

# CHAPTER 1

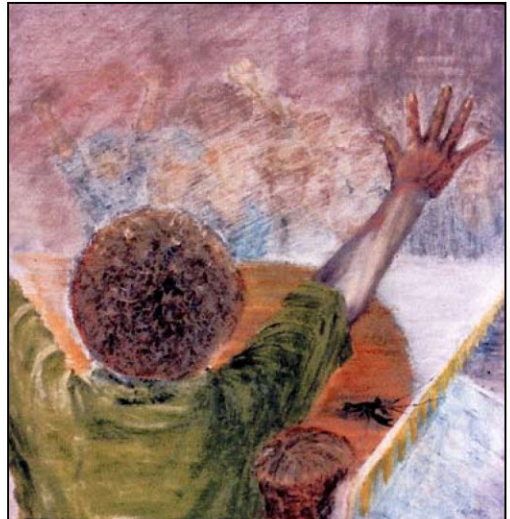
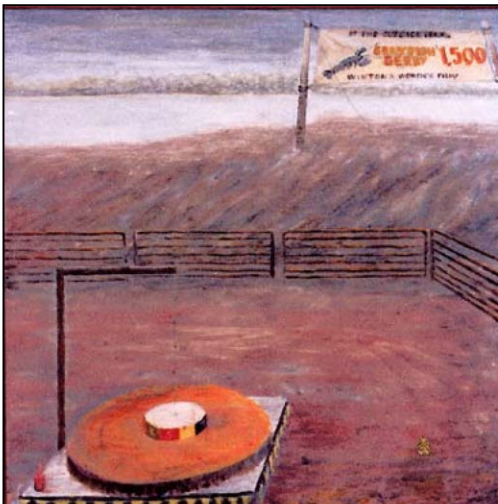
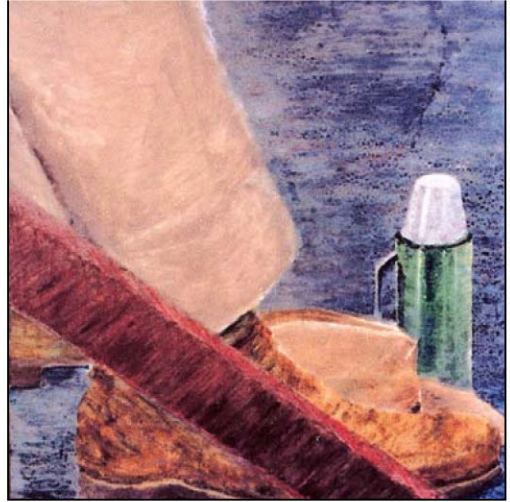
## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 SIGNPOSTING A JOURNEY

What is the essence of the land and from where does this special quality come? And, importantly, can an artist portray this uniqueness? These questions arose out of earlier Honours research into the landscape and the community of Winton (Nixon-Smith 1998). (A tentative step in an ongoing quest to bridge the chasm between the artist's strongly felt affinity with the land and the reluctance, wellnigh dread, experienced when faced with the prospect of portraying the landscape. Sadly, the study had little impact on the prevailing mindset.)

In the research undertaken in 1998, the focus was on finding ways to portray the social traits peculiar to the sparsely populated outback town of Winton, as exemplified in *Winton Suite* (1998) [Plate 1.1.1]. During the Winton study, a difficulty arose of finding a way to portray in a self-explanatory image the relationship between the landscape and the local people. After all, the nexus between the land and its inhabitants is more than colour, people and topographical features. The land is a living entity with a multiplicity of connections involving not only those living on it, but also relationships between the various features of the landscape itself.

The following study probes this complexity further, but here the focus has moved from looking at connections between land and community to analysing change in landscape arising from natural energies: growth cycles, diurnal change, seasonal change, migratory patterns and motion of the tides on saltpans and mudflats.



*Winton Suite*, 1998  
oil and wax on canvas  
each panel 65 x 63 cm  
private collection

## SOCIAL TRAITS

### Plate 1.1.1

## 1.2 A NEW AWARENESS OF LANDSCAPE

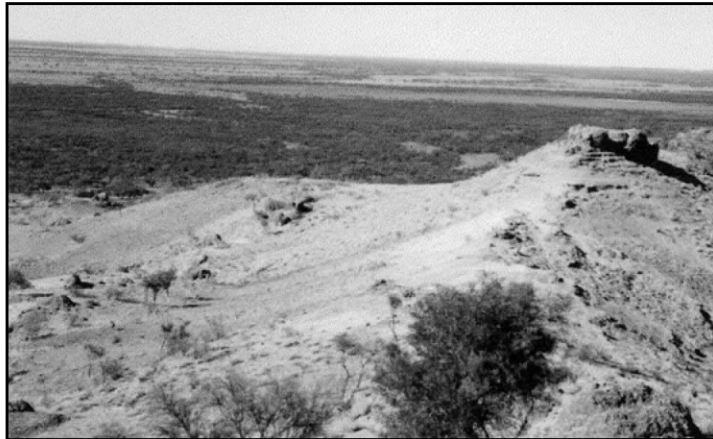
On returning to Townsville after a prolonged stay in Western Queensland, the difference between landscapes of the coastal tropical city and the outback was almost palpable. In the West [Plate 1.2.1], the seemingly primeval landscape of sparse vegetation, parched land, low and scattered hills with occasional remnants of dinosaurs, is very evident to the senses.<sup>1</sup> By contrast, the tropical character of the Townsville area [Plate 1.2.2], with its greater precipitation, lush vegetation and ring of surrounding mountains, has much less of the outback's ancient and elemental character.

A blanket of vegetation, be it living or in various states of decomposition, covers areas of the Townsville tropical landscape veiling, and sometimes totally obscuring, the underlying terrain. In comparison to the arid West, there is not the same strong contrast of light and shade [compare Plates 1.2.1 and 1.2.2]. Instead, the eye tends to differentiate the edge of features by colour more than tone. When looking broadly at the coastal tropical landscape, the normal sight is one of vast expanses of close-toned colour with an occasional patch of strong tonal contrast relieving the sameness. Even in areas of natural degradation, the colours of the landscape change but the essential tonal key of the area does not. This lack of tonal variance is most evident on days when cloud cover impedes light penetration—a noticeable phenomenon that, to someone from the West, seems to appear at greater frequency than indicated by radio advertisements claiming 300 days of sunshine for Townsville per year. These differences have been observed by other artists who relocated to Townsville from the West. For instance, in a conversation with landscape artist, Vince

---

1

Regarding the primeval character of Winton region, the fossilised footprints of a dinosaur stampede is one of its tourist attractions.



Winton region landscape  
photograph by Trish Nixon-Smith

## **WINTON REGION LANDSCAPE**

### **Plate 1.2.1**



Townsville region landscape  
photograph by Trish Nixon-Smith

## **TOWNSVILLE REGION LANDSCAPE**

### **Plate 1.2.2**

Bray, he substantiates the perception that the landscape colour of Townsville is close-toned, particularly areas of thick bush. Moreover, in the same conversation he mentioned that the intensity of the light in Townsville is a lot weaker than in the West as a possible reason for the close tones.

Hence, for artists who have relocated from the West, to see the character of the Townsville landscape as a reality requires careful scrutiny. Observation reveals subtleties that a casual glance could easily miss. For example, the nuances of colour to be found within each new shoot; the transformation in plants as they mature and die; and, the shifting position of leaves as they adjust to changes in the available light throughout the day.<sup>2</sup>

As an artist, the Townsville landscape started to come alive as a potential subject while on a photographic field trip to the Townsville Town Common Environmental Park<sup>3</sup>—simply referred to as *The Common*. During this particular excursion, the hitherto missing *wow factor* or, what literary theorist, Stephen Greenblatt (Sutton 2000) refers to as “. . . arresting sense of uniqueness, to evoke an exalted attention” (Sutton 2000, p. 10), became visible through the camera’s viewfinder and magnification lens. With such degree of scrutiny came an appreciation that the real Townsville landscape is not found in a panoramic view. Instead, the essence of the Townsville landscape is seen in variety: shape, size, colour and relationships between details. An awakening of interest in the coastal tropical landscape was beginning.

