drawn from floor vinyl but reduced in scale. This and the decorative design in the sky reference the domestic, the tiling referring to the way in which our knowledge of events such as the 'Backpacker Murders' are mediated by the domestic space, the decorative motif being drawn from a new product developed by *Baygon*, the *Fly Control Window Sticker*.<sup>255</sup> This pest control refers to the blight of contemporary crime on the idyllic and heroic imaging of life in the bush. The image produced by Joseph Lycett *Liverpool, New South Wales* (1823) has been referenced to link the past with the present, and coincidentally refers to events that occurred in that region. In Lycett's image, a hunter rests with his two rifles upon a fallen tree in a similar position that the cut-out of Milat occupies in *Baygon Days*. The image of Milat is derived from a well-known photograph of Milat sitting on a sofa in a lounge room with a rifle and ammunition. The integration of the two images provides a historical continuum of gun culture in Australia from British inspired hunting excursions and conflict with the indigenous populations through to late twentieth century serial murders.

***The Freedom to be Dirty, 2007, acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 122 cm.***

**(figure 13)**

The title of this work has been derived from the wording on a box of *Omo* washing powder. The product works so well, it suggests on the packaging, that parents can relax in the full knowledge that their children can be children, can play and get dirty and afterwards have their clothes come up clean in the wash.

I have applied this theme to the historical and personal transitions that women have made from being 'frothed and fair' to wearing trousers and performing what was regarded as men's work in the bush. Many women, through either necessity or choice, cast aside the shackles of domesticity and femininity to enjoy greater mobility and work choices in the Australian bush. In order to do this, some, like jockey Bill (Wilhemena) Smith, had to pass as men in order to achieve their goals. The figure on the racehorse, while actually drawn from an

Internet image of a contemporary British woman jockey, refers to Smith and the achievement of her goals to be a jockey. Yet this wasn't simply a transition of being freed from living the life of a woman, it was a shift to living within the constraints of concealment. Bill rarely spoke and never revealed her body to anyone until she was in hospital two weeks before her death. In the foreground, I have also imaged a silhouette of my partner Brenda Factor and myself wearing trousers and standing beside our dog Minnie.

The figures have been emptied out and refilled with a fabric pattern, not to conceal the identity of the figures but rather to make their gender inconsequential.

***A Bush Burial, 2007, acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 122 cm.***

*A Bush Burial* refers partly to the shooting and disappearance of Peter Falconio on the Stuart Highway in 2001, an event that further blemished the bush brand. The narrative of this event, however, has been confused within a collection of unrelated motifs. The title, for example, refers to Frederick McCubbin's *The Bush Burial* (1890), a painting that refers to the end of the pioneer era and suggests that the pioneers made sacrifices to benefit not themselves, but the interests of the new colony. The pioneering spirit lives on, however, in the form of a more personal pursuit of discovery and adventure embodied in tourism. The kombi van symbolized, particularly to young people in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, an escape from everyday working life. Yet, as has been proven time and time again in Australia, this domesticated form of frontierism is not without its dangers.

The burial site is situated to the lower left of the date palm (itself and the camel providing an additional subtext of the part played by the 'Ghans' in the history of pioneering in Australia). A figure appropriated and reversed from *Down on his Luck* (1889) by Frederick McCubbin was originally located on this site but it sat uncomfortably both compositionally and textually. The figure offered a far more interesting subtext by being entombed between the canvas and layers of differently toned paint to indicate its deliberate erasure and burial. The

erasure of some historical narratives and the preservation of others is a task of contemporary culture.

References to other well-known Australian paintings can be located within this painting as a means of further situating the work within the Australian landscape tradition and to confuse the narrative and timeframe of what is depicted. The foregrounded and strangely perverse stumps reference McCubbins *Lost* (1886) while the stumps toward the horizon line are a modified version of the background forest in *Winter Morning, near Heidelberg* (1869) by Louis Buvelot, the so-called ‘grandfather’ of Australian landscape painting. The settlers depicted in the latter painting have already commenced the process of modification: clearing, gathering and burning tree limbs in an effort to domesticate the land. The vehicle is based on an image of the Kombi van that was held as evidence against Bradley John Murdoch who was on trial for murdering Peter Falconio. The narrative is not clear however, since it has been confused with figures appropriated from *Bailed Up* (1895-1927) By Tom Roberts.

The high key colours and relative lack of contrast, the ambling nature of the camel and the way it has defecated indifferently to the unfolding events create a sense of disquiet within the bush, where violent events are swallowed up in the moment and in the space. The purple pattern that has come to occupy the figures, and thereby conceal their particular details, was appropriated from a ‘funky’ domestic sponge imported into Australia from South Korea.

***Loose Trousers to Camel Toes*, 2008, acrylic paint on canvas,  
122 x 270 cm. (figure 14).**

The silhouettes of the figures embodied within the tryptich *Loose Trousers to Camel Toes* (2008) have been appropriated from paintings by artists Hilda Rix Nicholas and Grace Taylor. These artists signalled a new development in Australian landscape painting because they represented women wearing trousers for perhaps the first time. Also featured is a silhouette appropriated from a newspaper image depicting a young woman jockey riding in the bush

during the horse influenza of 2007, to draw a connection from the past to the present.

The tent and car silhouetted on the horizon belonged to Lindy and Michael Chamberlain at the time of their camping trip near Uluru in 1978 when their baby girl, Azaria, disappeared. Lindy Chamberlain was found guilty and incarcerated for her child's murder, largely as a consequence of public outrage about the case. After an appeal there was found to be insufficient evidence and she was released from prison. Many myths revolved around this event and despite her innocence, Lindy Chamberlain continued to be labelled as the bad mother for leaving the domestic sphere and taking her baby out into the wilderness.

The pattern that obscures the identity of the figures and forms was appropriated and modified from a packet of coconut biscuits purchased in a Chinese grocery store in Flemington, Sydney. The biscuits were manufactured in Dongguan City, Guangdong Province in China. The pattern references the long history of Chinese settlement in Australia. The attire worn by Chinese settlers, often described as baggy trousers, was regularly employed to describe their differences from the settlers of Anglo-Celtic origin.

Several more 'burial sites' appear in this painting. The 'burial site' enables me to experiment and be more flexible about the inclusion and exclusion of extra figures. On these sites I had placed figures as patches of light, rather than shadow, but on not liking the effect, I buried them under a few layers of paint.

***Going Bush*, 2008, acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 122 cm.**

*Going Bush* is the name of a travel show hosted by Olympian Cathy Freeman, actor Deborah Mailman (and later Luke Carroll in Series 2) aired on SBS in February 2006.<sup>256</sup> This painting embodies a silhouette of Cathy Freeman as she sprints the two hundred metres in the 2000 World Olympic Games in Australia in her super hero running outfit. Here she is running through the bush, her identity concealed by a domestic wallpaper pattern I observed while watching *Dr Who*. To the left sit two boab trees that have been transformed into strange

fleshy figures. The original trees, located in Western Australia, were featured in one of their expeditions. Cathy and Deborah are “self confessed city girls”<sup>257</sup> and had themselves, made many assumptions about Aboriginal cultures. These expeditions forced them to look beyond the paradigm of Aboriginal cultures as old and static, to one that is diverse, dynamic and evolving.

### **6.5 Bush Icons**

***Dingoes are Wild*, 2007, acrylic paint on canvas, 30 x 30 cm.**

***Snowy River*, 2007, acrylic paint on canvas, 30 x 30 cm.**

***Off the Block*, 2007, acrylic paint on canvas, 30 x 30 cm.**

***Funky Sponge 4WD*, 2007, acrylic paint on canvas, 30 x 30 cm.**

***On a Plate*, 2008, acrylic paint on canvas, 30 x 30 cm.**

This series of five small paintings identify bush icons and isolate them into a direct exchange between icon and domestic patterns or surfaces.

### **6.6 Collages**

***Out West*, 2007, mixed media and acrylic paint on MDF, 25 x 35 cm.**

***Bush Basher* (2007), mixed media and acrylic paint on MDF, 25 x 35 cm.**

***Don't Mess with Bill*, (2007), mixed media and acrylic paint on MDF, 25 x 35 cm.**

***Desert Queens*, (2008), mixed media and acrylic paint on MDF, 25 x 35 cm.**

***Solid as a Brick*, (2008), mixed media and acrylic paint on MDF, 25 x 35 cm.**

***The Bush Rocks* (2008), mixed media and acrylic paint on MDF, 25 x 35 cm.**

***Down at the Oasis* (2008), mixed media and acrylic paint on MDF, 25 x 35 cm.**

This series of collages reflects the construction of my paintings and offer a new direction in materiality that escapes the traditional methods of landscape painting while continuing to participate in representation and landscape. Collage enabled me to work faster through themes and ideas during the final

stages of research. Featured figures include: jockey Bill (Wilhemena) Smith; the main cast from the Australian movie *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* and Robyn Davidson with one of her camels.

## 7 Back and Beyond

The bush, as an idea located within landscape discourse, emerged in Australia during the late nineteenth century, within the context of rising nationalist sentiment and a search for a cohesive collective identity. It is a paradigm or a brand that is supported by an ideology and iconography that is anti-city, relies on a British genealogy and is constructed according to hetero-normative strategies. The bush takes white male identity as its dominant theme while all other representations of identity are subordinated to it. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the bush brand as I most commonly refer to it, continues to be reinforced through Australia's political and cultural institutions and various forms of media. The aim of this research project has been to speculate on the extent to which the bush brand, as represented within the traditions of landscape painting, is open to negotiation particularly on matters relating to gender and sexuality. To undertake this investigation I have developed a strategy to ideologically and symbolically engage with the bush brand while, simultaneously, enabling the introduction of a new system of signs, symbols and ideas, to disrupt its internal logic and cohesion.

One of the first objectives to emerge at the outset of my research was to convey, within the genre of Australian figurative landscape painting, a sense of estrangement from the bush brand. In many ways, this formed the foundation for my investigation because it was an expression necessarily bound up in issues of identity and representation. I modified a system of signs and symbols associated with landscape traditions, for example, tree limbs and stumps, present and absent shadows, theatrical space and horizons lines, to commentate on the dubious status of the bush brand, in its current form, to represent

Australian identity. The bush is an elusive term, its meanings constantly shifting between reality and representation. Representations of the bush brand have relied on ideologies that foster myths built on the subordination and absences of marginalized cultures.

Taking a cue from Judith Butler's research into gender identity categories, I disrupt the internal coherence and logic of the bush brand by placing subordinate terms at the very heart of the dominant ones. My approach to this problem is to integrate signs, symbols and ideas derived from urban and domestic spaces, into paintings that embody an iconography of the bush landscape. This enables signs normally located outside of the brand, to interact in an exchange of language and ideology, within the brand itself. Part of the solution I identified, involves the appropriation of male hero figures from bush landscapes, and cross-dressing their silhouettes in motifs or patterns appropriated from the feminine domestic sphere. This functions as a method of undermining their masculinity and male identity. The notion of cross-dressing also points to the theatrical and performative qualities of representation and who is being represented. Even though the identities of the figures appear fixed in the paintings, the suggestion exists that these can be renegotiated. It could be perceived that this strategy simply perpetuates themes of male identity by representing it in different forms. Yet, by stripping the figures of their defining features, the designation of their gender (and often, British origins) remains a matter for conjecture (although I do reveal the sources of many of the original figures in Chapter 6, *My Pink Bush and the Lost Limb*, to inform the viewer of my process). To further disrupt the distinction between gender categories, I also incorporate the silhouettes of figures from other genders and cultural contexts. This integration of figures also serves to muddle and confuse the readability of well-known myths contained within the bush brand.

The colour pink, as a queer symbol of pride and symbol of femininity, is incorporated into the paintings I have produced for this research project. If it isn't embodied within a motif or a pattern then it is infused into the paint mixes or the under-painting. This infusion of queer and gender discourses provides



another strategy by which to disrupt the ideology of the bush brand. When Brenda Factor and I exhibited *My Pink Bush and the Lost Limb* at Bathurst Regional Gallery in 2004, a visitor commented to one of the curatorial staff in a disapproving way: “you know what pink means don’t you?”<sup>258</sup> Perhaps this is an indication of the success of using pink as a subversive communication tool, particularly in the bush.

Lucy Frost expressed a concern about simply ‘refurbishing the brand’ because, she argued, by making it more inclusive, as she did with her research into women in the bush, one simply refigures the icon and in fact strengthens the brand by re-establishing its relevance in contemporary society. My research project, the bulk of which took part during the Howard era, played a negligible role, I believe, in keeping the brand alive. The culture of the conservative Liberal Party was far too efficient in this respect, by placing the representation of the bush brand high on its nationalist agenda. This all seemed rather grim, except that it provided me with an excellent repository of contemporary source material to consider and critique.

By diffusing the specificity of representation, and by employing the strategy of parody, I have avoided some of the nationalist pitfalls of representing the brand because these methods operate as internal critiques. My goal was not to seek ways of identifying with the brand, or necessarily representing specific *others*, but expressing my estrangement from it. While powerful forces within the dominant culture are intent on preserving the bush brand, my paintings and research present the argument that it is more indeterminate, amorphous and negotiable than Lucy Frost would have us believe. The significant role that the ideology of the bush brand plays in the genre of landscape painting, for example, has diminished since its inception. In saying that, however, it is a paradigm that waxes and wanes according to the climate of nationalist sentiment. It is persistent and has revealed its capacity to regroup after comparative periods of dormancy. As the cultural face of Australia increasingly transforms, however, it is likely that the bush brand, and its identifying attributes, will seem increasingly old fashioned and irrelevant.

