

## **CHAPTER EIGHT – REFLECTIONS AND DIRECTIONS**

### **8.1 – Achievements and Limitations of the Study**

The previous chapter provided a complete overview and description of the work presented in the two exhibitions (see 6.3.1 and 6.3.2) together with evidence of the realized Public Artworks. One of the central purposes of this chapter is to evaluate the outcomes of the projects undertaken for the present study and address the extent to which the research aims have been met. Reflections on the manner in which the work for the projects was undertaken which involved the production of the two Public Artwork projects and the creation of an Artist's Book are also included as are considerations with respect to the critical reviews of the exhibitions and the tenor of the comments which issued from the general viewing public. Implications of the current research ideas for further work, together with comments on the outcome of the Artist's Book in the form of a post examination publication, are also explored.

Generally as is the case with the matter of interpretation (see 2.1), the success or failure of an artist's work is ultimately the province of *others* and is itself subject to the vagaries of time and the fickleness of shifting trends. However, from the artist's own point of view, the aims set out for the work were in the main fulfilled, though it is always possible to find shortcomings given the distance provided by the passage of time from the actual production of the work.

At the inception of the study it was stated that the underlying driver for the research was the potential implicit in the intersection of time and colour. Indeed the primary motivations for this were born from aspects of temporality experienced in the artist's immediate environment. The creative work, which resulted, has been informed by a wide variety of cultural stimuli, both visual and otherwise. Indeed the exploration of the synergies between time and colour has been informed by divergent cultural sources within the artist's immediate environment and encapsulates the substance of the first of the aims (see 1.3). As a result, compositional strategies were developed with a view to creating visual works generated in the studio, which would subsequently be reinterpreted for use in the public domain. These were founded upon the perceived coalescence and synergistic interaction between colour and time; in fact it is this, which, in essence, underpinned the second of the principal aims (see 1.3).

Nevertheless the form of the compositional organization derives from temporal rhythmic structures whose genesis may be discerned in the traditions of art, symbolic association, sacred and profane geometry and number (see 4.3.1.1 and 5.2.3.3). The pictorial elements, though specific to the artist's immediate environment, were informed by and demonstrate the utilization of a wide spectrum of diverse pan historical and cultural sources. The manner in which this source material was collected, organized, synthesized and developed was the key to the methodological processes outlined in Chapters Three to Five.

## **8.2 – Internal Reflections on the Process**

In reflecting upon the process involved in creating the work, perhaps the most significant and conspicuous factor has been the enormous difference between the creation of two architecturally located Public Works on the one hand, and the production of an Artist's Book on the other. Nevertheless all the works have a similar history with regard to their initial design and compositional development as well as with the materials employed in their creation. Evaluation of the study with regard to the working process involved the design and organization of the projects, the methodological approach, the creation of the painted works and the realization of the two Public Artworks and an Artist's Book and affiliated material.

Although the primary focus of the study was established during its early phases, which was advantageous, unexpected developments in that the opportunity to realize the form of the Public Artworks created a shift in emphasis from the private, studio based work to the public domain. However this challenge was factored in and both types of work were accommodated within the overall plan of the study. Indeed the actual realization of the reinterpreted artworks led to a much broader perception of the possibilities for the works' future applications and the need for an element of flexibility in the research planning. The fact that the final realizations of the initial painted works were destined to be fabricated in different materials employing other media and would be permanently established in public places (outside the walls of a gallery), gave rise to a number of questions.

For instance, it may well be asked what challenges the artist had to contend with in the face of a situation of this kind and how were they overcome? In the case of both the Public Artworks and the Artist's Book a number of significant challenges arose; these can to some degree be discussed in tandem though, in some instances, ranking them has presented something of a dilemma. Needless to say, Public Art Practice differs radically from that which is destined for the confines of a gallery (see 4.3.2.1). Noteworthy also is the fact that artistic sensibilities and aesthetic goals will also change as the work moves from the private to the public domain. Nevertheless translation of this kind demands the consideration of a number of significant matters. In this regard, selected elements from Kelly's exemplary paper prepared for the Queensland Government *Art Built-in* (2000), have assisted in guiding the artist's reflective comments on both the Public Artworks and the publication of the Artist's Book. The issues that Kelly (2000) proposes for consideration, though not necessarily in the original order are