---

2

In *Tropical Topics, a Compilation*, Stella Martin (1997), discusses aspects of light and foliage relationships. In explaining the efficiency of mangroves to adjust to changing light conditions, Martin comments: “Researchers also discovered that . . . leaves move into the most efficient positions; leaf angles in these mangrove trees alter with changes in light between wet (cloudy) and dry (sunny seasons)” (Martin 1997, p.9).

3

The Townsville Town Common Environmental Park is an area of 3,245 hectares of wetlands and is a remnant of the once extensive Bohle River Basin. With boundaries of Townsville airport to the south, the Bohle River tributaries to the west, Cleveland Bay to the east and Many Peaks Range to the north, the Common is noted for its diverse birdlife and landscape features.

The stirring interest escalated with the diversity of landscape types ranging from mangrove to forest found in this park. Such interest was nourished further by close observation of landscape details without peripheral distractions, as is experienced in tunnelled vision through a camera's viewfinder.

### **1.3 PAST ENCOUNTERS WITH LANDSCAPE**

Previous personal experience of landscape has been mainly with western Queensland particularly the Winton region. This area has natural cycles different from those of Townsville, the West experiencing almost complementary extremes of nature. For instance, the days can be scorching and the nights freezing; deluging rain follows drought; strong sunlight can dissipate into diffused eerie-light of a dust storm; and, a totally cloudless night sky can be transformed into an extravaganza of blazing lights during a dry electrical storm.

These dramatic natural changes are considered normal occurrences in the West. Even everyday sights involve some form of strong contrasts. For example, the contrast between areas of very different coloured earth creates a definite line across the landscape; contrast between a craggy hill and flat plain is visually stimulating; and, contrast between a green line of stunted trees and the parched land is unforgettable. Such spectacles are both familiar and normal.

By comparison, the Townsville landscape is made of much more subtle contrasts. Here, there are still differences between features but the differences occur in edges, veiled terrain and diffused light—differences that may go unnoticed without prior experience of the Western landscape.

## 1.4 TOWNSVILLE COMMON AS POTENTIAL FOCUS FOR STUDY

During the course of a personal history of field trips to The Common, a transition was made from casual observer to that of close observer of flora. In the role of scrutinizer, interesting disclosures occur such as an inconstant field of colour outlining leaves. Arguably, this anomaly can be explained as what scientists Briggs, Smithson, Addison and Atkinson (1997), refer to as “long-wave radiation”. These scientists note that:

The nature of the radiation reflected and emitted from leaves varies from one species to another, and from healthy to unhealthy plants, owing to alterations in the distribution of pigments in the leaves (Briggs et al. 1997, p.156).

From a personal understanding of this phenomenon, the colour at the outer edge of leaves bears a direct relationship to the colour of the plant’s flowers. For example, those plants with red flowers have red as a component in the green of their leaves.

For an artist, the fact that the site has also appealed to other artists is an added bonus. John Olsen in the 1970s, Jim Cox in the 1980s and James Brown from 1980 to the present, have worked extensively in the area thus giving the opportunity to study different views and treatments of The Common.<sup>4</sup>

Another factor in favour of The Common is that it exemplifies, as a microcosm, the Townsville region. Moreover, by having the landscape variables of a whole region included within a relatively small area facilitates the study of natural energies of cyclical change. From personal experience, the change from the *Wet* season of December to April [Plate 1.4.1] to the *Dry* season [Plate 1.4.2] is impressive. During the *Wet*, the full lagoons attract great numbers of waterbirds, which can be seen feeding and whirling in

---

4

John Olsen’s encounter with the Common featured in the ABC Wild Australia Production *At the Edge of the Salt Plain* (1971), Jim Cox illustrated botanist Ursula Rowlett’s book *Water Plants of the Townsville Town Common* (c.1981) and James Brown portrayed the Common in the exhibition *Littoral Zone* (2000).





The Common, Site 2 (Wet Season)  
photograph by Trish Nixon-Smith

### **THE COMMON: WET SEASON**

#### **Plate 1.4.1**



The Common, Site 2 (Dry Season)  
photograph by Trish Nixon-Smith

### **THE COMMON: DRY SEASON**

#### **Plate 1.4.2**



large flocks. Within a week from the first rains, water plants such as nardoo start to appear as do dragonflies of various sizes and colours. After the cessation of the rains, the land slowly transforms. The lagoons start to diminish, waterbird activity declines, the dragonflies disappear and the water-plants start to wither. In this cyclical change, The Common communicates with the artist by displaying subtle energy relationships.

## **1.5 RATIONALE FOR AND AIMS OF THE STUDY**

Such communication through energy is both idiosyncratic and universal, both specific to one place and characteristic of many places. This research thus explores, through one specific place, artistic responsiveness to the energy of place.

In responding to the natural energies of place, the research aims firstly, to

- a) identify the parameters of natural cyclical change;
- b) balance intuitive and analytical processes.

Secondly, given that the focus of the research is on but one specific place, the second aim is to derive from these explorations of place an idiosyncratic visual code that, as a model, will have universal application to place, any place.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE BIG PICTURE

#### 2.1 INTERACTIONS WITH THE LANDSCAPE

Humans' interdependence with the natural energies of landscape has been documented visually since the very earliest times. It is also fundamental to the principles of ancient philosophy such as the Taoist connection between humans and the energies of the cosmos, which is the cornerstone of Taoist landscaping paintings. Furthermore, this connection is common to many cultures including present day Australians, as is evidenced by landscape architects Sinatra and Murphy's (1999) revelations on interactions between rural Australians and the land in *Listen to the People, Listen to the Land*. For instance, in an anecdote about Paddy Roe and Frans Hoogland, frequent reference is made to "*le-an*", a term which the authors describe as "seeing [the land] through feeling" (Sinatra & Murphy 1999, p. 21). This relationship is highlighted when Paddy asserts ". . . one man and this tree talking" (Sinatra & Murphy 1999, p. 18).

In the context of contemporary Aboriginal Art, relationships between the land and its inhabitants are of vital importance. Jeanie Adams (1995), curator of the exhibition 'Made with Meaning: Crafts of Aboriginal Far North Queensland', clarifies by purporting that aborigines share in ". . . a complex relationship to the environment, the land on which people live or emotionally depend" (Adams 1995, p. 36). In *Gwion Gwion* (2000) such a relationship for one Australian Aboriginal Community is explicated as a connection to every living thing through sources of continuously releasing energies emanating from particular landscape features and paintings. Like relationships extend to the cities in the south as Barnes, Murphy and Nicholson (2000)

state clearly when discussing public spaces in the cities: “Acknowledging the connection between people and place . . . is recognition of a fundamental relationship . . .” (2000, p. 17). Furthermore, archaeologist, Peterman’s (1992) view is that this relationship is both enduring and possible to decode arguing that

. . . site locations themselves have left us a record of patterned human behaviours, which can be decoded using environmental correlates (Peterman 1992, p. 162).

Closer to home, Blackman (1983) discusses the relationship of man and the water-birds of coastal swamps in terms of

The justification for their [water-birds] continued existence is steeped in the philosophy of conservation and in the growing awareness that, regardless of his environment-altering capacities, man is still part of the natural order (Blackman 1983, p. 186).

From an artist’s perspective, Margaret Wilson (Ditchburn 1966) posits a two-fold interaction maintaining that

Parallel to a sensed resonance of this place [northern environment] and space is a perceived centring core of energy which flows through the rhythms and cycles structuring its ambience (Ditchburn 1996, p. 22).