There are artists, for example Gordon Bennett and Narelle Jubelin, who have found new ways of interpreting their, or their culture's, relationship with the land that does not involve representing subordinate and dominant terms, or at the very least, methods of inverting these terms.

It must be quite natural to feel, after a long period of intense research, that so many questions remain unanswered, that there are more objectives to achieve, and better ways of expressing oneself. Below I shall detail some of the problems I encountered within my research project and what future directions may lay ahead.

Throughout my critique of the bush brand, I have remained acutely aware that the task of representation required by figurative landscape painting, is a problematic and sensitive one based on issues of inclusion and exclusion in relation to the land. I did not want other cultures to be absent in my representations, as they have within the bush brand and pastoral landscapes, nor did I want to be complicit in any processes of objectification, misrepresentation or cultural theft. Somehow I wanted to acknowledge the cultures that I interact with and observe around me. While I deliberated over this issue, my research focused on critiquing the construction of gender categories within the bush brand. It was not until my last year of research that I really began to visually grapple with broader issues of cultural representation.

My initial solution to representations of culture was to empty figures of their defining features so that they could in fact represent anyone (although the profile of the figures does indicate the type of clothing worn by the figure, so that would exclude anyone wearing, for example, a sari). I chose domestic patterns that did not necessarily reflect one culture or another and could perhaps be found in anyone's home, anywhere in Australia, or indeed, many parts of the world. Often these products were manufactured in China or South Korea thereby carrying a relationship with these cultures. People could read

their own identity into the figures if they wished. What concerned me about this approach, however, was that it functioned as a form of visual assimilation.

My next step was choosing silhouettes of Australians who were not from Anglo-Celtic backgrounds and who either occupied public profiles in contemporary culture or from whom I had sought permission to represent. The strategy here is to intermingle these representations so that no assumptions could be made about the cultural identity of any particular figure. Cathy Freeman as Olympian and co-host of *Going Bush*, Penny Wong, Federal Minister for Environment and Climate Change and my partner Brenda Factor with whom I lived on the edge of the bush, seemed to fit the bill perfectly as a foray into this subject. The other strategy was to choose motifs other than human silhouettes that signified the presence of cultures other than British within the bush brand: camels and date palms, a pattern appropriated from a packet of Chinese coconut biscuits and paper wrapping from a Lebanese sweet shop.

Finally, I will comment on the format and materials of my artworks. For this research I adhered to the traditional format of the square canvas that was employed by Australian landscape artists to represent the bush. Rather than paint with traditional oils, I instead decided that acrylic paint would be a more appropriate medium because of the connection between its artificiality and the bush brand as artifice. I also created a number of small sculptures and collaborated on an installation piece, *Our Pink Tent* (2004), with Brenda Factor but in the end, excluded these works from my research project, since they digressed too far from the painting objectives set out for this research. What I did include with the paintings, however, is a series of collages that I assembled in the last stages of this research. These works very much reflect the way I construct my paintings and indicate a new material, perhaps even spatial, direction for the future. The materials I incorporate into these works have the capacity to signify so much more than layers of paint because they are artifacts generated from a broad range of cultural and social contexts for an equally diverse range of purposes. As a result, the collages have provided an added and

successful material strategy to further contribute to the disruptions already taking place inside my representations of the bush. By applying the range of strategies outlined in this conclusion I have demonstrated that it is possible to reconceptualize the bush brand to accommodate new themes of identity.

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- Figure 5** Anonymous, Portrait of Wilhemena (Bill) Smith, 1974, Herberton, Far North Queensland. **/between 62 and 63**
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- Figure 13** Sally Clarke, *The Freedom To Be Dirty*, acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 112 cm. Image: Michel Brouet. **/between 127 and 128**
- Figure 14** Sally Clarke, *Loose Trousers To Camel Toes*, 2008, acrylic paint on canvas, 112 x 277 cm. Image: Michel Brouet. **/between 129 and 130**



**Figure 1. Penleigh Boyd, *The Canberra Site*, 1913, watercolour on paper, 18 x 36.5 cm. (the oil on canvas version hangs in Parliament House).**



**Figure 2. Kenneth K. Noza, High Commissioner for Papua New Guinea, presents a letter of introduction to Prime Minister John Howard in 1996.**



**Figure 3. John Howard and family at home in Wollstonecraft, 1985. Note the landscape pinned to the Australian flag in the top left hand corner.**

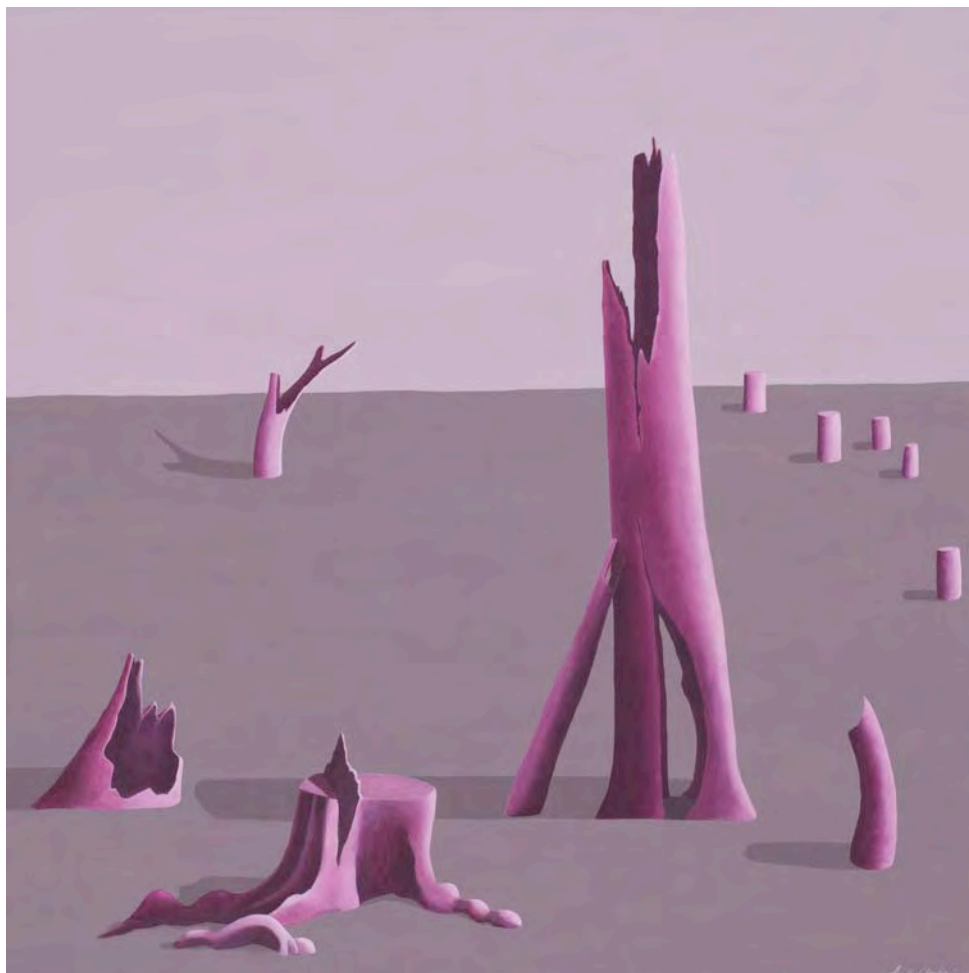




**Figure 4. A ceremony attended by Jan Fullerton, Director of the National Library of Australia, to accept the return of Kingford-Smith's wings which were taken into space on the space shuttle Discovery by Adelaide-born astronaut Andy Thomas. Image taken at Parliament House.**



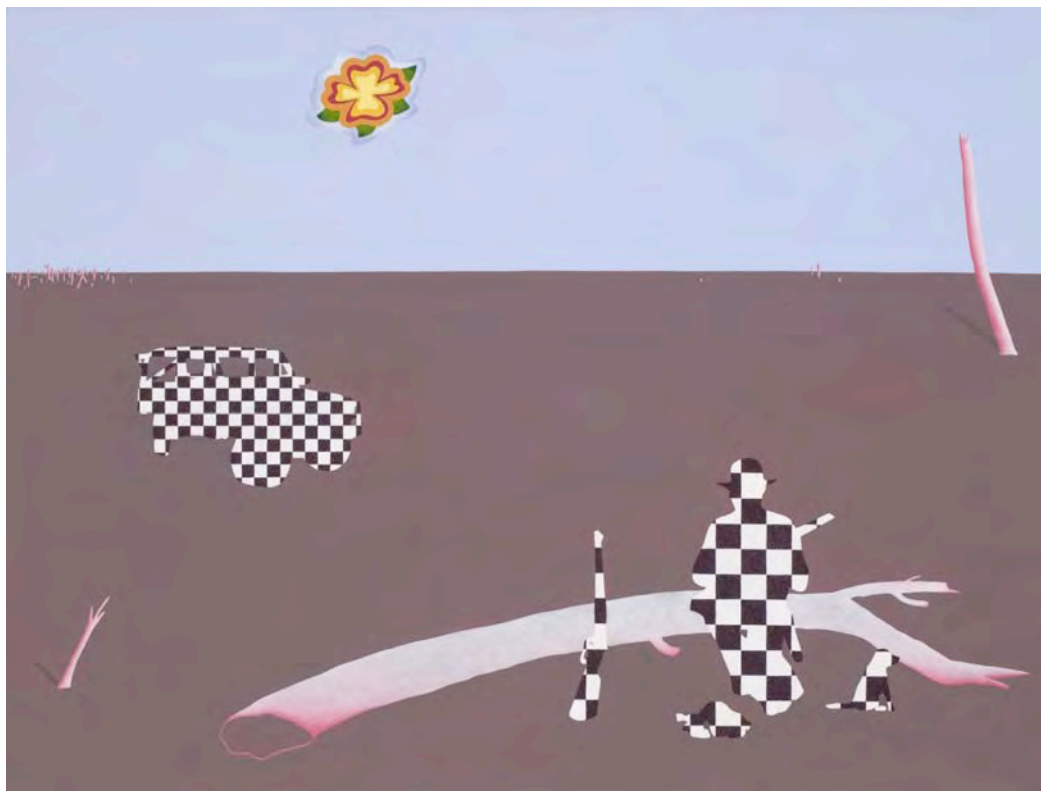
**Figure 5. Anonymous, *Portrait of Wilhemena (Bill) Smith*, 1974, Herberton, Far North Queensland.**



**Figure 6.** Sally Clarke, *Dismemberments: Some Stumps To Remember Our Great Artists By*, 2004, acrylic paint on canvas, 84 x 84 cm.



**Figure 7.** Sally Clarke, *On A Plate*, 2008, acrylic paint on canvas, 30 x 30 cm.



**Figure 8.** Sally Clarke, *Baygon Days*, acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 122 cm.



**Figure 9. Sally Clarke and Brenda Factor, *Figs in Space*, 2002, nylon fabric and blowers, each leaf 450 x 320 x 100 cm.**

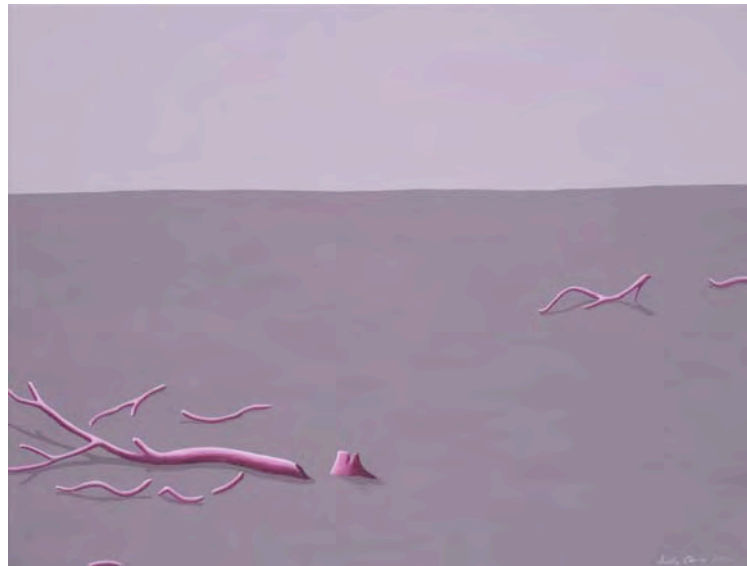




**Figure 10. Sally Clarke, *My Pink Bush And The Lost Limb*, acrylic paint on plasticised paper, 42 x 29 cm.**



**Figure 11.** Sally Clarke, *Dismemberments: Remembering Ernst*, 2004, acrylic paint on canvas, 61 x 50.5 cm.

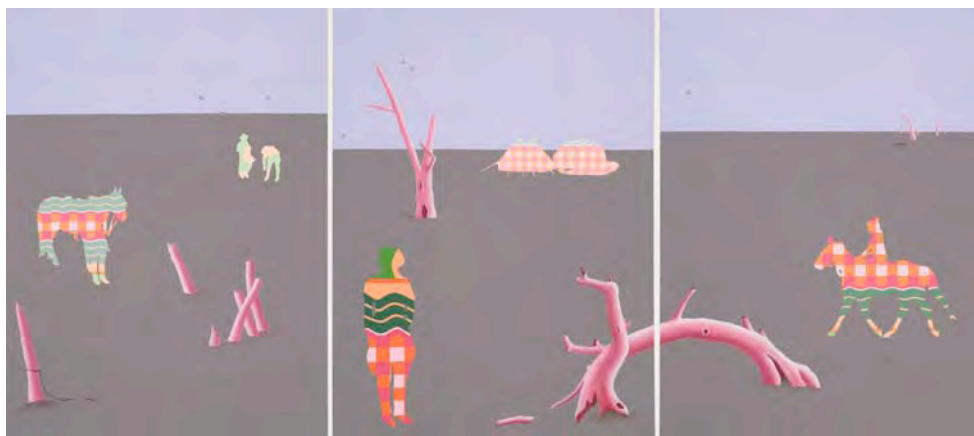


**Figure 12.** Sally Clarke, *Dismemberments: Forgetting Mr Boney's Farm*, acrylic paint on canvas, 51 x 66 cm.





**Figure 13.** Sally Clarke, *The Freedom To Be Dirty*, 2007, acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 122 cm.