- Creating artwork which responds to a particular... architectural design...
- Establishing a relationship with a fabricator to ensure that... [the artist's] ideas are fully realized.
- Negotiating with...Art Project Manager[s] fabricators...[and] architects...who had input into...[the] work.
- Understanding...the aesthetic and terminology of...[fabricators,] built environment... [and other] professionals.
- Transferring a strong creative idea, or...[the artist's] usual practice into different media or extended into a larger scale.

- Working in short timelines, or across an extended period of time.

As the designs for both the *Brisbane International Airport: Terminal Complex* and the *Strand Redevelopment Project* were, in terms of their pictorial content and style pre-selected, the primary consideration was adapting and re-modelling them to conform to the constraints of the sites they were destined to occupy. The manner in which this was accomplished is discussed in 4.3.2.1 and 4.3.2.2 and the final outcomes illustrated in Appendices C1, C2, D1 and D2 respectively. Moreover the interpretation of the original artwork had primacy over other choices, as for example materials.

In the case of both the public works (particularly the *Brisbane International Airport*), as the artist was retained in the capacity of a consultant, it was possible (in spite of certain limitations inherent in the materials themselves i.e., the fabrication of images in glass mosaic) by means of verbal dialogue, correspondence and visual (physical) corrections made on-site to keep interpretive inaccuracies to a minimum (see Appendices C.2, C.3, D.2 and D.3). Nevertheless it has to be reported that, by comparison with the *Brisbane International Airport*, the *Strand Redevelopment* work, for the reasons recorded below, suffered from less than accurate interpretation in some respects. Indeed it is in the matter of interpretation that the most significant practical problems were encountered in *that* work.

- As a result of the shorter fabrication time allowed by the client i.e., six months as opposed to the twelve months allocated for the *Brisbane International Airport* work, difficulties arose with the ordering of materials from the regular Italian

suppliers. The result was a lack of continuity in both the supply and quality of the materials as other varieties of mosaic had to be accessed from Mexico.

- The employment by the mosaic fabricators of less skilled workers, again due to time constraints placed on them by the client with the result of a less well crafted product.
- Insufficient provision for regular consultative visits by the artist to the mosaic fabricators at critical stages during the work's construction.
- Poor on-site communication between the various groups of architects and other site workers resulting in minor damage to the work subsequent to its installation.

With regard to the publication of the Artist's Book, *Communion to the Trees*, however though there was consultation with the artist by the designer through the publisher *Macmillan* and co-publisher *Perc Tucker Regional Gallery* regarding the page layouts and overall design, interpretive inaccuracies also occurred and for the following reasons.

- The printer's methods of working and timelines precluded to and fro consultation prior to the Book's printing.
- This resulted in a larger interpretive gap in relation to the original artwork than might be desirable and hence a less satisfactory publication outcome.

Overall interpretive accuracy, regardless of the translation of a work into another medium, may be perceived from a number of viewpoints, probably the most significant being those enumerated below.

- (i) The overall disposition of the design;
- (ii) The character and *likeness* of the drawing;
- (iii) The colour in terms of overall schema and individual pictorial elements;
- (iv) The tonality both general and particularized.

In the case of the two Public Artworks all four aspects of the work enumerated above demanded consideration, whereas the Artist's Book required only the consideration of (i) i.e., the book's overall design and structure, together with (iii) and (iv) i.e., the colour and tone of the reproductions. Given the four issues listed above, the following points may be addressed independently in relation to the two Public Artworks and the Artist's Book.

The issue of overall design (i) in the two Public Works, given that (as both required considerable enlargement), was concerned with

- re-evaluation of the relative positions of the mosaic elements in terms of placing them within their respective architectural settings was negotiated with the architects through the *Art Advisory* and *Art Management Services* (see 4.3.2.3).
- re-positioning of pictorial elements as a result of enlarging the original artwork which was carried out by the artist and mosaic fabricators *in-situ*.