In essence, then, it can be demonstrated, from philosophy to art, that elemental land energies play an essential role in the interaction of humans and the landscape and that such energies affect humans from all walks of life but not necessarily in the same way. This interaction (artist/viewer and landscape) is fundamental to developing a code.

## **2.2 NATURAL ENERGIES AND ENERGY RELATIONSHIPS**

From a scientific viewpoint Briggs et al. (1997, p.11) identify the five energies affecting environmental processes as radiant, thermal, kinetic, chemical and potential. In comparison, philosophers of Tao refer to energy and the “five phases of energy

evolution” as being a life force or what may be described as “the force of the universe” (Hua-Ching Ni 1979, p. 9).

Both outlooks acknowledge the invisibility of most of this energy—an exception being radiant energy, which can be photographed via satellite (Briggs et al. 1997, p. 12)—and both acknowledge the critically important effect that energy exerts on the material world. Furthermore, there is written documentation on a long-standing cross-cultural connection between humans and the landscape as exemplified in Ancient Greek myths (Altenhoff 2001). Of this connection, Altenhoff observes that “. . . the interior landscape of the psyche was contiguous with the external landscape of the world” (2001, p. 1). More specific to the Australian landscape, there are examples of Aboriginal art depicting what Jenks (n.d., p. 2) describes as “integrated energy fields” linking humans with the world around them. From a cross-cultural perspective, Ione (2002) notes philosopher Casey’s (2002) argument that “. . . visual works should be judged in terms of how they connect us with an earth and world that is not merely the content of mind or language” (Ione 2002, p. 1). Moreover, Casey (2002) argues for the magnitude of landscape relationships when he notes that: “Every event [that] happens in a landscape . . . straddles the boundary between earth and world . . .” (Casey 2002, p. 275). Although a strong personal input into the relationship between humans and the landscape may be inferred from these propositions, there is little reference to actual incidences of energy relationships between individual persons and the landscape.

Given that the strong connection between people and land is both global and historical, a similar connection could be found between humans and the energies of the Common, more particularly, between this individual artist and The Common.

## 2.3 THE TOWNSVILLE COMMON

### 2.3.1 The context: background information

The Common has attracted research attention from a range of disciplines which include scientific writings on the North Queensland wetlands, publications on the fauna and flora of The Common and environmental plans for the park. Data relating to physical changes to The Common over the past three decades have been sought also from Gavin Blackman and Robert Graham, Park Ranger of the Townsville Common (pers. com.).

Scientific research on The Common has been ongoing since the early sixties, both as an entity and in context with larger wetland regions—as an entity (Blackman un. pub.), in context of North Queensland (Lavery 1964), in context of the Townsville District (Lavery 1968), and in the context of Queensland (Blackman 1983) and in context of important Queensland wetlands (Blackman, J.G., Perry, T.W., Ford, G.I., Craven, S.A., Gardiner, S.J. & De Lai, R.J. 1999). International scientists also have focused on The Common for researching their particular discipline, for example, American botanist Rowlatt's studies on plants living entirely in fresh water (Rowlatt & Cox c.1981). From the perspective of the potentiality of The Common, an historical and projection study of The Common was undertaken by Birtles and Sofield (1992) of the Department of Tourism at James Cook University of North Queensland.

At the instigation of the Townsville Town Common Steering Committee, Birtles and Sofield (1992) produced *Brolga Dreaming: A Vision for the Future of the Townsville Town Common* as a Concept Plan and Pre-feasibility Study for a North Australian Environmental and Heritage Theme Park, to date, however, it has not yet been implemented. The publication gives an insight into the chequered history of The Common, in particular, the heritage of the aboriginal Wulguru-Kaba people (Birtles &

Soffield 1992, p. 23); the military use of the locale during World War II (ibid., p. 23); the gazetting of the area as a pasturage reserve in 1869 (ibid., p.1), and its subsequent change to that of an Environmental Park in 1980 (ibid., p. 4). Moreover, some of the history is embodied in its full name: Townsville Town Common Environmental Park.

Despite this history of varied usage, The Common, as part of a larger region called the Burdekin-Townsville Coastal Aggregation, is still considered to be “. . . of international significance as migratory wader habitat . . .” (Blackman et al. 1999, p. 37). Botanist, Rowlatt (c.1981) supports this importance when discussing the “. . . scientific curiosity of plants living entirely in fresh water on the Townsville Town Common” (Rowlatt c.1981, p. 6) as do Birtle and Sofield (1992) in noting: “In spite of the degradation of some areas of the Town Common, it still retains much of intrinsic interest and value” (Birtle & Sofield 1992, p. 5).

Hence, The Common is constantly changing and by association so must the sense of place and the natural energies within that place.

### **2.3.2 Physical features and diversity**

The Common is characterised by diverse physical features [Plates 2.3.2.1 and 2.3.2.2]. In a fact seeking and taped discussion between this artist and Townsville scientist and Principal Conservation Officer for the Environmental Protection Agency, Gavin Blackman (2002), Blackman (2002 pers. com.) graphically presented the topography of the area as a satellite photograph. Elaborating on the said photograph, Blackman (2002) explained that the formation of The Common’s current configuration of two distinct regions, that is, lowlands surrounded by uplands (the Many Peaks Range) was caused by interactions between sea, land and volcanic upheavals. Blackman (2002) continued by expounding such regions. In the lowlands, Blackman (2002)





Map of the Town Common  
(Queensland National Parks and Wildlife)

**TOWN COMMON: MAP**

**Plate 2.3.2.1**

THE IMAGES ON THIS PAGE HAVE BEEN REMOVED DUE TO  
COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

Town Common Landforms  
J.G. Blackman (unpublished)

**TOWN COMMON: LANDFORMS**

**Plate 2.3.2.2**

identified the diverse features as sedge swamps, melaleuca swamps, mangrove swamps, salt pants, sand dunes, marine lagoons, freshwater streams and a tidal river. Of the uplands, grasslands and woodlands were identified as being two distinct features.

Such diverse features generate equally diverse habitats sustaining multitudinous varieties of both flora and fauna on The Common. Of the range and variety to be found, Rowlatt (c.1981) lists twenty-three “. . . plants living entirely in fresh water . . .” (Rowlatt c.1981, p. 4), Garnett and Cox (1983) classify 265 birds seen on the Townsville Town Common (Garnett & Cox 1983, pp. 177-93), and Birtles and Sofields (1992) report “. . . large concentrations of Brolgas, Magpie geese and other waterbirds . . . dingos, crocodiles, wallabies and goannas” (Birtles & Sofield 1992, p. x). Additional to the foregoing list are feral pigs, possums, snakes, lizards, hares, spiders and a plethora of insect species personally observed on The Common.

The presence of less apparent yet scientifically important phenomena such as the vine thickets and their importance as corridors for various bird species travelling north, the importance of the sedge swamps to the survival of the Brolga colonies, the pattern of waves recorded in rock (Wave Rock) and examples of Aboriginal rock art painting was highlighted by Blackman (2002). Beyond the variety in the landforms, flora and fauna found on The Common, Blackman (1983) points out a state of flux that makes this area special:

In the sense of geological time, the swamps are part of a succession modified by the oscillation of annual wet and dry seasons. Thus geological change and season variability bestow on the coastal swamps of the Burdekin/Townsville region [of which the Common is part] a dynamic impermanence comparable with few other habitat types in Queensland (Blackman 1983, p. 157).

## 2.4 OTHER ARTISTS AND THE TOWN COMMON

### 2.4.1 Emergence of the Common as artistic subject

Artists visiting Townsville in the nineteenth century (for example, Julian Ashton, Edward Bevan, Walter Jenner, William Allom and H.S. Rimstead) focussed their attention on the distinctive granite feature that is Castle Hill (Searle 1991). According to Searle (1991), these early artists “[u]sually depicted [Townsville] from off-shore, with Castle Hill forming a dramatic backdrop . . .” (Searle 1991, p. 21) [Plate 2.4.1.1]. There is, nevertheless, a wood engraving (1884) by an unknown artist showing a view to Tee Reach [the Strand] and Kissing Point with The Common and Pallarenda in the far distance [Plate 2.4.1.2].