**Figure 14.** Sally Clarke, *Loose Trousers To Camel Toes*, 2008, acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 277cm.

# Appendix 1

## List of Works by Sally Clarke on PowerPoint.

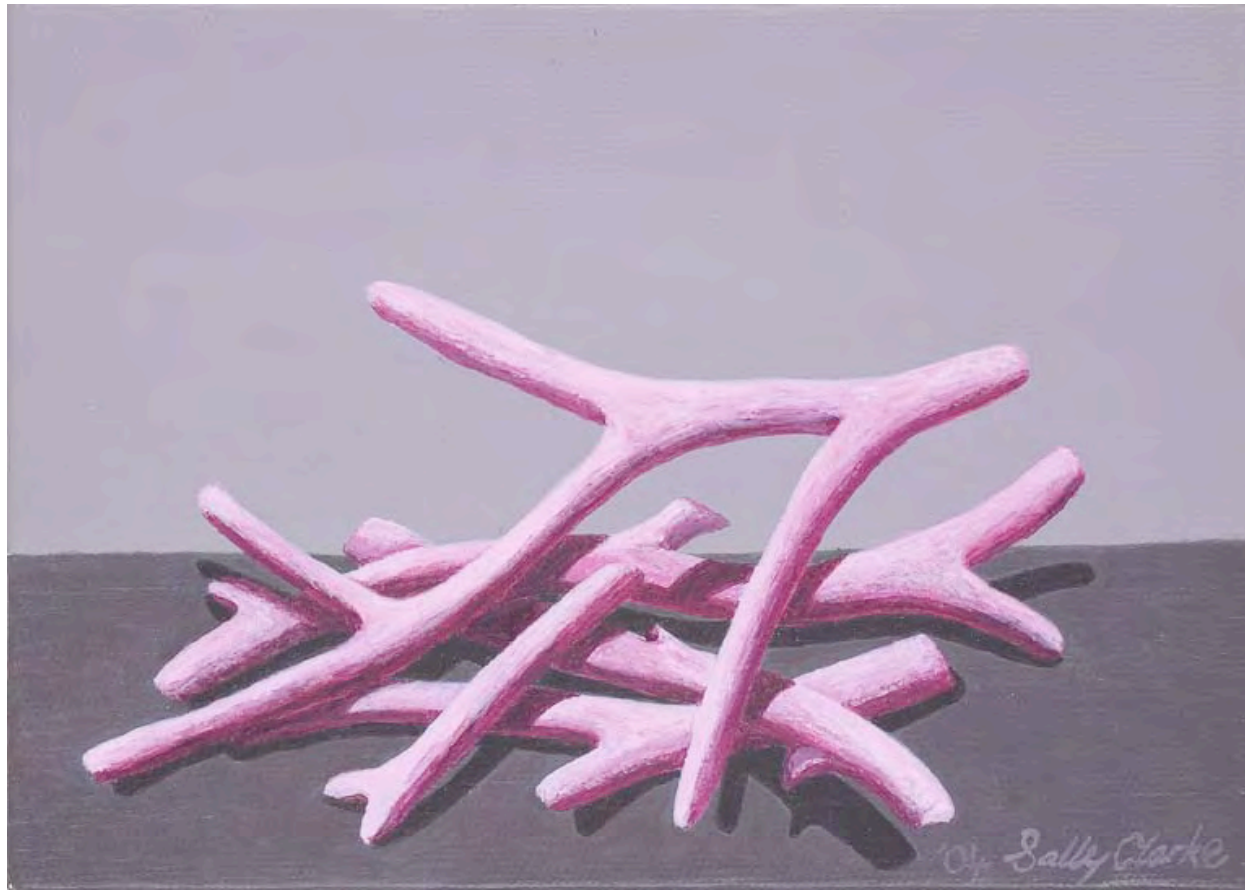
1. *My Pink Bush And The Lost Limb*, 2004, acrylic paint on plasticised paper, 44 x 31 cm
2. *Dismemberments: Remembering Guston*, 2004, acrylic paint on canvas, 13 x 17.5 cm
3. *Dismemberments: Some Time Later At Mrs Muirhead's Station*, 2004, acrylic paint on canvas, 13 x 17.5 cm
4. *Dismemberments: Remembering Manet*, 2004, acrylic paint on canvas, 23 x 28 cm
5. *Dismemberments: Remembering Ernst*, 2004, acrylic paint on canvas, 61 x 50.5 cm
6. *Dismemberments: Forgetting Mr Boney's Farm*, 2004, acrylic paint on canvas, 51 x 66 cm
7. *Dismemberments: After Knut Bull's Carnage*, 2004, acrylic paint on canvas, 25 x 35 cm
8. *Dismemberments: Some Stumps To Remember Our Great artists By*, 2004, acrylic paint on canvas, 84 x 84 cm
9. *Dismemberments: Carnage on the Great Western Highway*, 2004, acrylic paint on canvas, 45.5 x 61 cm
10. *Dismemberments: The Road To Brewongle*, 2004, acrylic paint on canvas, 101 x 137 cm
11. *Dismemberments: Stumps Not Far From Bathurst*, 2004, acrylic paint on canvas, 45.5 x 61 cm
12. *Dismemberments: Stumps*, 2005, acrylic paint on canvas, 53 x 65 cm
13. *Dismemberments: Body Towers*, 2004, acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 84 cm
14. *Crossing the Wire 1*, 2005, acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 91 cm
15. *Crossing the Wire 2*, 2005, acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 91 cm
16. *Crossing the Wire 3*, 2005, acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 91 cm
17. *Pine-O-Cleen Dream*, 2006, acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 91 cm
18. *Phantom Forest 1*, 2004, floor vinyl, acrylic paint on MDF (10 panels), 70 x 125 cm

19. *Phantom Forest 2*, 2004, floor vinyl, acrylic paint on MDF (10 panels),  
70 x 125 cm
20. *Phantom Forest 3*, 2005, floor vinyl, acrylic paint on MDF (6 panels),  
70 x 75 cm
21. *Phantom Forest 4*, 2005, floor vinyl on marine ply, each panel 30 x 30 cm
22. *Phantom Rider 1*, 2006, acrylic paint on canvas, 71 x 91 cm
23. *Phantom Rider 2*, 2006, acrylic paint on canvas, 51 x 61 cm
24. *Phantom Robbery*, 2006, acrylic paint on canvas, 51 x 61 cm
25. *The Girl's Lost Bucket*, 2006, acrylic paint on canvas, 51 x 61 cm
26. *Out There From In Here*, 2006, acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 112 cm
27. *At Home By The Pink Lakes (or Winnebago Dreaming)*, 2006, acrylic paint  
on canvas, 91 x 122 cm
28. *Baygon Days*, 2007, acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 122 cm
29. *The Freedom To Be Dirty*, 2007, acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 122 cm
30. *A Bush Burial*, 2007, acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 122 cm
31. *Going Bush*, 2008, acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 122 cm
32. *Loose Trousers To Camel Toes*, 2008, acrylic paint on canvas,  
122 x 277 cm
33. *Funky Sponge 4WD*, 2007, acrylic paint on canvas, 30 x 30 cm
34. *From Snowy River*, 2007, acrylic paint on canvas, 30 x 30 cm
35. *Off The Block*, 2007, acrylic paint on canvas, 30 x 30 cm
36. *Dingoes are Wild*, 2007, acrylic paint on canvas, 30 x 30 cm
37. *On A Plate*, 2008, acrylic paint on canvas, 30 x 30 cm
38. *Out West*, 2007, acrylic paint and mixed media on MDF, 25 x 35 cm
39. *Don't Mess with Bill*, 2007, acrylic paint and mixed media on MDF,  
25 x 35 cm
40. *The Bush Basher*, 2007, acrylic paint and mixed media on MDF,  
25 x 35 cm
41. *The Bush Rocks*, 2008, acrylic paint and mixed media on MDF, 25 x 35 cm
42. *Down at the Oasis*, 2008, acrylic paint and mixed media on MDF,  
25 x 35 cm
43. *Solid as a Brick*, 2008, acrylic paint and mixed media on MDF, 25 x 35 cm
44. *Desert Queens*, 2008, acrylic paint and mixed media on MDF, 25 x 35 cm

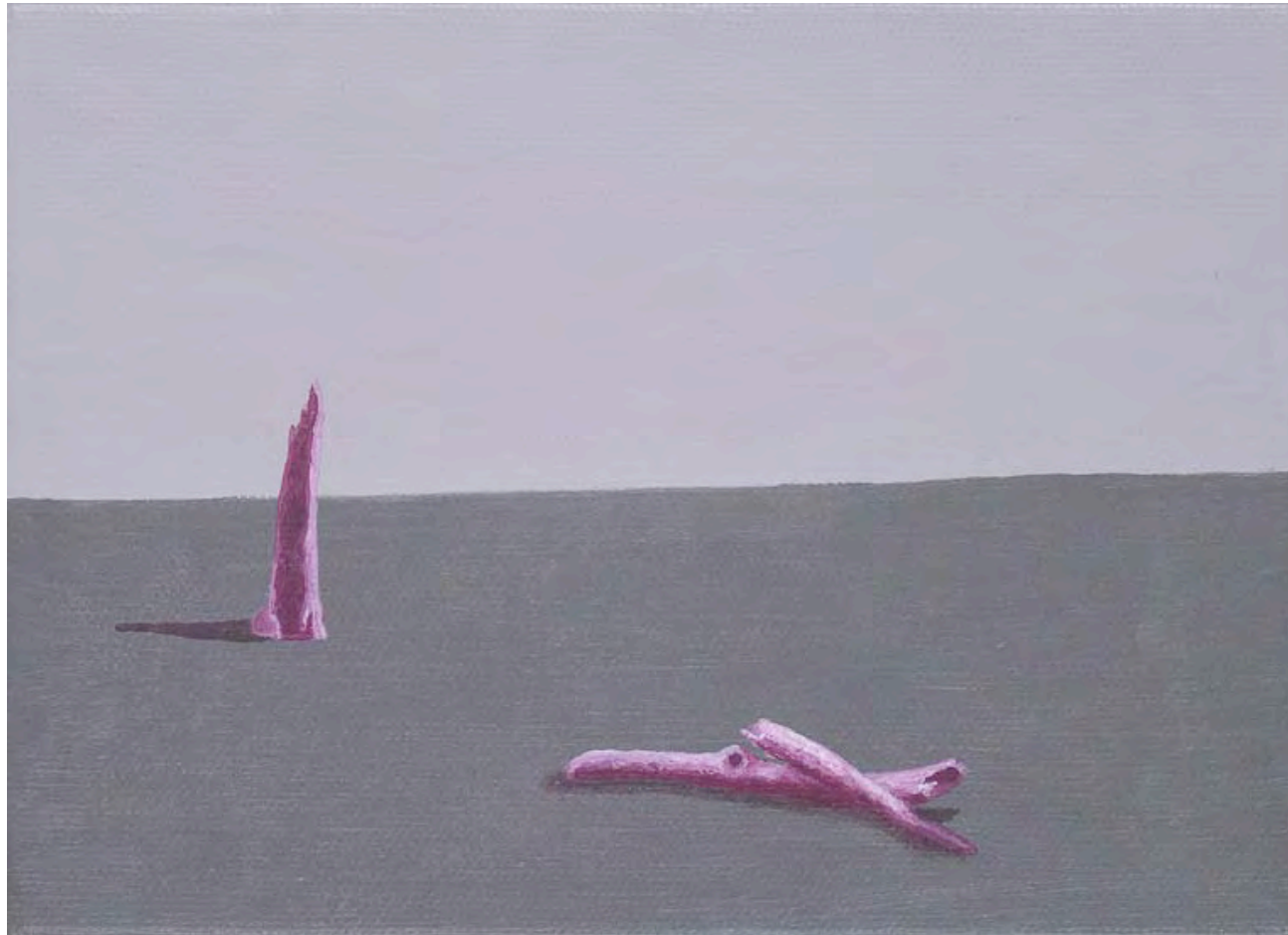
Sally Clarke, *My Pink Bush And The Lost Limb*, 2004,  
acrylic paint on plasticised paper, 44 x 31 cm



Sally Clarke, *Dismemberments: Remembering Guston*, 2004,  
acrylic paint on canvas, 13 x 17.5 cm



Sally Clarke, *Dismemberments: Some Time Later At Mrs Muirhead's Station*, 2004,  
acrylic paint on canvas, 13 x 17.5 cm



Sally Clarke, *Dismemberments: Remembering Manet*, 2004,  
acrylic paint on canvas, 23 x 28 cm