Matters regarding the overall design of the Artist's Book, given the need for a reduction in the scale of the artwork (in order that it would conform to the paper size and page dimensions selected by the publishers and printer), included

- the structural organization of the Book including its binding and composition.
- The Book's *programme* or sequence of its pages and ordering of the various elements comprising its contents.

Although both these aspects of the Book were controlled by the publishers and the designers, the artist was nevertheless consulted with regard to aspects of the positioning of major pictorial elements.

Aspects of drawing (ii) with regard to the increased scale of the two Public Works involved,

- re-assessment of the character of the pictorial elements of the work and their adjustment as a result of the enlargement process;
- the verity of the character and likeness of the drawing in terms of the original artwork and the necessary correction of inaccuracies again resulting from the enlargement process.

As far as correcting and fine-tuning the drawing of pictorial elements was concerned, this was expedited by the design and construction of large drafting templates, which were employed to retain the tension, and dynamic qualities of those shapes possessed of curvilinear contours. Both matters were addressed and the work undertaken by the artist in consultation and with the assistance of the mosaic fabricators.

Although no drawing *per se* was involved in the publication of the Artist's Book, the following issues arose:



- The designers had unilaterally composed additional *decorative* components by recombining pictorial elements appropriated from the artist's original artwork. It was suggested by the artist and co-publisher that the designers were *making art with art* by creating *vignettes* from appropriated fragments of the artist's original work and, as a result, these images were subsequently excised.
- Suggestions were also made by the artist and co-publisher concerning the re-scaling and re-location of some images, decorative elements and the style of the typography. These matters were attended to by means of consultation between artist and publisher and co-publisher.

While the Public Artworks and the Book obviously subtend one another in terms of both media and scale, the independent issues of colour (iii) and general tonality or value (iv) will be discussed together. Although parallels may be discerned, inasmuch as both the two Public Works and the Artist's Book were drawn together through the community of colour and tone and their mutual interpretation, far less control could be exercised. The explanations for this are listed below which, in the case of the two Public Artworks, engaged the following issues.

- The intrinsic qualities of the mosaic material itself presented a number of interpretive difficulties. In this regard, the varieties of available tints and shades were pre-eminent as these were limited in their range to those, which could be manufactured, in (*smalti*) hard glass. However, a number of new tints and shades needed to be developed by the Venetian manufacturer (*Orsoni*) to specifications provided by the artist (see 4.4.1.2 and Appendix C.4).

- As it is not possible to mix colour in the same manner as paint and the range of colour is controlled by the inherent physical properties of the mosaic material itself other methods have necessarily to be employed. Indeed many of the subtler tints and shades had to be created by intermixing the *tesserae* in a similar manner to that in which individual coloured brushmarks were employed by the *divisionist* painters (see 4.4.1.2). The tonality of colour and its bias was also altered by the colour and tonal value of the grouting used to fill the interspaces of the tessellated surface (see 4.4.1.1).
- Accurate assessment of colour and tone in the mosaic work presented some difficulties, as the glass *tesserae*, which are highly light reflective, often made it difficult to determine the *true* chromatic and tonal value of an area of colour. This situation was further exacerbated by the fact that the *reverse* or *indirect* method (see Table 4.4.1) was employed in its fabrication which, apart from revealing the often slightly differently coloured bases of the *tesserae* as they are placed face down also creates, (due to the variation in the length of the shanks of each *tessera*) an overall surface to the work which is extremely irregular (see Appendix C.6).
- By its very nature mosaic material creates a surface which is made up of an aggregation of myriad small individual units, both discontinuous in structure and tessellated in appearance and quite unlike the continuous surface of the original painted design from which it was derived. Indeed it could be suggested that the painted design with its *analogue* qualities was translated into one possessed of *digital* attributes.

In order to overcome the (inventory of) challenges listed above, it was necessary for the artist to consult with the mosaic fabricators on a regular basis and at critical points in the work's production. Nevertheless many important decisions with regard to what was considered to be best practice *vis à vis* the mixing of tints and shades, the provision of new hues and the colour and tonal value of the grouting were made by the mosaic fabricators alone. It was possible, however, for the artist to have small sections of the work *unpicked* in the interests of achieving a more accurate chromatic and tonal interpretation, but this was not a common practice.