The Common as subject matter for artists is evidenced more frequently in the nineteen hundreds, particularly by the artists John Olsen (1928-), Jim Cox (1939-), James Brown (1953-) and Hilary Mangan (1938-).

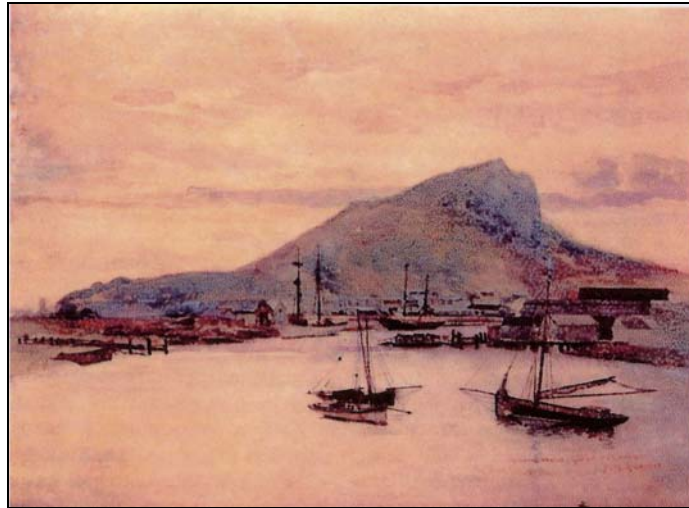
Each artist draws attention to a different aspect of The Common for the viewer’s consideration and each infuses paintings or prints with uniqueness. Such uniqueness is the artists’ personalities and culture influencing a painting. Philosopher Canaday (1980) explains thus:

. . . a painting is a projection of the personality of the artist who painted it, and also a statement—or at least a partial statement—of the philosophy of the age that produced it (Canaday 1980, p. 15).

Art historian, Bussagli (1988), is of a similar mind as is evidenced in his posit on Chinese Painting: “. . . a man’s being being reflected in his brush” (Bussagli 1988, p. 14).

### 2.4.2 John Olsen (b. 1928)

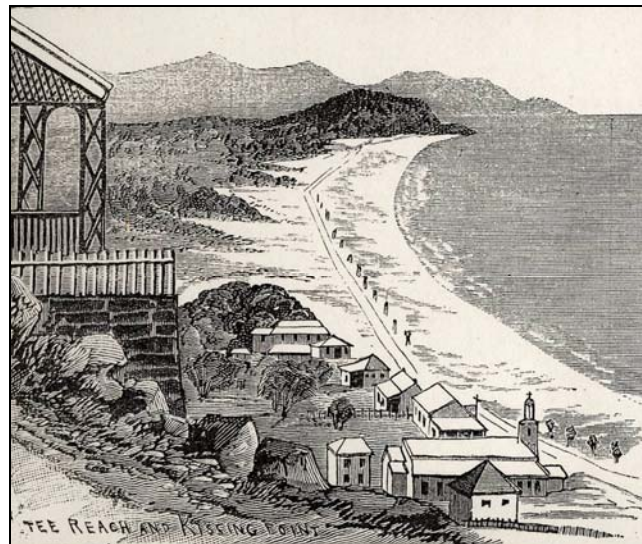
John Olsen’s encounter with The Common featured in *At the Edge of the Salt Plain* 1971 (ABC Wild Australia Production). In this production, focus is on the swamps and marshes of the area particularly the birdlife inhabitants. Although Olsen made the



Julian Ashton, 1851–1942  
*Castle Hill, Townsville, Queensland, c.1885*  
 watercolour, 25.6 x 34.7 cm  
 Perc Tucker Regional Gallery  
 (Searle 1991)

### **JULIAN ASHTON, (1851-1842)**

#### **Plate 2.4.1.1**



unknown artist  
*Tee Reach and Kissing Point, 1884*  
 wood engraving  
 Flinders Gallery, Townsville

### **UNKNOWN ARTIST: 1884**

#### **Plate 2.4.1.2**

Brolga a focal subject for his paintings, Hart (1991) explains that in the Common:

. . . Olsen was stimulated . . . by the sense of the whole pulsating mass of living creatures of birds, fish, crustaceans, worms and insects—that inhabited the swamps and marshes in the wet season (Hart 1991, p. 127).

The essence of Olsen’s paintings of brolgas [Plate 2.4.2.1] is movement. Both Hawley (1993) and Hart (1991) wrote of Olsen’s interest in movement with Olsen himself enforcing the idea of movement with his comments “Nature is never static, it is in constant flux . . . Don’t think of form, think of forming. Forming is growing, developing process . . .” (Hart 1991, p. ix).

Using unhesitant fluid brush strokes of different thicknesses in his paintings of brolgas, Olsen characterises the birds’ movements. These gestural calligraphic brolgas are accented by white backlighting—the light glistening on water. By this means of strong contrast, Olsen brings attention to the prime focus point, the foremost brolga. From this focal point the viewers’ attention is directed throughout the paintings by what Alumni Foundation Distinguished Professor of Art, Feldman (1981), refers to as “dominance and subordination”. Feldman explains this thus:

. . . the artist attempts to control the *sequence* in which visual events are observed and the *amount of attention* they are paid. The dominant element of a work is the one the others depend on for their meaning, or visual value (Feldman 1981, p. 252).

Interestingly, in 77 *Brolga Dancing*, Olsen has the dark, almost black—a prime matter colour (Cirlot 1971)—brolgas silhouetted against white—an ascension colour (Cirlot 1971)—giving emphasis to the rising up (and implying movement) of the brolgas when dancing. Enforcing this anticipated rising up is the foremost brolga’s strong connection to the ground [the stronger the connection the higher the leap] by way of similarity of tone between the supporting leg and the ground. Furthermore, the “v” shape in the corresponding leg strengthens this “ground” connection.

The use of prime matter and ascension colours, arguably, could impart a spiritual quality to the brolga. Also of interest is that the colours used—black, white, red and gold



THIS IMAGE HAS BEEN REMOVED DUE TO COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

*77 Brolga Dancing* (undated)  
gouache on paper, 34 x 39.2 cm  
private collection  
(Hart 1991)

**JOHN OLSEN (b. 1928)**

**Plate 2.4.2.1**



(green/gold)—are symbolic of spiritual evolution (Cirlot 1971, p. 56)—a different kind of movement. Moreover, the possible spiritual component of the painting is upheld by an aboriginal story in which the spirit of the earth is represented by the dancing brolga (Reed, A.W. 1971).

Hence, Olsen's paintings of brolgas on The Common are, in essence, the portrayal of movement of the spiritual energy of the place.

### **2.4.3 Jim Cox (b. 1939)**

Jim Cox presents a different view. As illustrator of *Water Plants of the Townsville Town Common* (Rowlatt c.1981) and *Birds of the Townsville Common* (Garnett & Cox 1983), Cox explores a broader range of areas in the Common—lagoons, ponds, borrow pits, dam and Bald Rock—than Olsen, and detailed examination of flora and fauna.

Although the majority of pen and ink illustrations in these publications deal with individual plant and bird species, there are also panoramic views [Plate 2.4.3.1]. These panoramas engage the viewer's interest through contrast between dark and light achieved by the use of many small marks in rendering form and imparting descriptive value. Through this technique, Cox imparts a sense of the myriad of minutiae happenings within a broad view of the landscape.

Beyond this complexity of small details, an impression of order is sustained by Cox with his illustrations denoting stability (in comparison to Olsen's paintings of movement). This order and stability is achieved by the use of marks, voids and tones making the viewer aware of orderliness in the organic shapes as well as the lights and shadows of nature.