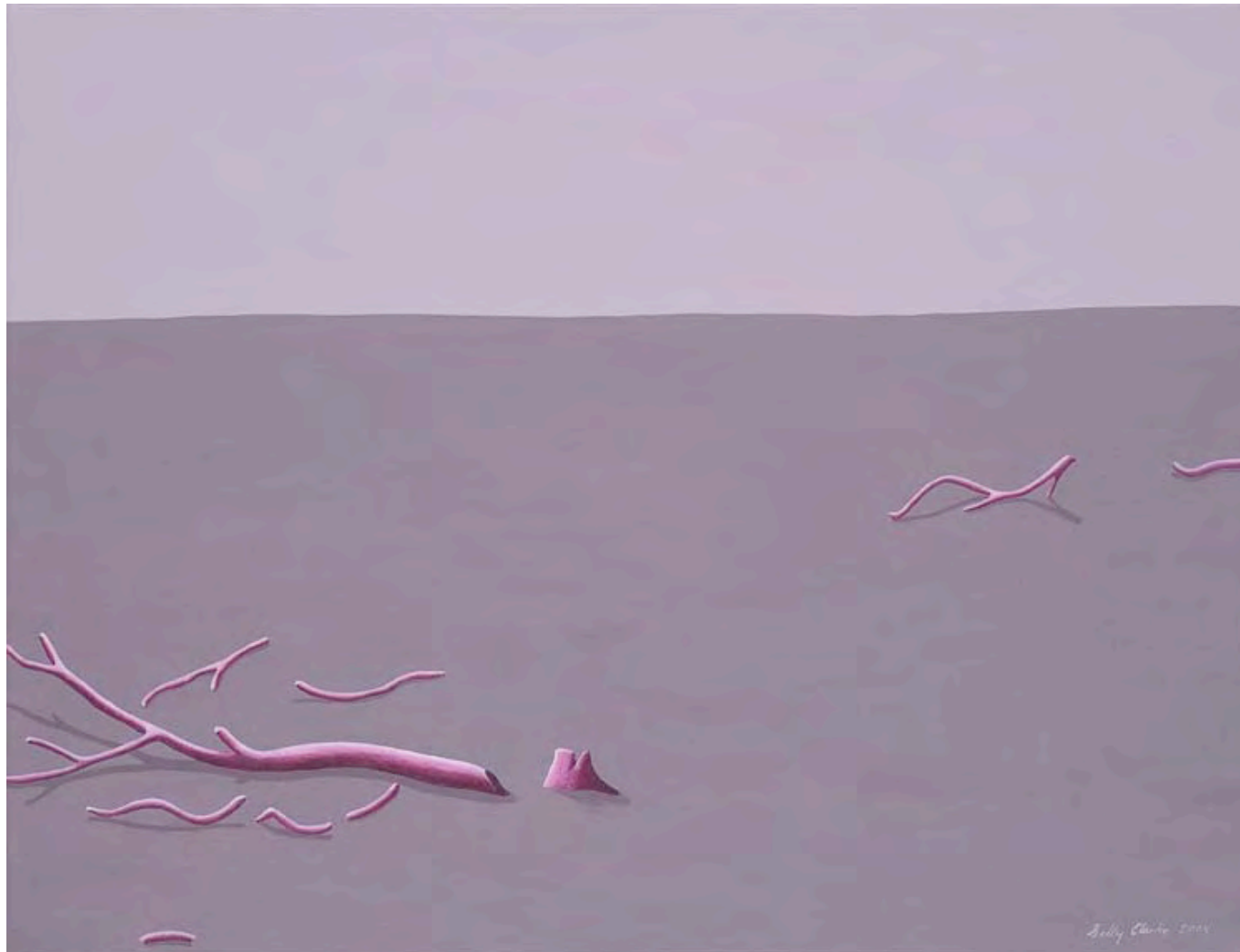




Sally Clarke, *Dismemberments: Remembering Ernst*, 2004,  
acrylic paint on canvas, 61 x 51 cm



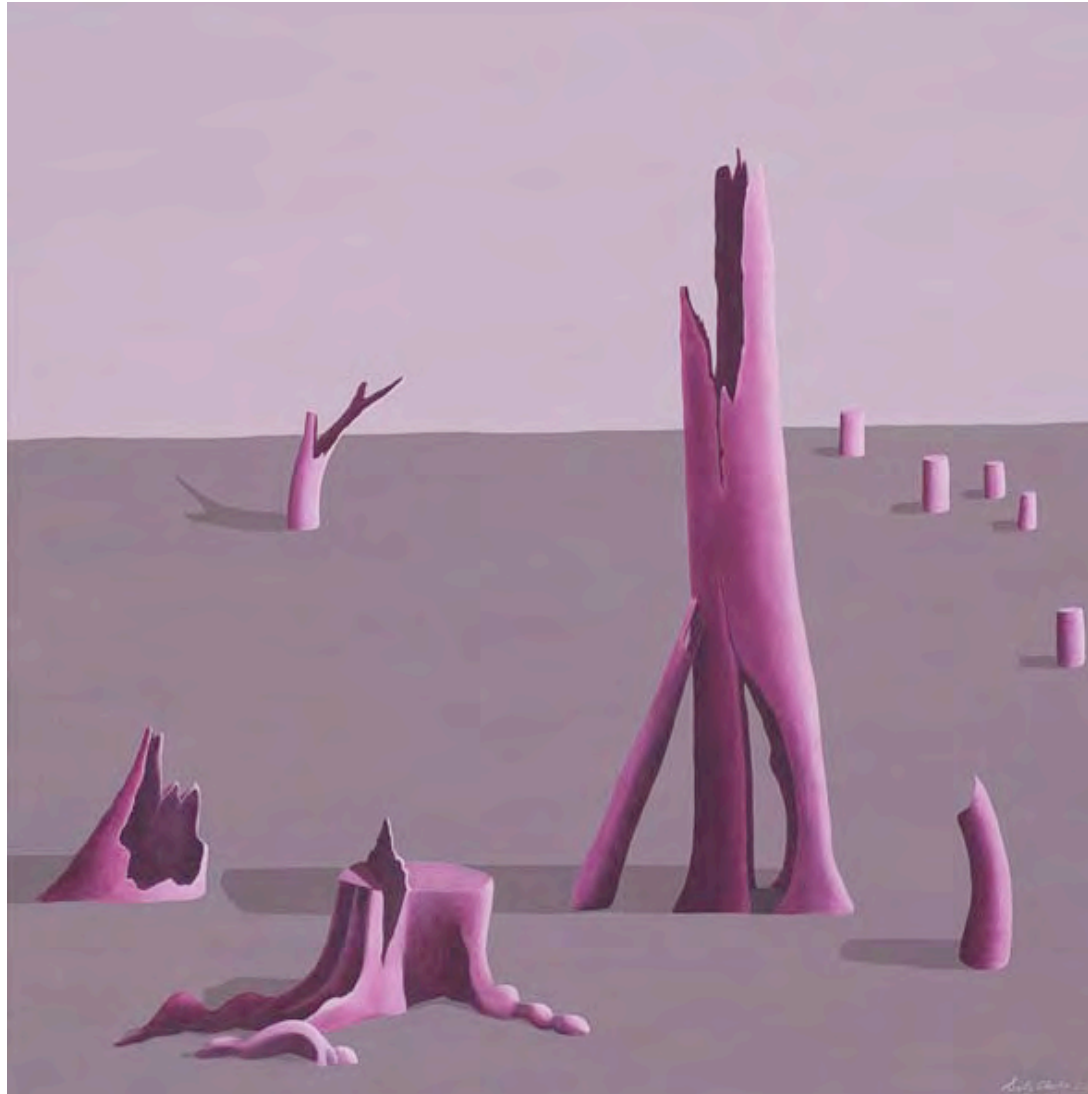
Sally Clarke, *Dismemberments: Forgetting Mr Boney's Farm*, 2004,  
acrylic paint on canvas, 51 x 66 cm



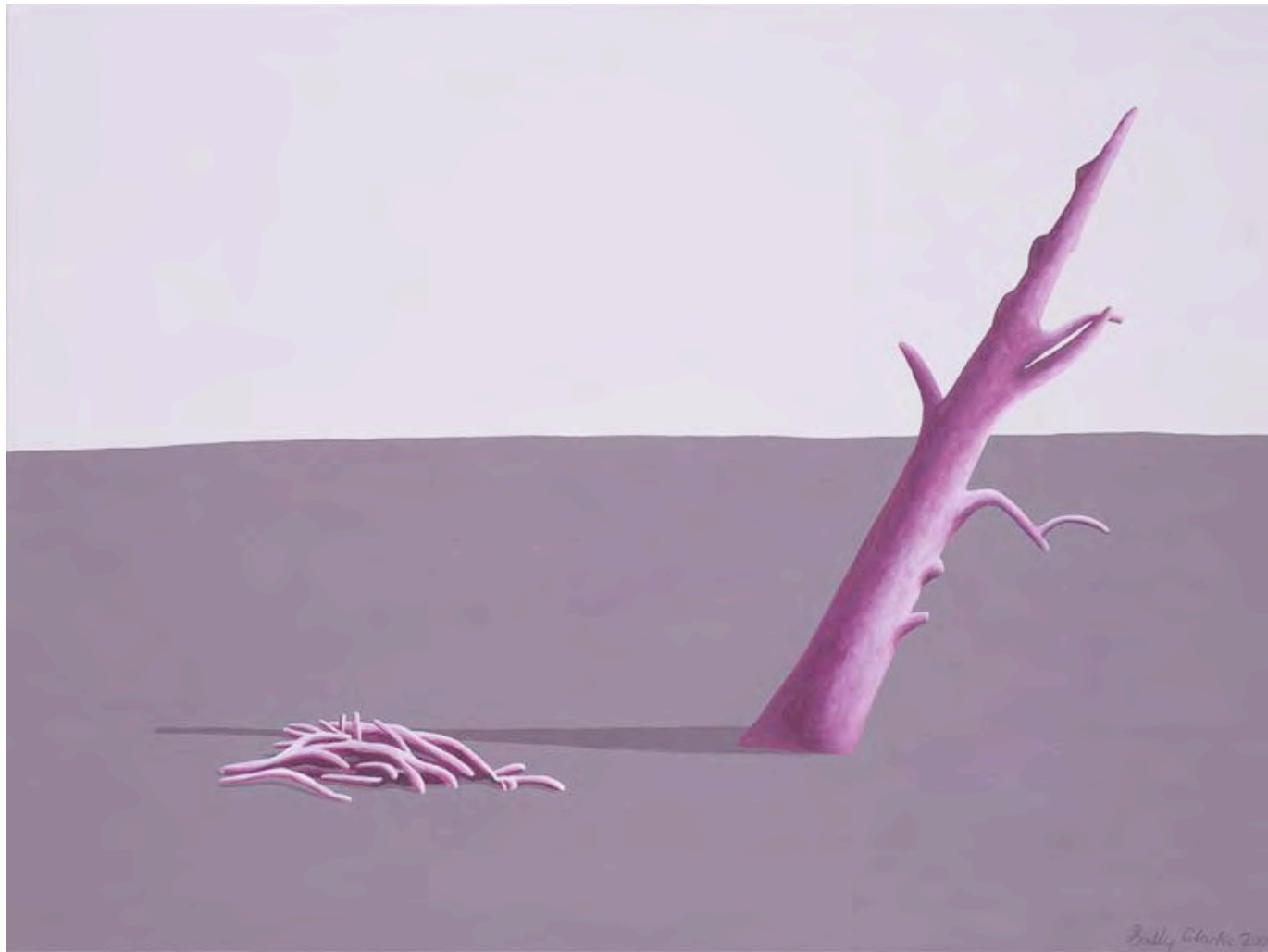
Sally Clarke, *Dismemberments: After Knut Bull's Carnage*, 2004,  
acrylic paint on canvas, 25 x 35 cm



Sally Clarke, *Dismemberments: Some Stumps To Remember Our Great Artists By*,  
2004, acrylic paint on canvas, 84 x 84 cm



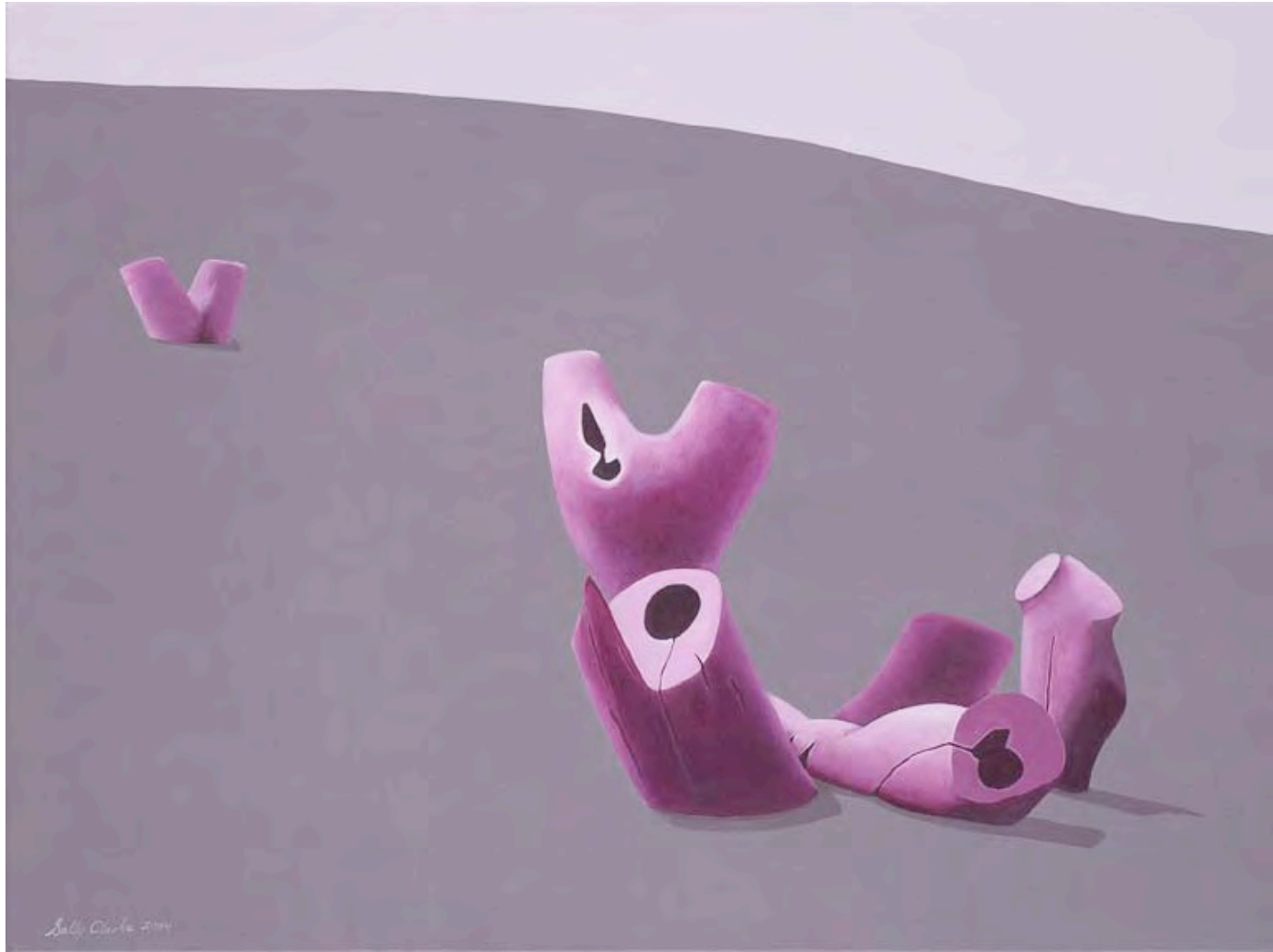
Sally Clarke, *Dismemberments: Carnage On The Great Western Highway*, 2004,  
acrylic paint on canvas, 45.5 x 61 cm