With regard to the Artist's Book *Communion to the Trees*, the accurate interpretation of both colour and tone engaged the following issues.

- The accurate translation of the character, chromatic and tonal values of the original artwork through
  - (i) Photography in the form of transparencies
  - (ii) Reproducing the photographic work in the form of *printers-proofs*.

These aspects of the work were exclusively overseen by the publishers and undertaken by the printer who was in possession of the original artwork, but without recourse to consultation with the artist.

- Issues of colour and tone also pertained to the Book's binding, its slip-case, decorative elements (*blocking* and *tooling*) and the style of the title lettering. Although initially maquettes were provided by the artist (see Plate 7.2.34) and limited consultation was sought, the work was overseen by the publishers and carried out by the binders.

### 8.3 – Further Internal Reflections on the Exhibited Work

The previous section addressed those issues, which were concerned with the collaborative nature of the Public Artwork in terms of the interpretation of the artist's original artwork through its re-interpretation into other media. It reflected on the importance (in this regard) of the consultative process *in terms of* establishing a meaningful dialogue between the artist and other interested professionals and the variable rate that such a dialogue (or lack thereof) can have on interpreting the artist's work.

Considered also was the transactional nature of working with the kinds of commerce that creates Public Artwork. This in the case of *Brisbane International Airport: Terminal Complex*, included the communication of the artist's requirements concerning the production of new colours to the Venetian glass manufacturers *Orsoni* (via the mosaic fabricators, *Artbusters*), in order to realize the vision of the original artwork as closely as possible. Additional consideration had to be given to the manufacturer's expostulations regarding the inherent limitations of the material in terms of matching some of the colours in the kind of glass employed for floor and pavement mosaics (4.4.1.2).

In the case of the publication outcome of the Artist's Book, the extent and character of the interaction between the artist, publishers, designers and printer was reviewed together with the effect of that interaction on the consultative process. What follows reflects on further aspects of the exhibited work, which addresses the matter of a change in scale and the effect that such a change exerted on the aesthetic qualities of the work in

terms of its recontextualization within a built environment. As already indicated (see 4.3.1.1) the original artwork was both finely wrought and small in size, the underlying aesthetic of preciousness being an essential ingredient in its creation. With regard to this work in a gallery setting it was the artist's intention, through the manner of its creation to draw viewers toward the walls thus compelling them to explore what was displayed there. Indeed to prevent them from being able to view the entire exhibition from the centre of the gallery floor. But was it possible for the artist to convey this quality at such a greatly increased scale?

Before attempting to answer this question a number of other considerations may be taken into account, which concern the nature of the built environment *per se*. Perhaps the most obvious is that of the size of the built environment itself, which is generally very much greater than the people it serves. In the case of an architectural edifice it engages the space, which encompasses them. The exterior view of the structure, as Bouleau (1980) observes "...is part of the landscape...[and] inside it is a closed world in which we...move about." (Bouleau, 1980: 13). Indeed as with movement in terms of distance it presents a critical factor not only in viewing the building itself, but also those objects or parts which contribute to its exterior and interior surfaces. This may, of course, include the enrichment of the building with decorations and monumental art of various kinds, all of which will inevitably engage the phenomenon of time and space and a space which is larger than those that use it (Bouleau, 1980).

It should perhaps be mentioned at this point that the artist's grounds for citing Bouleau (1980) so exclusively in what follows is that he provided the earliest and principle

source of enlightenment during the nascent stages of the creation of the Public Artwork i.e., *Brisbane International Airport: Terminal Complex*. Bouleau's (1980) work was found to be of great assistance as it not only examined the structural organization of images and the development of sacred and profane geometries in pictorial composition, but also explored aspects of the relationship of the compositions themselves to built environments and those that use them.