Voids play an important role in Cox's illustrations—directing the viewer's attention. The strength of these voids arises from their relationship to the heavily marked

THIS IMAGE HAS BEEN REMOVED DUE TO COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

*Snipe Ponds*  
(Rowlatt c. 1989)

**JIM COX (b. 1939)**

**Plate 2.4.3.1**

areas (Feldman's [1981] "dominance and subordination"). Nevertheless, the eye's pathway is subtly manipulated by both the use of cross directional marks—to linger or turn in another direction—and arrow like formations—to hasten through.

Therefore, it is reasonable to construe that Cox's interpretation of The Common as one of the physical connection between the energies of individual features of place.

#### **2.4.4 James Brown (b. 1953)**

James Brown's approach is different yet again. Brown focuses on a single area of The Common, usually excluding the local fauna, to produce suites of paintings. For instance, the mangrove and beach area of The Common is the focus of the exhibition, *Littoral Zone* (2000) and the open-forest areas of the lowlands are the focus of *Secret Gardens* (2002). In a visual way, Brown walks the viewer through his paintings of The Common through directional brush marks and weaving of gradually changing colours [Plate 2.4.4.1].

A recent conversation with the artist gave insight into his approach to the subject. During this discussion, Brown (2002) mentioned that he is seeking the ambiguity of solids and space with space itself as being the real object rather than a vista featuring a specific angle of view. He observed that, he paints generalities rather than detail so the viewers' primary involvement is not with the scene but focuses on the painter's enjoyment on the physical act of painting. For Brown, key interests are big shapes, shadow patterns and window-like gaps between trees. Beyond these physical properties, there are also the non-visual dimensions of pervasive sounds, the presence of unseen animals and personal mindset that Brown takes into account.

Given the above, in essence, Brown's paintings portray the energies of the artist working in The Common—a relationship of energies between artist and place.



THIS IMAGE HAS BEEN REMOVED DUE TO COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

*Tidal Traces*, 1999  
oil on canvas, 116 x 125 cm

**JAMES BROWN (b. 1953)**

**Plate 2.4.4.1**

### 2.4.5 Hilary Mangan (b. 1938)

Whereas Brown is native to Townsville, Hilary Mangan originally came from Ireland. Further, Mangan spent many years living in various regions in Europe and as a result, her perceptions of The Common are inevitably conditioned by the European background.

Mangan finds The Common unique in that it is without the orderliness of European forests, supports a much wider variety of tree species and, according to Mangan, seems almost Jurassic (particularly the palm and pandanus groves). It is the unmanicured and distinctively North Queensland scrubby quality of the area that is of special appeal to Mangan (pers. com. 2002).

In her paintings and prints, Mangan focuses on a single species as subject matter (usually palms and pandanus), as distinct from the diverse plant life to be found there. Her attention is drawn to detail, structure, starkness and the specialness of the subject [Plate 2.4.5.1] and it is these tools she uses to express her vision of the subject.

Hence, Mangan's relationship with The Common is with the energies of palms *in situ* rather than The Common as an entity.

Given the wide variety of the above artist's treatment of The Common, it could be maintained that each of these artists, along with any artist who portrays The Common, uses a personal code to convey singular viewpoints of this Environmental Park with such codes being as diverse as the individual's visions. Whether these codes are deliberately generated, and if so, to what extent, is debatable; however, in developing such code there is a need for an understanding of vision-image relationships.

THIS IMAGE HAS BEEN REMOVED DUE TO COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

Untitled, 2002  
lithograph

**HILARY MANGAN (b. 1938)**

**Plate 2.4.5.1**



## 2.5 ENCODING A VISION AS IMAGE

Since humans first started expressing themselves by making marks, visual codes in terms of images have been developed. Such codes represent a graphic language used to convey ideas, responses and visions with one school of thought suggesting the language of image as being “living ‘organic’ link[s]” to ancient realities (Curry n.d.). In reading an encoded image, the viewer deciphers and then interprets the code within a framework from memories of personal experiences and imagination.<sup>5</sup> The resulting interpretation however, is not necessarily the message of the encoder, as the variables of the viewers’ personal experiences<sup>6</sup> have a profound effect on what is conveyed. This is exemplified in the opposing views on the Australian landscape held by artist Drysdale and critic Hughes: Drysdale (Dutton 1992) comments: “. . . [there is] a great sense of freedom [in the space of the back country]” (Dutton 1992, p. 124), whereas Hughes (2000) reports, “. . . space . . . was prison [and therefore] . . . Australians don’t [do not] associate large space with freedom” (Hughes 2000, p. 2).

Regarding the affect of variables, philosopher Noë (2002), in his paper *Art as Enaction*, argues: “You . . . encounter the world as detailed in your experience . . . [and, as a consequence,] we interpret our limited sensory experience in the light of our knowledge” (Noë 2002, p. 3). Going further, Noë (2002) considers an artist to be an “*experience engineer*” because “[t]he painter literally enacts the content of a possible experience” (Noë 2002, p. 9). In *engineering* a viewer’s reading of an encoded image,

---

5

Interestingly, from research into the role of imagination in art, philosopher Currie (1996) proposes that there could be an “imagination system . . . in the way there is a visual system . . .” (Currie 1996, p. 1) Going further with Currie’s proposal, this imagination system could be arguably a seventh sense.

6

Regarding the variables of personal experience, Carter (2002) offers the list: “memories (personal and factual); ideas (‘democracy is good’); symbols (‘d-o-g’ stands for things that go woof); prejudices and preferences. It also comprises know *how*.” (Carter 2002, p. 143).

the historian, Arikha (2002) advises: “Line, form and colour can . . . communicate . . . by impact, igniting a cascade of feelings or aesthetic emotions” (Arikha 2002, p. 3).

These pictorial elements are used by artists in differing degrees and to different ends, in encoding a vision. For instance, Olsen (McGregor et al. 1969) uses these elements in his Australian landscapes as a “filtering process” to achieve his desire for the viewer to see “the microcosm and at the next moment the expansiveness of the universe” (Hart 1991, p. 129). The extent of Olsen’s success in encoding this vision is shown in artist and arts writer Berlind’s (1993) article on the *John Olsen Retrospective* in which he notes:

His [Olsen’s] characteristically quizzical line and irregular squiggles and dots deftly render countless organisms, large and minute. Their environment is conjured through loosely brushed and stained expanses of colour . . . Olsen’s imagery teems with life (Berlind 1993, p. 1).

On the other hand, Williams (McGregor et al. 1969), in encoding his vision of the essence of the landscape without the atmosphere, simplifies the elements of design “. . . so that all the atmosphere is reduced to one tiny spot of paint”. His intention is for the viewer to “grapple with the canvasses” (McGregor et al. 1969, p. 107).

There are more elements than line, form and colour through which to influence a viewer. Medium, size of format and manner of presentation are also critical. Of these arguably, size might play the greatest role. Arts commentator, Gayford (2002) argues, in relation to size, that:

. . . a huge picture functions in certain ways entirely differently from an above-the-mantelpiece job. It is big enough to become an environment. As Rothko noted, you become a participant (Gayford 2002, p. 63).

Supporting Gayford’s argument on the importance of size, but approaching it from the opposite end of the size spectrum, is poet and essayist, Hustvedt (2002) reasoning, that “. . . smaller than the spectator’s body makes the work intimate, friendly, manageable . . .” (Hustvedt 2002, p. 81). Hence it follows, that the sense of intimacy projected by an artwork is in direct relationship to its size.