Sally Clarke, *Dismemberments: The Road To Brewongle*, 2004,  
acrylic paint on canvas, 101 x 137 cm



Sally Clarke, *Dismemberments: Stumps Not Far From Bathurst*, 2004,  
acrylic paint on canvas, 45.5 x 61 cm





Sally Clarke, *Dismemberments: Stumps*, 2005, acrylic paint on canvas, 53 x 65 cm





Sally Clarke, *Dismemberments: Body Towers*, 2005,  
acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 84 cm



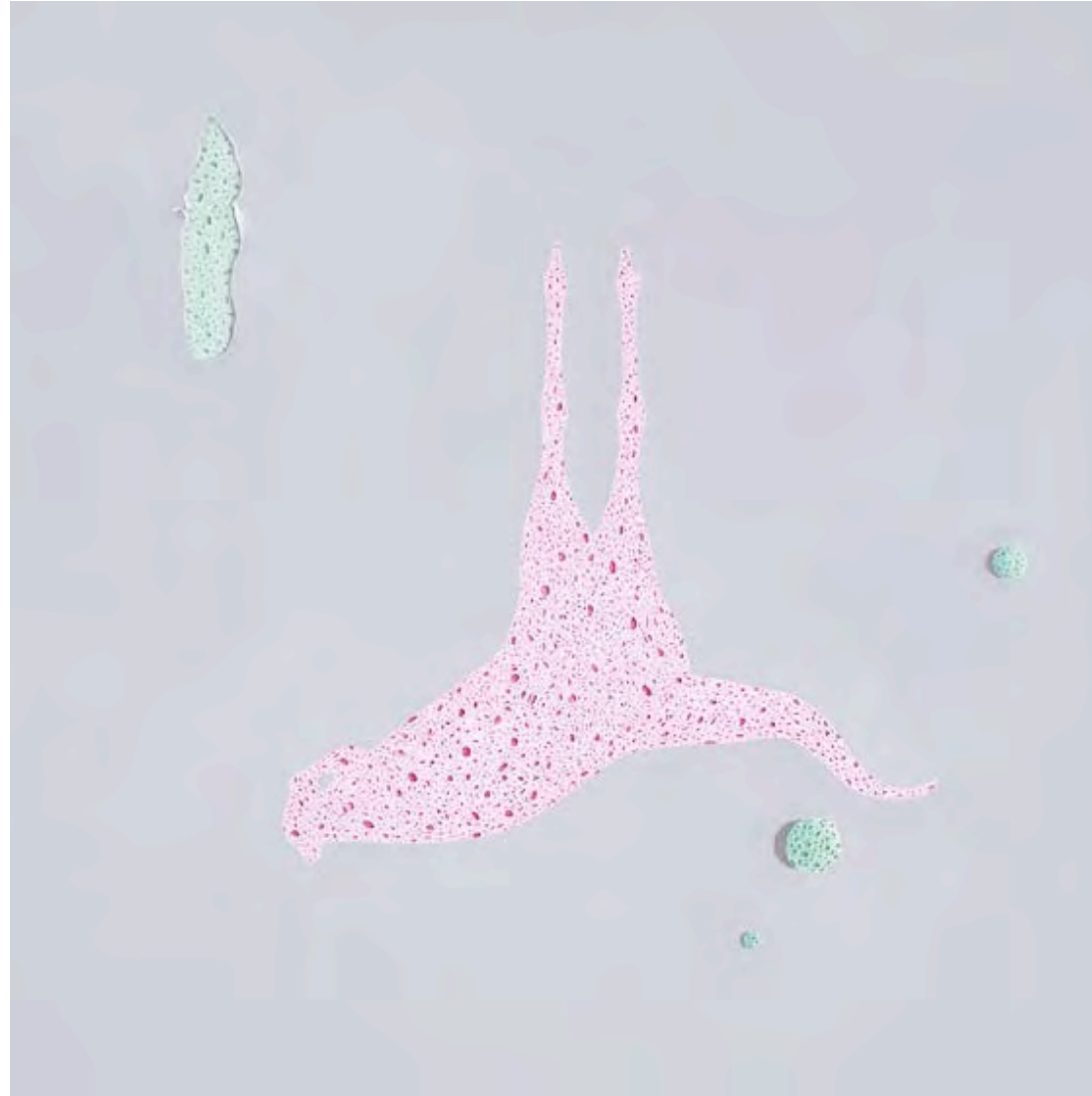
Sally Clarke, *Crossing The Wire 1*, 2005, acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 91 cm



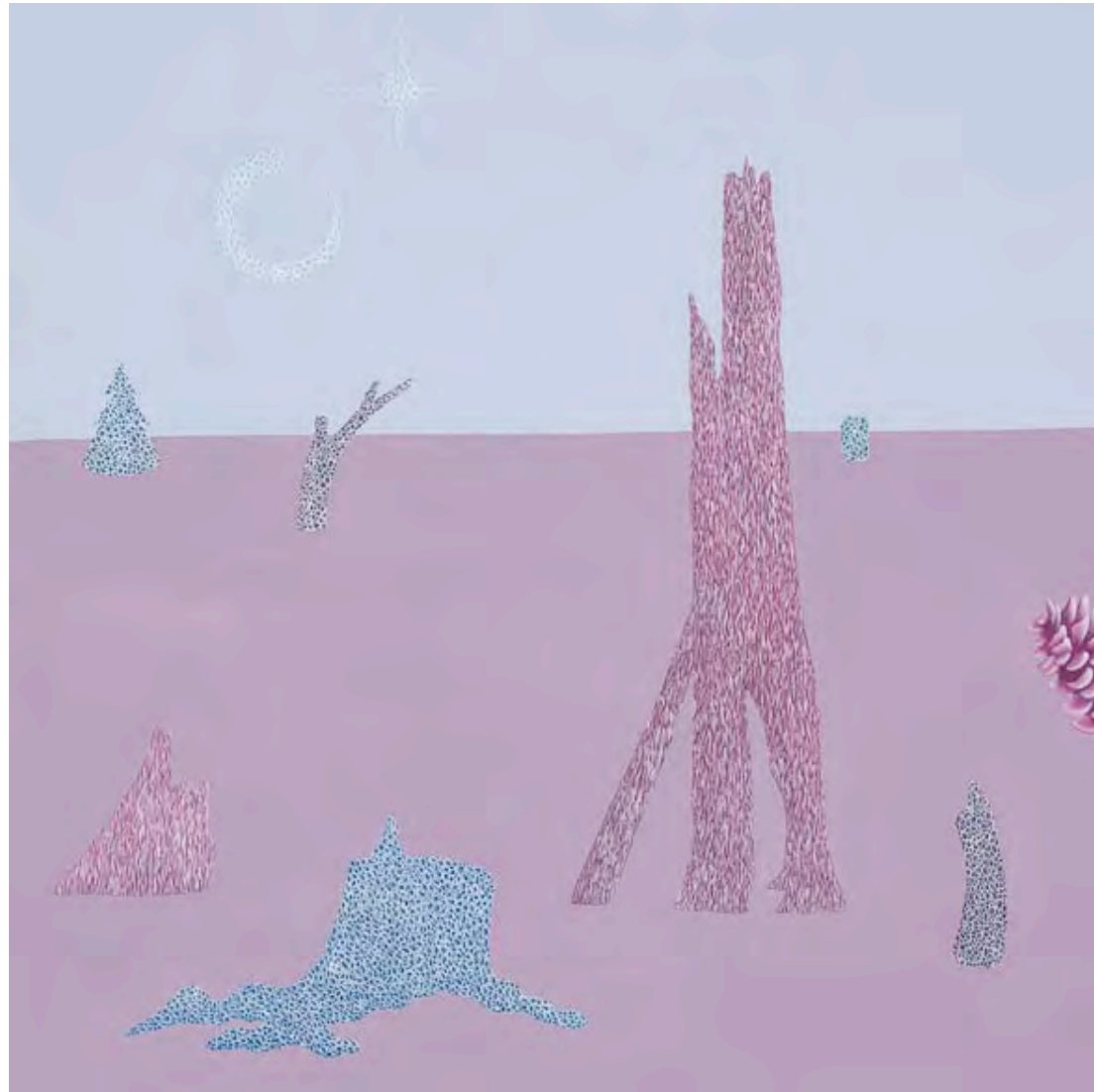
Sally Clarke, *Crossing The Wire 2*, 2005, acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 91 cm



Sally Clarke, *Crossing The Wire 3*, 2005, acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 91 cm



Sally Clarke, *Pine-O-Cleen Dream*, 2006, acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 91 cm



Sally Clarke, *Phantom Forest 1*, 2004,  
floor vinyl and acrylic paint on MDF, 70 x 125 cm





Sally Clarke, *Phantom Forest 2*, 2004,  
floor vinyl and acrylic paint on MDF, 70 x 125 cm



Sally Clarke, *Phantom Forest 3*, 2006,  
acrylic paint and floor vinyl on MDF, 70 x 75 cm

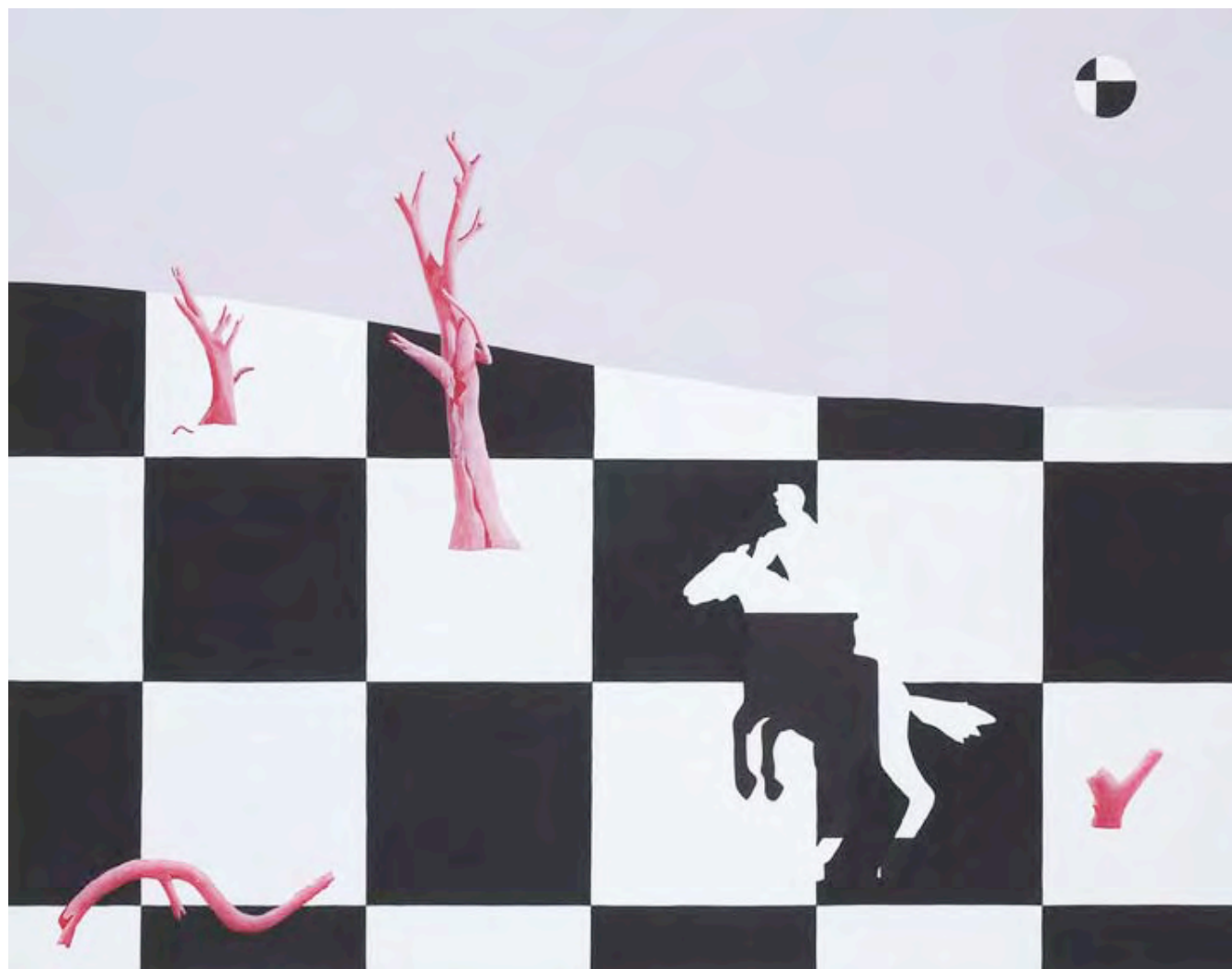




Sally Clarke, *Phantom Forest 4*, 2006,  
floor vinyl on marine ply, 3 panels 30 x 30 cm each