Both the exterior and interior of a building changes in aspect as one moves around or through it as is also the case with sites in outdoor locations. Apart from any constraints placed on the artist by the architects the placing of the work in this regard is also critical as "...some points of view show...[the building] at its best, or better...[whilst] others are unfavourable." (Bouleau, 1980). It is of importance in planning the positions for setting the artwork that

The artist must always be placing...[her or] himself in the position, of the visitor, or of the user; the place where he...[or she] will be most inclined to stop is the sensitive point which demand the utmost care; as it is from there that the forms of the monument must exert their full power over the imagination.

(Bouleau, 1980: 14).

Human movement in relation to the most advantageous viewing positions in conjunction with the location of the artwork points to another significant factor which always presents itself as a part of the debate encompassing scale. Does the enlargement of the artwork have the appearance of a small image greatly increased in size or is the

increased scale consistent with the dimensions bestowed on the built environment by the architect? In terms of representational images (however stylized they might be) human figures, should they be represented in the work often provide a clue. In the case of both the artist's Public Artworks representations of human figures were engaged and

It is on the architectural elements, devised for human use, and, above all, on the representation of figures (statues, frescoes...) that it normally falls to indicate the dimensions of a building by making possible the comparison with what is called the human scale.

(Bouleau, 1980: 14).

The human scale in this context is understood to be a unit of measure, which is derived from, or is consistent with the human organism (generally adult) taken as a unit of measure. This became an important factor in defining the final dimensions of both Public Artworks. Indeed the representations of the adult male and female figures featured in both Public Artworks (subsequent to their enlargement from the original painted compositions), were scaled to approximate the average size of an adult human being. This coincides with the perception that there has always been the need throughout its long history for humanity to *refer everything to* itself driven by an innate intelligence which demands order and synthesis and the subsumption of diversity within unity (Bouleau, 1980). Nevertheless as Bouleau (1980) explains, a work of art "...draws its enrichment from the tension between its various components." (Bouleau, 190: 255).

Thus, however unnatural the size of the creatures and objects surrounding them, the

human figures represented in the Public Artworks through a synergy of scale were designed to present viewers with points of reference to which (it was hoped) they would immediately be able to respond and through them gain access to the world as it is represented in the work.

The scale of the original painted artwork was however, driven by quite another purpose; though the materials employed for and in their production, as was the case with Public Artworks were intentionally costly. The creation of both the painted works and the Public Artworks were also costly in terms of the amount of time (in parallel with the labour) taken to create and fabricate them. It should be noted that the finished pictorial forms which constituted the subject matter of the painted *compositions*, were as much the product of the painting technique itself (see 5.2.2) as they were the result of the *pre-compositional* works, which preceded them.

Although there would certainly be other ways of producing a very similar result to that achieved by the artist to a large extent the final paintings *do* rely on a high degree of reciprocity between the development of pictorial forms and the painting technique. The artist's intention in creating such small finely wrought and detailed paintings was certainly not to be *precious* but to set out deliberately to create *refined* artefacts with *precious* materials (as with the use of gold and palladium leaf) which were informed by a long established art historical tradition.

It may well be asked however, if the *precious* qualities sought in the painted works translated into a larger scale in the Public Artworks? Certainly from the point of view of the materials (see 4.4.1.1) the answer to this question would be in the affirmative. The



remarks directed toward the completed work (see 8.5) for the *Brisbane International Airport*, suggest that elements of the preciousness did translate inasmuch as the “...mosaic, 2 x 9 metres [sic], sits like a jewel in the...departures floor at the foot of the escalators.” (Battersby, 1996: 54). The *Strand Redevelopment* work was commented upon by the Project Manager (at that time) Ingrid Hoffmann (1999) who remarked that “...I write to congratulate you on the successful completion of your public art commission...the results have been outstanding.” (Hoffmann 1999, personal communication).