Adding greater complexity to the engineering of a viewer's experience, the effects of culture are pivotal to the encoding process. This is exemplified by the use and nomenclature of colours throughout history (Gage 1995), the different symbolic meanings of colour (viz. between oriental and occidental communities [Cirlot 1971]), and the non-universality of colour names (Kay 2002; Lindsey & Brown 2002).<sup>7</sup> From an artist's viewpoint, McKenna (1999) highlights its imperative: ". . . color has political, historical, and corporeal meanings that resonate in a system of cultural relations" (McKenna 1999, p. 4). Hence, cultural reading of colour plays a vital role in any experience of art. Of the roles played by culture in art, such roles may not be absolute but tempered by "artistic universals" (Ramachandran 2003). Neuroscientist Ramachandran (2003) argues the existence of laws in art the "effect of which is common to all brains". Further, he proposes ten universal laws of art<sup>8</sup> as being those which "cut across cultural boundaries" (Ramachandran 2003, p. 3). In part, his validation of this hypothesis includes the observation that:

. . . human artists through trial and error, through intuition, through genius have discovered the figural primitives of our perceptual grammar. They are tapping into these and creating for your brain . . . (Ramachandran 2003, p. 7).

Even more complexity is added to the encoding process by each artist having a signature style, usually featuring recurrent elements, as exemplified by Olsen in his use of line. Regarding Olsen's use of line, journalist Hawley (1993) describes its function as going ". . . for a walk around the canvas, stumbling, rumbling into a profusion of multi-layered incidents . . ." (Hawley 1993, p. 128). The affect of an artist's personal

---

7

Regarding the non-universality of colour names, Lindsey and Brown's (2002) findings demonstrate that ". . . many languages do not distinguish between 'blue' and 'green'." (Lindsey & Brown 2002, p. 506).

8

The ten universal laws of art proposed by Ramachandran (2003) are: "peak shifting; grouping; contrast; isolation; perception problem solving; symmetry; abhorrence of coincidence/generic viewpoint; repetition, rhythm and orderliness; balance and metaphor" (Ramachandran 2003, p. 3).

style in encoding meaning may be traced to intuition; that is, “knowingness”, “unconscious processes” (Darracott 1997; Dutton 1992; Carter 1990) and the all-encompassing “collective unconscious” (Rose 1993; Tucker, 1992). For the scientist, Rose (1993) intuition “. . . dominate[s] our lives” (Rose 1993, p. 327) and, by extension, it must also profoundly affect the encoding and deciphering of images. In support of this idea, the art historian Carter (1990), perceives encoding an image as “. . . largely, but not wholly, an unconscious process” (Carter 1990, p. 70). Carter (1990), observes, however, that it is also “. . . a rule-governed activity . . . conscious choice can and does operate at certain levels of coding . . .” (Carter 1990, p. 70).

Hence, the encoding process is complex involving many variables—perceptions on life, experiences, messages to be conveyed, mediums employed (including presentations), cultures, artistic universals, signature styles and intuitive knowledge—encompassing both intuition and calculation. Similar variables affect viewers’ readings of artworks with the additional variant of expectations.

## **2.6 EXPECTATIONS OF VIEWERS**

Viewers may have very different expectations, but there is a clear division between the expectations of two groups: those that are acculturated to looking at art through education and experience, and those that lack formal training and exposure to art. Differences in the expectations of these groups are shown by the entries written in Visitors’ Book on display in most galleries: those familiar with art practices usually write about an artist’s skill and vision, whereas those unfamiliar with art practices tend to comment, when applicable, on their state of incomprehension about artworks. Beyond the lack of communication underpinning

the expectation of the latter group, expectations for those who are familiar with the conventions of contemporary art and practices have some commonality.

From the perspective of good design in visual arts, psychologists Locher, Stappers and Overbeek (1999), agree that there are differences between the two groups but qualify the extent, synthesising their research thus:

Findings demonstrate that the ability to detect the induced structural skeleton of a painting resulting from a visually right design does not require expert knowledge of design principles whereas the ability to discriminate between several articulation possibilities of the same composition does require formal training (Locher, Stappers & Overbeek 1999, p. 2).

Such findings, it could be argued, are supported by Ramanachandran's (2003) hypothesis of there being "universal laws [in art] common to all brains" (Section 2.5).

Although a plethora of writings about art can be found in hardcopy and online, the primary focus is not necessarily on viewer's expectations. Notable exceptions are philosopher of art, Carroll (2001) who suggests that philosophers' essential experience of art is one of "pleasure"; the philosopher, Armstrong (2000) who believes "intimacy" (i.e. a very personal emotional response) should be a factor in any discussion about art; the philosopher, Sutton (2000) who discusses "wonder" (that is, ". . . an emotion felt in the presence of something possessing aura . . ." [Sutton 2000, p. 10]) and "aura" (" . . . a certain inarticulate understanding of an artwork . . ." [Sutton 2000, p. 10]); and, the art historian, Beckett (1999) who considers that "beauty" features in viewers' expectations. Interestingly, all these writers use broad terms open to culturally influenced interpretations such as "pleasure", "intimacy", "wonder", "aura", and "beauty", (for example "beauty" [Roth & Roth 1998]) when referring to a viewer's expectations. Furthermore, that an emotional response is expected by a viewer is

implied by each writer in employing one or more of these terms. Less helpful, but perhaps more honest, art professor, Nigel Whiteley (1999) succinctly states, that his feelings “. . . cannot simply be put into words” (Heywood & Sandywell eds. 1999, p. 99). Adding to the enigmatic aura surrounding viewers’ expectations while, at the same time supporting the foregoing writer’s notions on such expectations, is Dubuffet’s (1998) belief that “Art addresses the mind and not the eyes” (Dubuffet 1998, p. 14).

Further variables such as emotional anticipation evoked by vagaries of memory and the notion of inconstancy play roles in viewers’ expectations. The first factor is highlighted by Rose (1993) whose view of memory is that “Memories are living processes, which become transformed, inbred with new meanings, each time we recall them” (Rose 1993, p. 2). Regarding the second factor, Berger (1972) takes the stance that: “Publicity images . . . belong to the moment in the sense that they must be continually reviewed or made up-to-date” (Berger 1971, p. 130).

Therefore, given the foregoing, no definitive synopsis can be applied to viewers’ expectations globally. In any study encompassing viewers’ expectations, the key to clarification is who (education/experience), where (geography) and when (history). Of the mercurial components of expectation, emotion and mindset, such do not fit neatly into a definable box but arguably, have the greater input into not only expectations of viewers but also as to how images are interpreted.

## **2.7 HOW IMAGES ARE INTERPRETED**

The complex processes of the brain involved in interpreting images and the contingencies of context arising with each image could potentially yield many theses in its right. Of the complex process, this is an ongoing research subject spanning a variety of disciplines as is evidenced in papers outlining outcomes and hypotheses that appear in



journals such as *Perception*, *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, *Psyche*, *Æ* and universities' gazettes. Therefore, for this study, the viewing of artwork is seen as being subject to the same variables as encoding.

For a viewer to reach an understanding about what is encoded (i.e. to read an artwork) parallel steps to the creating of an artwork are followed whereby visual, emotional and analytical processes become interconnected (Armstrong 2000; Canaday 1980) in what some perception theorists see as a three-stage development.<sup>9</sup> First, there is an initial gut-reaction on sighting the work. Next, the viewer perceives what may be encoded. This stage involves the viewer with correlating the imagery with personal associations and memories. Finally, the viewer reflects on what is perceived which may involve meditation or fabrication of new meanings. The outcome cannot be predetermined as each subsequent viewing reveals something fresh and triggers new readings. New readings could be attributed, in part, to “visual persistence” (i.e. “sensory” or “iconic memory” [Wagar 2003]). Regarding visual persistence, Wagar (2003), explains that there is “[h]igh recall when cue delay is short” (Wagar 2003, p. 1) and “[p]rogressively poorer performance as cue delay is increased” (Wagar 2000, p. 7). Adding another dimension to this explanation, curator, art critic and art historian, Eagle (1992) notes that “. . . each sighting partly obscures the others” (Eagle 1992, p. 2).