Sally Clarke, *Phantom Rider 1*, 2006, acrylic paint on canvas, 71 x 91 cm



Sally Clarke, *Phantom Rider 2*, 2006, acrylic paint on canvas, 51 x 61 cm



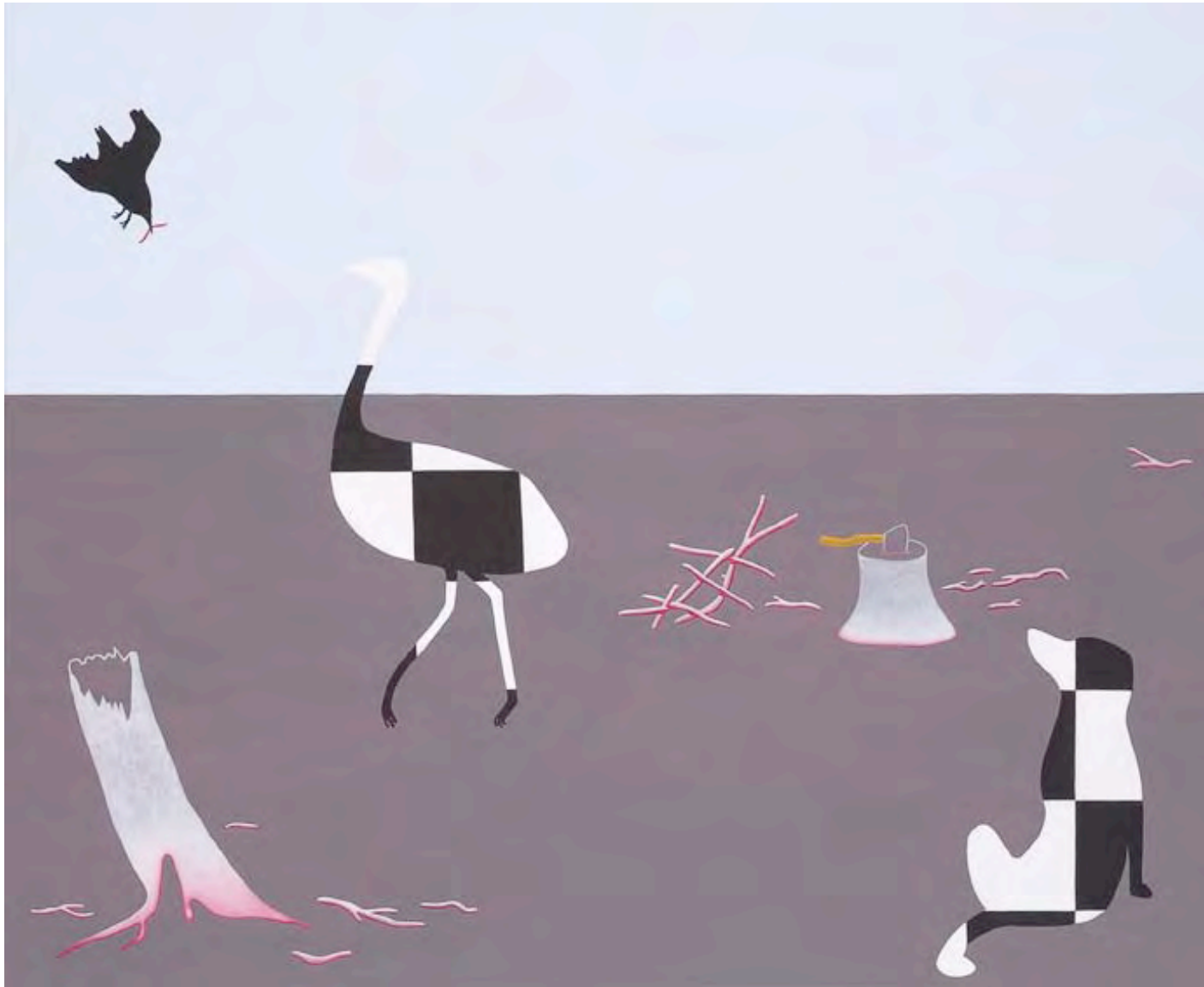
Sally Clarke, *Phantom Robbery*, 2006, acrylic paint on canvas, 51 x 61 cm



Sally Clarke, *The Girl's Lost Bucket*, 2006, acrylic paint on canvas, 51 x 61 cm



Sally Clarke, *Out There From In Here*, 2006, acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 112 cm

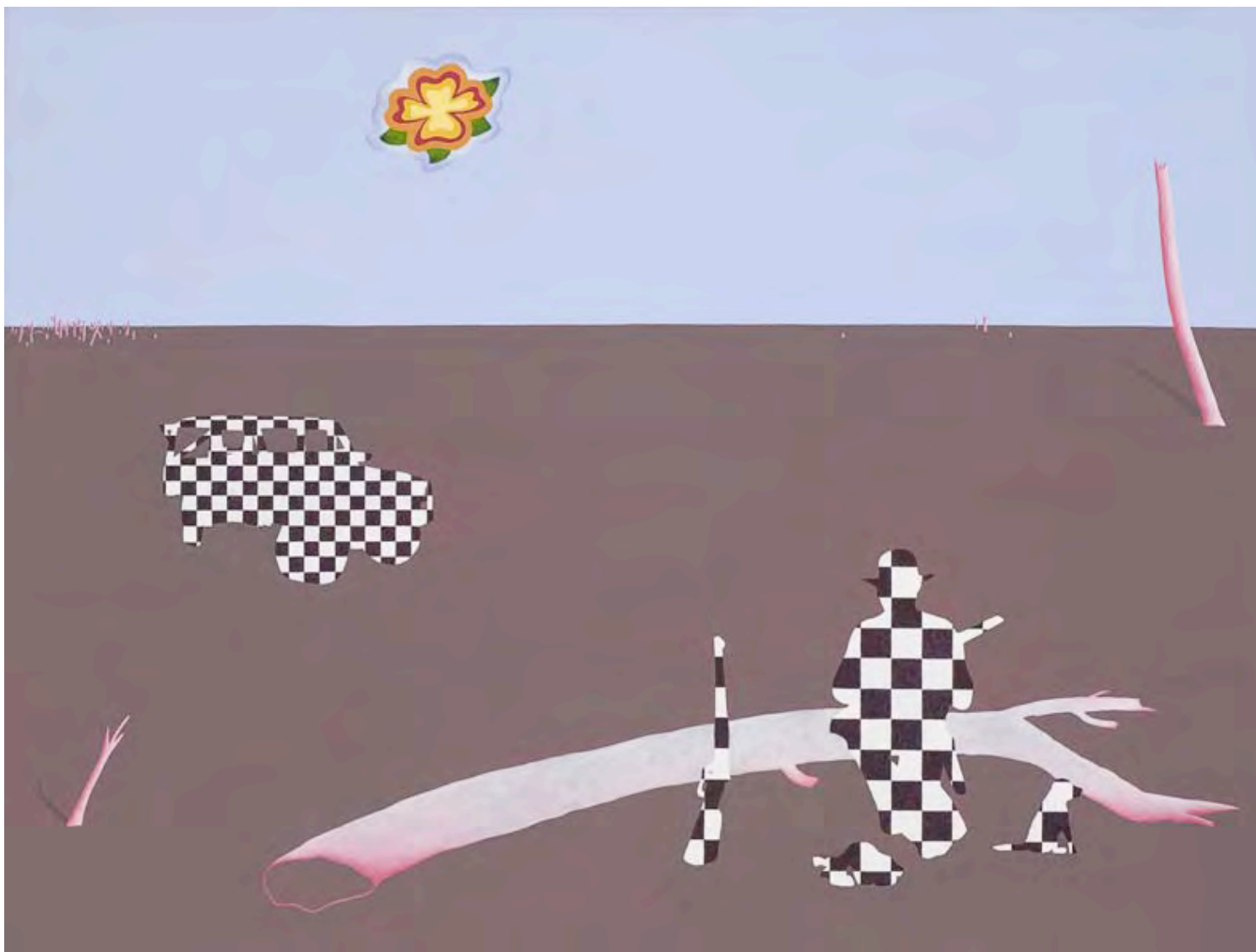


Sally Clarke, *At Home By The Pink Lakes (or Winnebago Dreaming)*, 2006,  
acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 122 cm



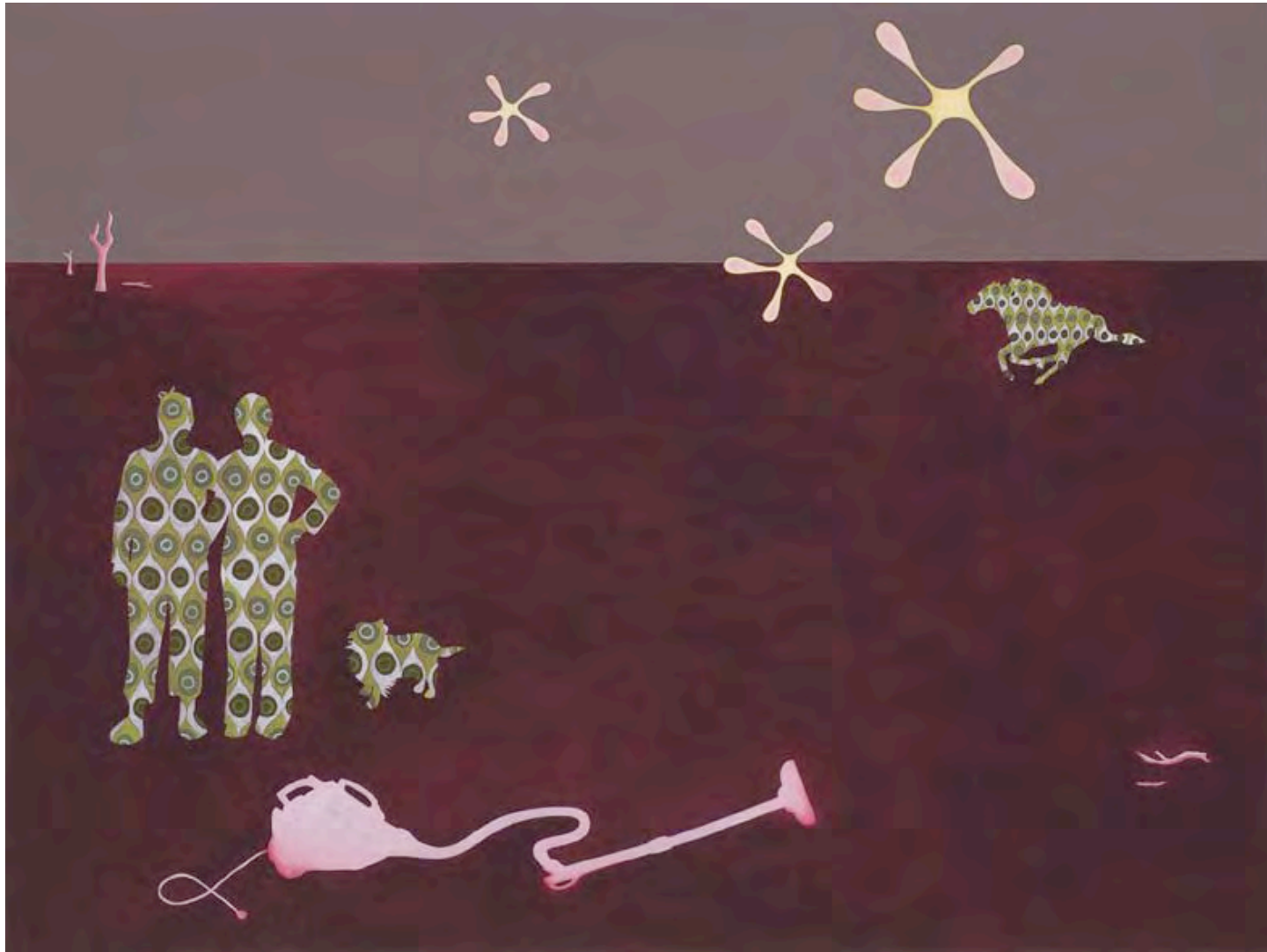


Sally Clarke, *Baygon Days*, 2007, acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 122 cm