#### **8.4 – External Perspectives on the Exhibited Work**

Contrary to the traditional exhibition format the artwork attracted external comment both in its role as Public Artwork and in a gallery context. Prior to the artwork itself being exhibited the Public Artwork received progressive media reports. The progress of the work for the *Brisbane International Airport: Terminal Complex* was reported in the media with the sophisticated banners they are typically noted for e.g., “Glass art slow, with a flying finish.” (Lovell, 1995: 22), “Airport art is now on a terminal plane.” (Oberhardt, 1995: 10) and “Brisbane International: Top flight shopping.” (Hall, 1995: 48), (see Appendix C.6 for complete articles). Nevertheless the Townsville media in spite of the \$300,000 set aside for the *Strand Redevelopment* artworks and the fact that “It... [was] the first time Townsville artists have had a chance to be involved in a work of this magnitude.” (Editorial, 1999: 10), in a bid to rival the journalistic skills and enthusiasm of their southern cousins, managed to evoke banners such as “Art to

showcase Strand.” (Editorial, 1999: 10), and “Art works for Strand” (Murdoch, 1999: 10), (see Appendix D.7 for complete texts).

Subsequent to the installation of the *Brisbane International Airport: Terminal Complex* mosaic however, the work was featured in two reviews and more recently the American mosaic artist Sonia King’s book *Mosaic: Techniques and Traditions* (King 2003: 230-31). The first reviewer, as with some others, though enthralled by the labour intensive nature of the work and quantity of material employed, it took “...five mosaic artists six...months to lay the 200,000 small Italian tesserae...” (Battersby, 1996: 22) in the main work, described the mosaic as,

...sitting like a jewel in the grey granite of the departures floor at the foot of the escalators. It is inspired by the rich and mysterious depths of the reef waters. Coral outcrops, sea creatures and coastal palms, hills and clouds are its imagery. The mosaic was produced in Brisbane by Lindy Gottlieb and five mosaic artists from Artbusters.... Additional mosaic elements surround the main work.

(Battersby, 1996: 22).

Although it occurred much later, the second review coincided with the artist’s Townsville exhibition at the *Perc Tucker Regional Gallery* (March 16, 2001) which featured both the artwork for, and photographs of the mosaic pieces. Indeed the reviewer described the work in some detail commenting on the artist’s background, artistic influences and the fact that the work

... adds a decorative, visual and cultural flavour to the otherwise sterile airport environment, particularly for tourists.... [and is] a large artwork with a substantial visual impact .... The mosaic's environmental focus, with its simple yet colourful symbols, makes it strikingly different from the airport's other works of art.

(Pennisi, 2001: 6).

For the text of both reviews see Appendices C.7 and I.2. The publication of the Artist's Book and the book launch, though they occurred as post-examination events, were also reviewed independently (see Appendix J.2). However these reviews will be treated further on in keeping with the chronological developments of the artist's work.

#### **8.4.1 – Critical Reviews of the Exhibitions**

Both exhibitions, the first of which was held at the *Customs House Gallery* (November 2, 2000) in Brisbane and the second at the *Perc Tucker Regional Gallery* (March 16, 2001) in Townsville received illustrated published reviews. The *Customs House* exhibition was reviewed in the *University News: The University of Queensland*, in 'Striking Imagery of the North' (Liddy, 2000: 2). The reviewer, in quoting the gallery's director Ross Searle, drew attention to the fact that

... [the artist] has an acute awareness of the local environment in Townsville and its environs, born out of years of keen observation.... [and] thematically, the work has a strong sense of north Queensland's coastal region...

(Liddy, 2000: 2).

In the case of the *Perc Tucker Regional Gallery*, the exhibition received extensive illustrated coverage in the *Townsville Bulletin* in, 'Going into Detail' (Wildeheart, 2001: 22). The reviewer remarked that in her opinion "... *The Mixing of Memory with Desire* exhibition at the Perc Tucker Regional Gallery could be summed up in just one word – magnificent .... [and commented that] this body of work is an amazing accomplishment." Wildeheart (2001) further observed that

What...[she] found most outstanding, was the sense of completeness about the works, beyond visual satisfaction. The more esoteric senses were fulfilled with underlying references to aura colours, music[al] colour relationships and spiritual interpretations.... When visiting this exhibition, viewers are encouraged to allocate ample time to fully appreciate... [the artist's] work.

(Wildeheart, 2001: 22).