Initial gut-reaction is pivotal for the viewer. The triggers for the reaction could arise from the elements of design used in encoding, or the emotional state of the viewer or a combination of both. This initial reaction is the prelude to a desire to know

---

9

There is dissention among perception theorists regarding the number of steps in the creative process. The number of suggested stages from embryonic to maturity ranges from three (Edwards 1986 cited Helmholtz n.d.) through to seven (Plsek, 1996 cited Rossman, 1931; Osborne, 1953; Koberg & Bagnall, 1981; Fritz, 1991; MG Taylor Corporation, 1996). Going further, MG Taylor Corp. (1996) expands their seven stages to 294 classified stages. Contentions also exist as to whether the process is “subconscious” or “purposefully generated” (Plsek, 1996). Artist and educator, Edwards (1986) favours Getzel’s five-step process: insight, saturation, incubation, illumination and verification. From a personal viewpoint, however, the steps can be simplified into one of three categories viz. embryonic, gestatory and maturing.

more. In other words, the gut reaction to an artwork draws questions from the viewer and in seeking answers; the viewer's interest is sustained to explore the artwork.

Beyond the correlation of imagery with personal associations and memories involved in the second stage, the viewer is influenced by several factors in exploring an image. One of these is revelations that are found only by scrutiny, such as varying qualities of the paint surface. Regarding such scrutiny, Eagles (1992,) makes the interesting comment that during this “. . . analysing of the painted surface . . . other aspects of the works of art disappear” (Eagles 1992, p.1). A viewer is also influenced by snippets of momentary information observed only by peripheral vision, such as changing lines and planes (Eagle 1992), and changing facial expressions (Livingstone, n.d.).

Additional factors play an integral part in image interpretation. Influences on interpretation are associated with historical context of the painting, style of execution, as well as gender and race (Woodrow, 2002; Eagles, 1992) of both artist and viewer. Another influencing factor is that the length of exposure to an image affects a reading resulting from changes to a viewer's mindset; for instance, the psychological effects of prolonged exposure to colours (Tremlett, 2003; Kelly, 2002).<sup>10</sup> The influences of these factors can be transient and, accordingly, give rise to changes in a viewer's interpretation.

Regarding the third stage, art historian, Freedberg (2002), together with electrical engineer and scientist, Perona (Freedberg 2002), are working on

---

<sup>10</sup>

Regarding the effects of exposure to colour, the length of time is arbitrary. For instance prisons in Spain in 1930s incorporated colour in their torture cells to assist in causing stress (Tremlett, 2003). Furthermore, prisons in the U.S. are currently using colour to reduce aggression (Kelly, 2002). In contrast, marketers consider that consumers “. . . make a judgement . . . within 90 seconds . . . between 62% and 90% is based on colour alone” (Kelly, 2002).

“correlations between visual composition and emotion” (Freedberg 2002). Results from such studies could assist in the qualitative assessment of emotional response in paintings and may, in turn, provide a better understanding about the mediative state that some works induce.

Construction of new meanings in this third stage may be influenced by the viewer’s knowledge of, or bias towards “Peircian semiotics” (Moriarty 1994) and/or “Saussurian semiology” (Moriarty 1994).<sup>11</sup> Research by marketers West, Huber and Sam Min (n.d.) (arguably without such knowledge) shows that peoples’ perceptions “. . . of paintings shift depending on how they interact with the works of art” (West, Huber & Sam Min n.d., p. 1). O’Toole (1994) explains this interaction thus: “. . . works of art initiate a never-ending dialogue . . . [within] new insights by individual viewers . . . [and] new interpretations by different generations and cultures” (O’Toole 1994, p. 31).

Given the foregoing, an artist responds to his/her experiences from the perspective of creator, encoder, acculturated viewer and interpreter and as such is influenced by the constantly changing variables within each role. A further development of this multifaceted responsiveness is seen in the discipline of psychoanalysis. Indeed, Glover (n.d.), a psychoanalyst observes an overlapping of

. . . the nature of the *creative process* and the experience of the artist; the *interpretation* of art; and also the nature of the *aesthetic encounter* (Glover n.d., p. 4).

Therefore, it is conceivable that artistic responsiveness may only be identifiable in relation to a specific moment.

---

<sup>11</sup>

Moriarty (1994) describes Peircian semiotics as “. . . [the] system for analysing signs [which] includes iconic, indexical and symbolic categories of meaning . . .”(Moriarty 1994, p. 1) and compares this system with Saussurian semiology that “. . . largely concentrates on linguistic based theories and forms of analysis” (Moriarty 1994, p. 1).

## CHAPTER 3

### VISION AS IMAGE

#### 3.1 *GUT REACTION* AS DRIVER

Throughout the following discussions, the term *gut reaction/s* is used as an umbrella for emotion, feeling, or a combination of both. The decision to use such an umbrella term is based firstly, on passive observation during discussions with colleagues, in which two distinct understandings of the subject of emotion and feeling emerged. On the one hand, there was a school of thought suggesting that feeling and emotion are synonymous, while on the other, varying distinctions between the two were perceived. However, there was no consensus as to the nature or extent of such distinctions.

The second rationale for the decision is that, for this researcher, awareness of response and any associated physiological affects were so closely intertwined that accurate placement of such effects as preceding, accompanying or following the personal response, was well nigh impossible. Similar bases for differentiation are used to distinguish between feeling and emotion in disciplines of psychology (Burkart 2003) and psychotherapy (Bernet (1996). Hence, the use of *gut reaction* in this study is considered appropriate as signifying personal immediate response to natural energies, that is *le-an* (Section 2.1). Such *gut reactions*, are pivotal to researching the sense of place.

#### 3.2 PLANNING THE JOURNEY

While remaining open to possibilities within unfolding events, this researcher envisages that, from the catalyst of individual *gut reactions* through to the

documentation of an idiosyncratic visual code to portray natural energies of cyclical change, two parallel pathways—empirical and intuitive data collecting, and, methodical and analytical processing of such data—will be trodden. The empirical and intuitive data collecting will enhance personal understanding of individual natural energies applicable to cycles within *The Common* culminating in an artistic representation of each energy source experienced. Methodical and analytical processing will be used to interpret such representations.

Of the empirical component, observations will determine the sites on which to focus, the parameters of cyclical change and personal responses. Documentation of these will be in the form of field notes, drawings and photographs. The intuitive component, however, will record *gut reactions* to energies without considering underlying mechanisms. The task of the processing component will be to determine mediums to be used in documentation and to demonstrate the extent to which, if at all, intuition plays a role in creating an idiosyncratic visual code with potential universal application to place.

As a construct towards codifying a private view of natural energies, the dual processing is detailed in Figure 3.2.1. Following these processes, the researcher will evaluate the aptness of such code from the position of the encoder in the context of development of artistic responsiveness. Such development will be revealed by comparison between pre-research portrayal of *The Common* (control painting) and post-research portrayal.