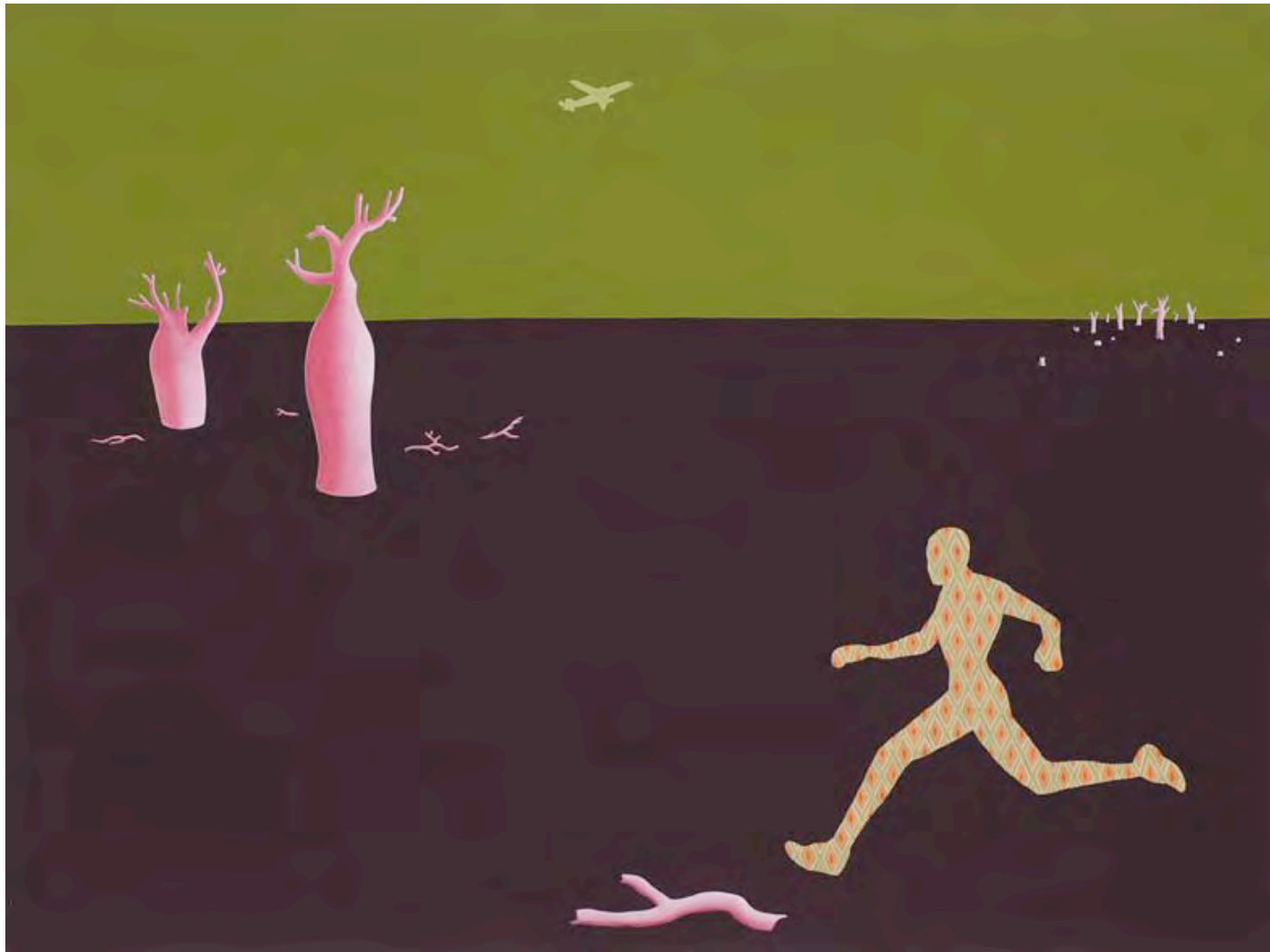
Sally Clarke, *The Freedom To Be Dirty*, 2007, acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 122 cm



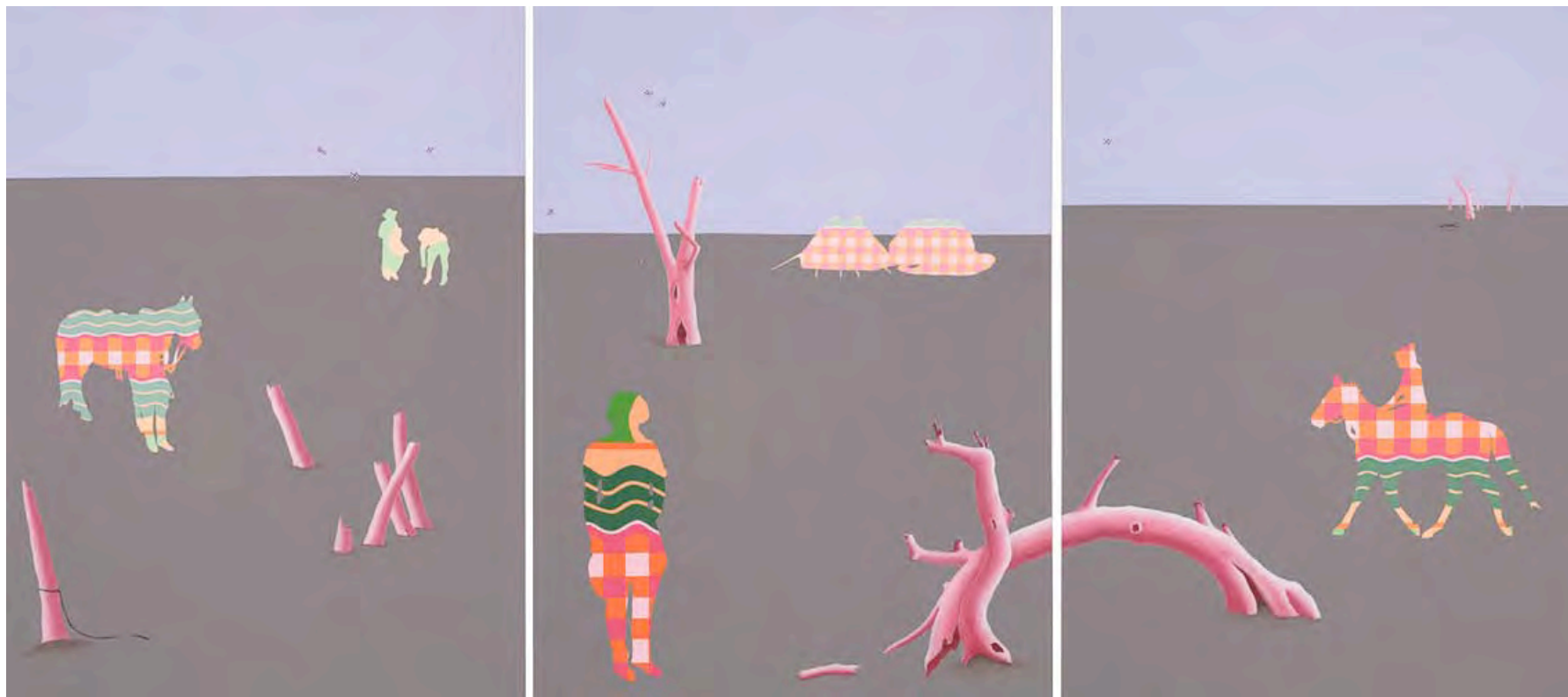
Sally Clarke, *A Bush Burial*, 2007, acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 122 cm



Sally Clarke, *Going Bush*, 2008, acrylic paint on canvas, 91 x 122 cm



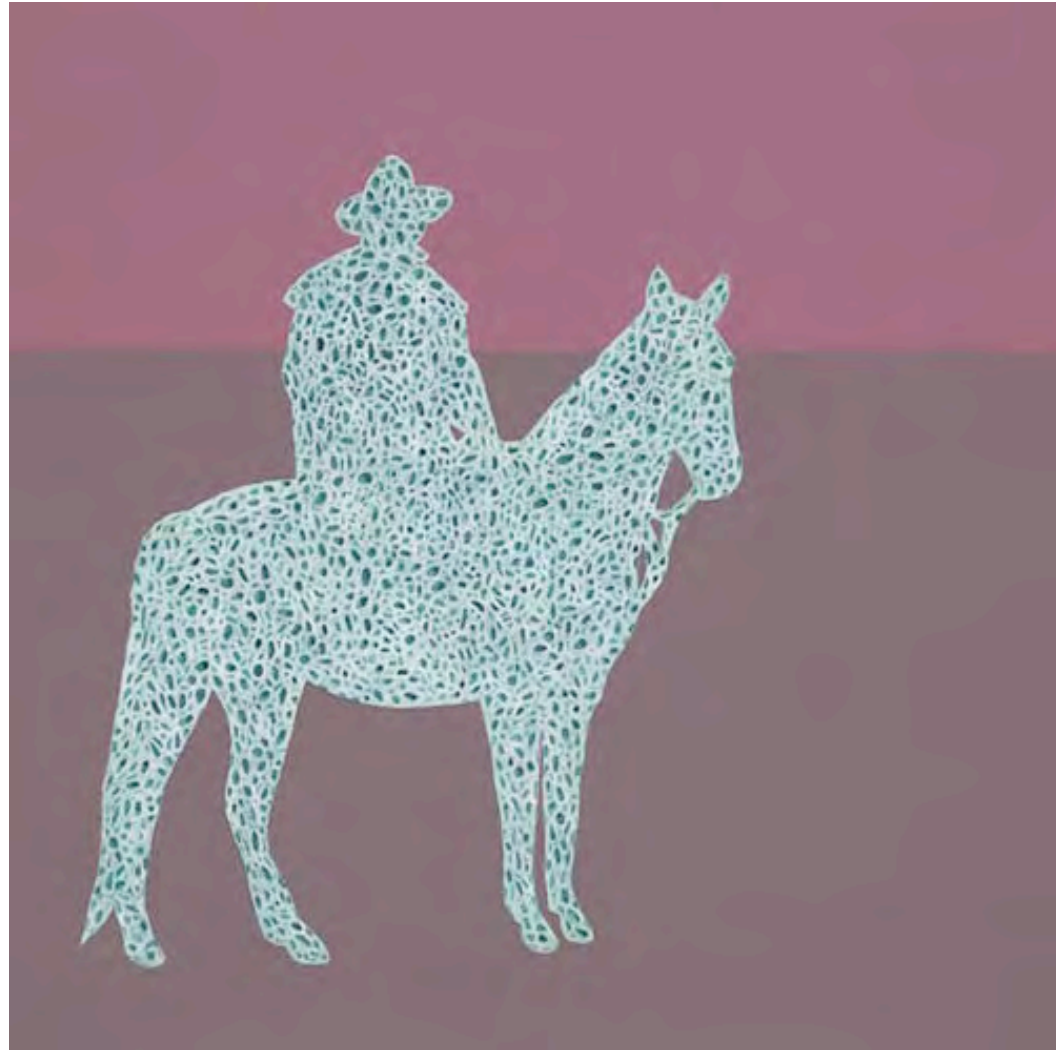
Sally Clarke, *Loose Trousers To Camel Toes*, 2008,  
acrylic paint on canvas, 122 x 277 cm



Sally Clarke, *Funky Sponge 4WD*, acrylic paint on MDF, 30 x 30 cm



Sally Clarke, *From Snowy River*, 2007, acrylic paint on canvas, 30 x 30 cm



Sally Clarke, *Off The Block*, 2007, acrylic paint on canvas, 30 x 30 cm



Sally Clarke, *Dingoes Are Wild*, 2007, acrylic paint on canvas, 30 x 30 cm





Sally Clarke, *On A Plate*, 2008, acrylic paint on canvas, 30 x 30 cm



Sally Clarke, *Out West*, 2007, mixed media and acrylic paint on MDF, 25 x 35 cm



Sally Clarke, *Don't Mess With Bill*, 2007,  
mixed media and acrylic paint on MDF, 25 x 35 m



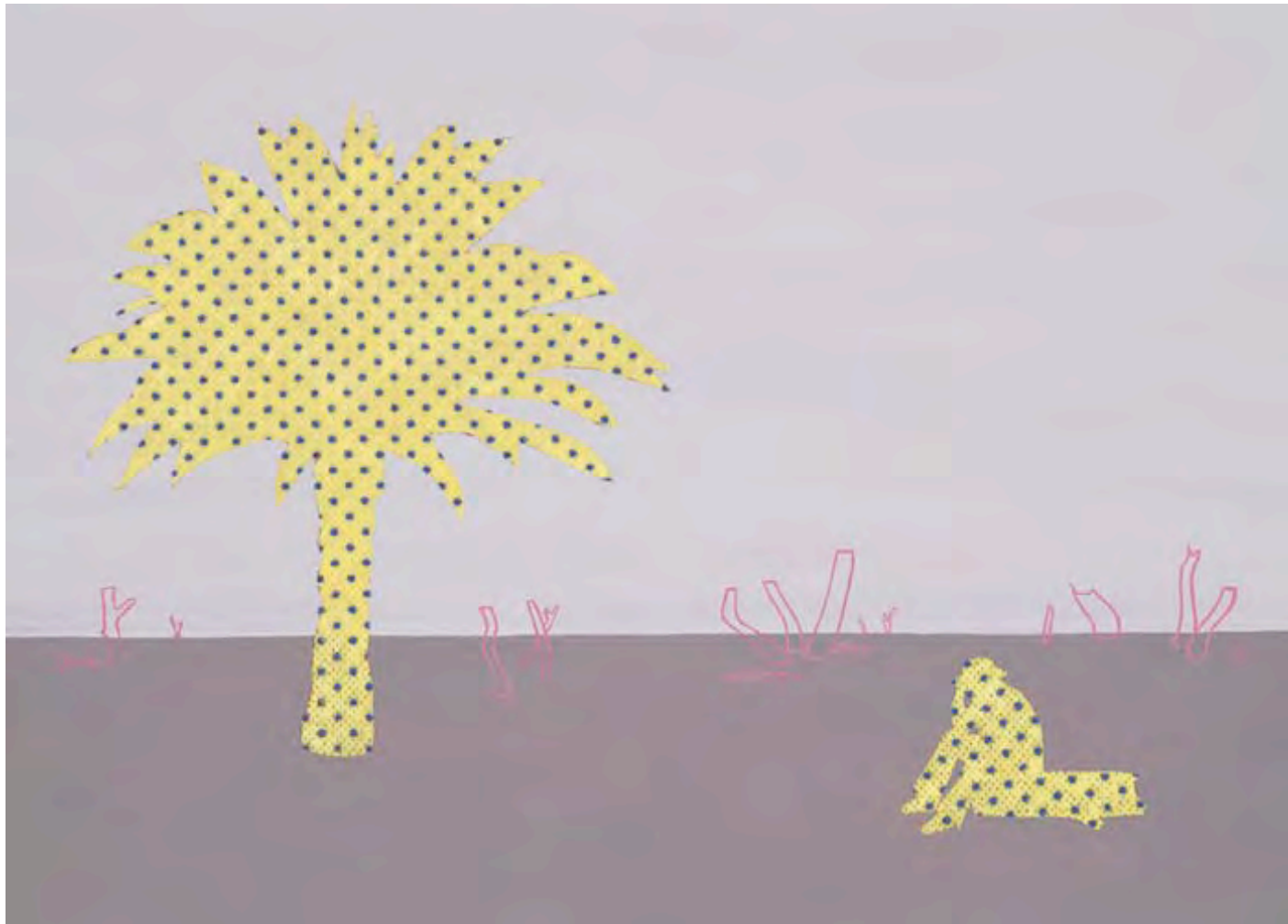
Sally Clarke, *The Bush Basher*, 2007,  
mixed media and acrylic paint on MDF, 25 x 35 cm