The texts for the two reviews cited above are included as Appendices H.2 and I.2 respectively. As the Public Artworks could not themselves be presented in either of the exhibitions, they were represented by a selection of photographs in the form of two volumes of photographic documentation, one for each Public Artwork, samples of which can be found in Appendices C.6 and D.4.

The post-examination publication outcome of *Communion to the Trees* (and its subsequent book launch at the *Perc Tucker Regional Gallery* (November 29, 2002)) was reviewed by the publishers *Palgrave Macmillans* (2002) in a letter introducing their

brochure listing new titles. In the review of their twenty one new art publications the opinion was expressed that

All the books are generously illustrated – indeed lavishly pictorial. But the most splendid is, perhaps, Robert Preston’s limited edition *Communion to the Trees* of which there are 100 numbered copies (hand-bound with a slip-case) which will interest the specialist book collector or make an impressive presentation or gift.

(Zimmer, November, 2002).

The publisher’s letter and descriptive brochure may be perused in Appendix J.1. The Artist’s Book also received two newspaper reviews, the first in the *Townsville Bulletin* in “Envisioning new Eden” (Frazer 2002: 21) in which the writer observed that

The tree of life is a Bats-wing Coral tree.... the artist used the dry tropics native instead of the traditional apple tree in a contemporary version of the ancient *Essene Gospel of Peace*.... The garden with its eternally flowing stream and central Tree of Life was envisaged as conducive to fostering a reverend attitude to life....[the artist] had thought about the images in the book for about ten years, but did not connect them with the Essene gospel until three years ago.

(Frazer, 2002: 21).

The second review also appeared in the *Townsville Bulletin Weekender: Books*, in “It’s illuminating” (Frazer, 2002: 60) and described the circumstances of the book’s creation and the substance of its contents, together with the advent of its publication and relates that the artist

... traces his interest in illuminated books and manuscripts to visits to museums and libraries as a boy in London. He attempted his first hand-made book a copy of the first twenty chapters of Genesis as an 11-year-old.

(Frazer, 2000: 60).

Both reviews are to be found in Appendix J.2. The following section provides an overview of feed-back from the viewing public in the form of remarks and general comments concerning both exhibitions.

#### **8.4.2 – Comments from the General Viewing Public**

The comments made by the general viewing public were recorded in a Visitor's Book (see Appendix I.1) and have been categorized into four broad groups, which are presented in Table 8.4.1. The comments have been organized in this manner in order to capture something of the flavour of the recorded responses to the exhibitions. In terms of the overall numbers of visitors who attended the exhibition held at the *Customs House Gallery*, over the period of its showing, approximately 2,500 were recorded (Post, December, 2000: Personal Communication), whilst the number of visitors who attended the exhibition at the *Perc Tucker Regional Gallery* numbered 6,931 (see Appendix I.1).

**Table 8.4.1**  
**Categorized selection of comments from Visitor's Book, Perc Tucker Regional Gallery.**

CATEGORIES		Exemplar Comments				Number (Total = 200)	%
		Date in 2001	Name	Place of Origin	Comments		
A	<b>Global positive judgments.</b>	March 16	Tate Adams	Townsville	<i>Superb.</i>	60	30
		March 17	Hilary Mangan	Annandale	<i>Magnificent Work.</i>		
		March 20	Motoka Ono	Tokyo, Japan	<i>Excellent.</i>		
		April 29	S. Chiringshul	Thailand	<i>Great.</i>		
		May 1	Anne Donohue	Townville	<i>Wonderful.</i>		
B	<b>Undifferentiated positive statements.</b>	March 15	Francesca O'Neill	Townville	<i>Cool.</i>	58	29
		April 5	Karu Karunansena	Annandale	<i>Great stuff.</i>		
		April 15	Dew Aungamane	Thailand	<i>Awesome stuff.</i>		
		April 15	Dana Green	Nome	<i>Congratulations.</i>		
		April 19	Lisa Cope	Englan	<i>Inspiring.</i>		
C	<b>Intermediate positive statements.</b>	March 28	Carol Torissi	North Ward	<i>Very interesting.</i>	52	26
		March 31	N. Chikako	Okinawa	<i>Very nice.</i>		
		April 8	Andrea McBride	Cranbrook	<i>Unusual.</i>		
		April 24	Katie Mear	Winnepeg, Canada	<i>Stellar.</i>		
		May 5	Steve Lowndes	Sydney	<i>Very original.</i>		
D	<b>Individual experiential comments.</b>	March 3	Janet Muir	Magnetic Island	<i>Exquisite. Truly the complete artist.</i>	30	15
		March 16	Moh'd Alawi	Manama, Bahrain	<i>Sophisticated, unique, meaningful.</i>		
		March 31	Rimike Kawamura	Japan (North Ward)	<i>This is my third time on Bob's exhibition.</i>		
		May 3	Joanne Klein	Charters Towers	<i>Still love your work...</i>		
		May 3	Judson Griffith	New England, U S A	<i>...I would take it home and look at it more.</i>		