The nature of the prime focus of this study, that is, natural energies of cyclical change, will dictate the data collection time-frame to encompass such changes. Hence, with the view of attaining insight into the natural energies of a particular place, empirical and intuitive data will be collected over twelve months of field studies. Such

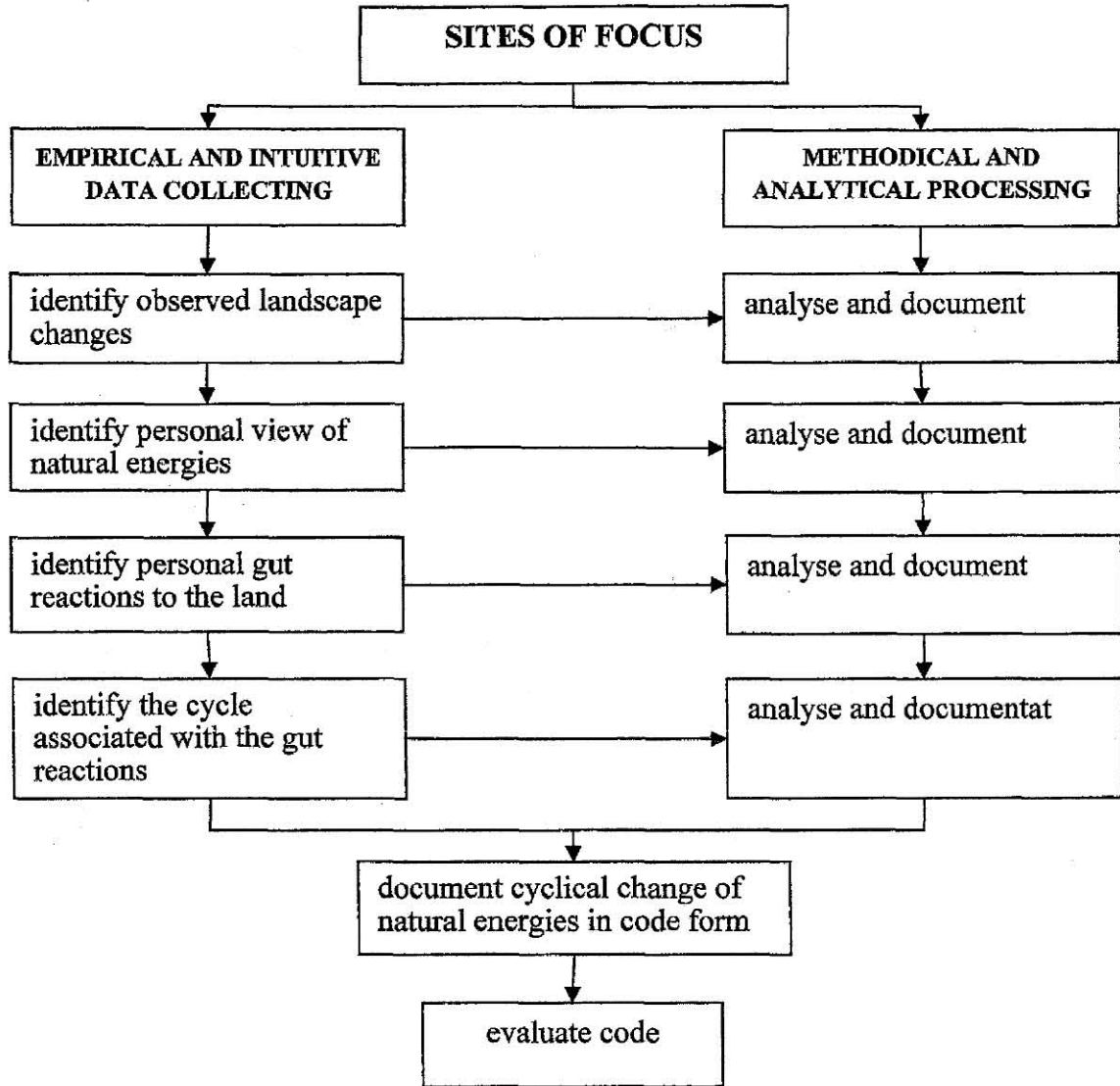


Figure 3.2.1

### PLANNING THE JOURNEY

documentation will focus on energies, changes, and personal responses to the identified energies and changes within The Common. Of the documentation, prevailing field conditions will influence the method, for example, heavy rain would preclude the use of water-colour visual diary entries although not pencilled entries.

In order to preserve a sense of balanced perspective, focus of similar intensity will be applied to the theoretical and analytical processes spanning a further twelve months wherein the collected data will be collated into appropriate energy cycles.

From these, further analyses and collating, based on personal responses and art theory will be made. Subsequently, such results will be analysed at greater depth and collated into exemplar aspects of cyclical changes, thus utilizing both pathways to arrive at a new code based on place.

Presentation of the research will be in the form of an exhibition. In such exhibition, presentation of each graphic process will be appropriate to the purpose for which it was used. Visual relationships between these processes will be the unifying factor in the exhibition.

### **3.3 THE SITES**

To facilitate the research of presenting artistic responsiveness to the energy of the natural cyclical changes on The Common while balancing intuitive and analytical ways of working, selection of appropriate sites from within the vast area that is The Common is necessary. Furthermore, as this study is predicated on personal responses to natural energies, neither predetermination nor arbitrary selection of sites on which to focus is appropriate.

Consequently reconnaissance visits were undertaken, the criterion for which was to experience the intensity of *gut reactions* (if any). Of such *gut reactions*, the premise was that, the greater the intensity the greater the likelihood of awareness to change would be. However, in this premise, there was no allowance for the possibility that such intensity (of fear) could possibly immobilise this researcher's progression, as was found to be the case in one instance. (Subsequent discussions between the artist and Blackman [2004] suggested the likelihood that the particular area was analogous to what indigenous people in some regions of Australia refer as "dead land", that is, places not entered [Blackman pers. com. 2004]). These *gut reactions* can be both

positive, negative and, in some instances debilitating. Hence, the criterion for site selection was modified to exclude such debilitating gut reactions. Table 3.3.1 details the *gut reaction* index for each site and the subsequent selection decision.

**Table 3.3.1**  
**SITE SELECTION**

<b>SITE</b>	<b>GUT REACTION INTENSITY SCALE 1-5</b>	<b>GUT REACTION ENERGY CLASS</b>	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>REASON</b>	<b>PHYSICAL FEATURE</b>
vicinity of entrance	4	positive	retained	high end of scale	grasslands
observation tower area	3.5	ambivalent	retained	high end of scale	sedge swamps
Jacara bird-hide and surrounds	1	ambivalent	rejected	low end of scale	freshwater lagoon
waterway	5	negative	retained	could work (apprehensively) at this level	freshwater stream/ waterhole
walking track	5+	negative	rejected	<i>gut reaction</i> to energy was immobilising	grasslands
hills near old quarantine station	3	positive	rejected	borderline on scale	woodlands
vicinity aboriginal plant trail	4	ambivalent	retained	high end of scale	woodlands
saltpans on causeway	4.5	positive	retained	high end of scale	saltpans

Thus, from eight possible sites five were selected [Plate 3.3.1] on the basis of the intensity of *gut reactions*. Fortuitously, each site so selected exemplified a particular physical feature of The Common (Section 2.3)—sedge swamps, saltpans, freshwater stream, grasslands and woodlands.

Supplementary working codes of practice were then applied to the selected sites, viz. minimum disturbance to natural habitat, accessibility and personal safety. Hence,



THIS IMAGE HAS BEEN REMOVED DUE TO COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

Map of the Town Common  
(Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service)

**TOWN COMMON: MAP OF SITES**

**Plate 3.3.1**

as far as possible, work was carried out in close proximity to walking tracks, bird hides and roads (minimum disturbance to natural habitat and accessibility); footsteps only were left behind (minimum disturbance); and when working near waterways the awareness of being in crocodile country was foremost (personal safety). Further, although key access to restricted areas was offered by the ranger, this researcher felt morally bound to adhere to any restrictions and/or directions to the public set by the Common's managing body.

### **3.4 AN OVERVIEW OF ANTICIPATED PROCESS**

In executing the strategy discussed in Section 3.2, it is envisaged that the following processes will be necessary.

- weekly visits to the Common
- documentation of changes observed in landforms, flora and fauna in photographs and drawings
- documentation of personal responses to natural energy changes at a range of different sites and at different times in field notes and drawings
- identification of cycles by empirical study
- identification of the three stages of creation (Section 2.7) combining intuition and calculation in the encoding process
- determination of appropriate method and medium for each stage in such process
- investigation into and analyses of relevant issues as found in hypotheses by authorities on philosophy, perception, human communications, viewers' expectations and art practice
- organisation of presentation of research as an exhibition