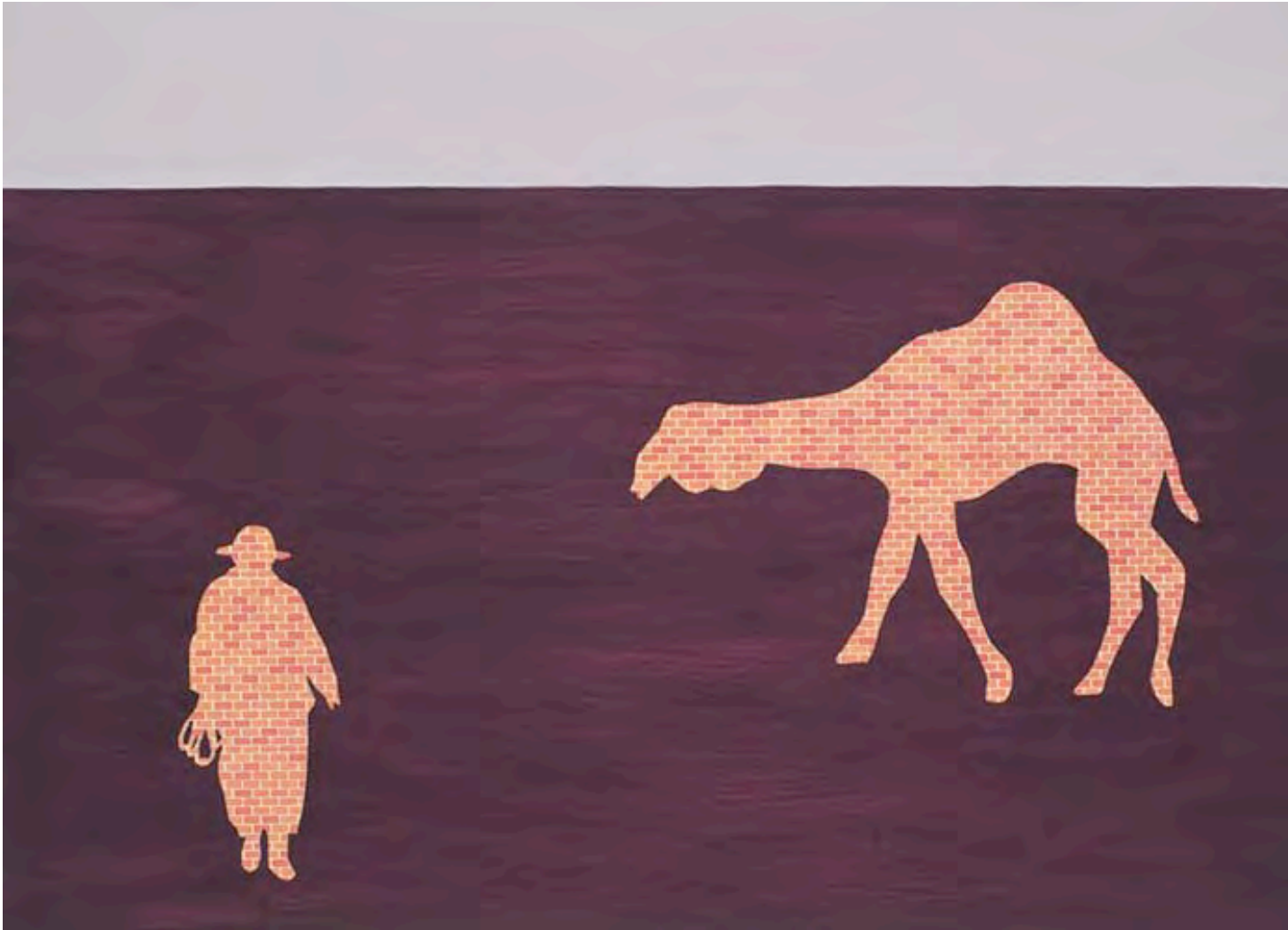
Sally Clarke, *The Bush Rocks*, 2008,  
mixed media and acrylic paint on MDF, 25 x 35 cm



Sally Clarke, *Down at the Oasis*, 2008,  
mixed media and acrylic paint on MDF, 25 x 35 cm

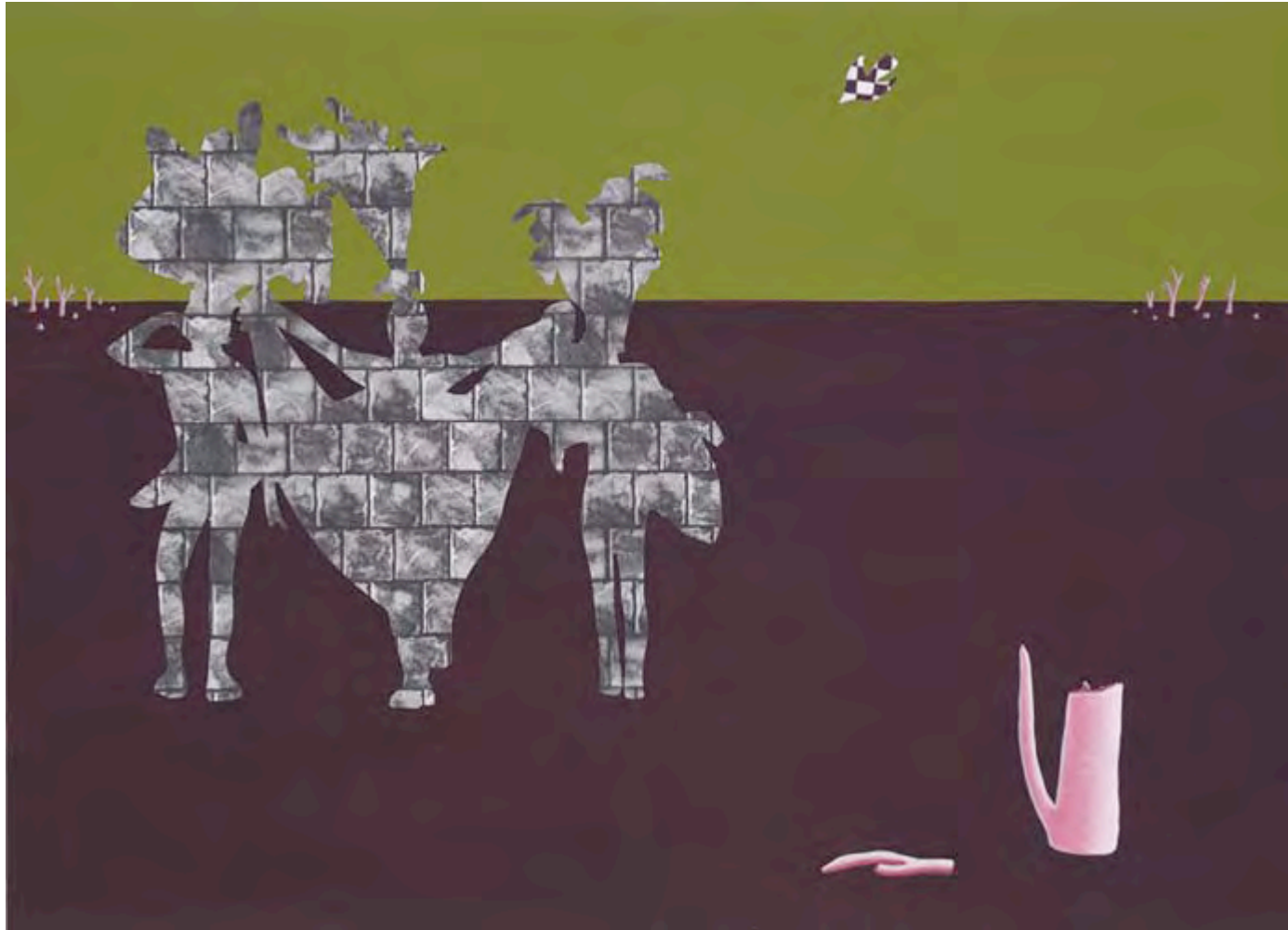


Sally Clarke, *Solid As A Brick*, 2008,  
mixed media and acrylic paint on MDF, 25 x 35 cm





Sally Clarke, *Desert Queens*, 2008,  
mixed media and acrylic paint on MDF, 25 x 35 cm





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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> This term was introduced to me in an essay by Lucy Frost, 'Escaping the Bush Paradigm', in Ryan, Judith and Wallace-Crabbe, Chris (editors), *Imagining Australia: Literature and Culture in the New New World*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, 2004, 60.
- <sup>2</sup> Seymour, Trevor and Lay, Duncan, 'Official Royal Easter Magazine 2007', Supplement to *The Sunday Telegraph*, 30 March 2007, Nationwide News Pty Ltd, Surry Hills, Sydney, 4-5.
- <sup>3</sup> See Gorman-Murray, Andrew, Waitt, Gordon and Gibson, Chris, Chilling out in the country? Interrogating Daylesford as a 'gay/lesbian rural idyll', *Queer Space: Centre and Peripheries*, UTS, 2007, 2.
- <sup>10</sup> Lawson, Henry quoted by Davison, Graeme, 'Sydney and the bush: An urban context for the Australian legend', in Russell, Penny and White, Richard (editors), *Pastiche I: Reflections on 19<sup>th</sup> Century Australia*, Allen and Unwin, Australia, 1994. 241.
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- <sup>12</sup> Schama, Simon, *Landscape and Memory*, Harper Collins Publishers, Great Britain, 1995, 61.
- <sup>13</sup> Smith, Bernard, *The Antipodean Manifesto: Essays in Art and History*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1976, 159.
- <sup>14</sup> Mitchell, W.J.T. (editor), *Landscape and Power*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1994, 1.
- <sup>15</sup> Mitchell, W.J.T., *Landscape and Power*, 2.
- <sup>16</sup> Mitchell, W.J.T., *Landscape and Power*, 2.
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<sup>32</sup> Interestingly, *Painting Australia* did not include any cityscapes.

<sup>33</sup> Wolseley, John, quoted on the ABC produced television series *Painting Australia*, hosted by Sorrel Wilby and first televised at 8.00pm, Tuesday, 27 March 2007.

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<[www.pinkmountains.com.au](http://www.pinkmountains.com.au)>
- <sup>250</sup> *Out on a Limb* featured the work of artists Sally Clarke, Apollinaire Cruz,

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Brenda Factor and Anie Nheu, curated by English language academic Melissa Boyde at Bathurst Regional Gallery 16 April – 30 May 2004. Each artist's work was exhibited in a separate space. Brenda Factor and I occupied the main gallery and titled it *My Pink Bush and the Lost Limb*.

<sup>251</sup> Hamilton, Richard, *Soft Pink Landscape* (1980), Collotype and Screenprint, displayed in *Multiplicities*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney in February 2007.

<sup>252</sup> Since the fall of the Keating government and the rise of right wing politics in Australia that accompanied John Howard's election into office the term *Un-Australian* has been employed widely in political debate to describe behaviour that does not comply with the public's opinion as to what constitutes Australian behaviour.

<sup>253</sup> *Two Aborigines Hunting Emus* (1820), Water Colour and Gouache on Paper, 17.6 x 27.8 cm, illustrated in McPhee, John (Editor), *Joseph Lycett: Convict Artist*, Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 2006, 115.

<sup>254</sup> *View Upon the South Esk River, Van Dieman's Land* (1823), Water Colour and Gouache on Paper, 17.5 x 27.8 cm, illustrated in McPhee, John (Editor), *Joseph Lycett: Convict Artist*, Historic Houses Trust of NSW, 2006, 230.

<sup>255</sup> *Baygon Fly Control Window Stickers* helps to control flies in the home without spraying. The flower design sticker is attached to the window. Flies are attracted by the sticker. Flies ingest the bait on the sticker then they fly away and die.

<sup>256</sup> Message Sticks, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Online. 'Going Bush With Cathy Freeman and Deborah Mailman', 25 January 2006. *Arts, SBS*, <<http://www.abc.net.au/message/news/stories/s1554720.htm>>

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<sup>258</sup> A member of staff from Bathurst Regional Gallery communicated this to me informally when we were packing up the exhibition.