## 8.5 – Implications for further Work

Having arrived at this point in the study, it would come as no surprise to learn that the artist, having brought to successful fruition such large scale, time consuming and far reaching projects, should be left feeling replete. Although it is not unnatural that the artist should harbour a strong desire to strike out in new directions, there also remains a profound sense of the memory of how elements of the work might perhaps have been developed differently. For instance the first of the Public Artworks could have been translated as a tapestry, and such a realization was for a short time contemplated by the *Art Advisory Service*. The Artist's Book, (given the benefit of a great deal more time) could have been more elaborately scaled; for example no decorated letters were included though preliminary designs were trialed. It might also have embraced four additional *Communions*, thereby further developing the concept of the four elements, the fifth being represented by the Tree of Life (see Appendix A). However the temporal constraints imposed by the organizational frame of the study, apart from the research itself, have had the added benefits of ensuring that the artist's practice was not only informed, but also purposeful and sustained.

In terms of striking out in new directions however, the difference between the work undertaken for the Masters study and the present research represents a clear case in point. It is evident, for example, that the Masters work, though reacting somewhat to that which preceded it, was not as significantly different in style as the work which emerged from the present research. Nevertheless this marked stylistic shift also occurred as a



conscious reaction to the artist's previous practice and a deliberate desire to tread new and different pathways.

To provide a detailed trajectory of future directions the work might take is, to an extent, both difficult and problematic. It is difficult by virtue of the fact that no new work has yet been initiated and problematic inasmuch as the demands of new projects tend to shape towards a variety of unknown directions. The artist's programme for further creative work in the immediate future is included in the inventory of projects documented below.

- The artist has been approached with a view to taking part in the restoration of relief sculptures depicting the *Via Crucis*, as part of a wider renovation program for the Anglican Cathedral of St James, Townsville, in May 2005.
- An invitation from the *Perc Tucker Regional Gallery* (on behalf of *Townsville City Council*) to design road furniture for selected sites in April-May 2005 has also been proffered.
- An invitation has been extended to collaborate in the creation of an album of prints, or an Artist's Book in association with the *Monsoon Press*, through the College of Music, Visual Arts and Theatre, James Cook University, for which *compositional studies* were begun two and a half years ago.
- An invitation to take part in a thematic group exhibition targeting the local coastal environment entitled *Thuringowa Sands* in August 2005 at the *Pinnacles Gallery*.

- An invitation to submit further work for an exhibition, at the *Cumberland Gallery* in Nashville, U.S.A. in 2007.

Whatever work may result as a response to the opportunities cited above, the artist inevitably feels some disquiet, wondering whether the work yet to be created will perhaps be the beginning of the end of what preceded it, or indeed a new beginning and not simply a fresh coat of paint applied to an old door. As the journey outlined in this study was, to a large extent precipitated by an interest in the poetry of T S Eliot, namely the *Four Quartets* (1943), it is perhaps fitting that it should conclude with the following lines from the final part (part V) of the last poem *Little Gidding* (1942) – as intrinsic to this artist's *modus operandi*:

We shall not cease from exploration

And the end of all our exploring

Will be to arrive where we started

And know the place for the first time

(Eliot, 1943: 48).