CHAPTER 4

CODIFYING A PRIVATE VIEW: THE PROCESS 4.1 PERSONAL VISION OF ENERGY RELATIONSHIPS

As discussed previously (Section 2.2), there is a long-standing connection between humans and the land. From a personal perspective, interaction with natural energies of the land is a multi-layered relationship. On a fundamental level, there is the unreasoned connection of humans to the land (Section 2.2) which could be summarised as an immediate response to landscape activated by vision and other senses, often resulting in emotions¹¹ and/or *gut reactions* as the personal catalyst for creating. On a secondary level the relationship is solely visual. For the purpose of this study, reference to natural energies is to the cycles—growth, diurnal, seasonal, migratory and tidal—of nature and their effect on the landscape. The aforementioned all bring change—in both life and habitat as is evidenced in the following discussion.

Of the secondary level, at such level, the changes in colour, light, shadow and mass are readily observable in relation to the stages of seasonal cycle. A good indicator of changing relationships within this cycle is seen in plants. Optimum ground moisture has plants standing tall seemingly exuding a joyous feeling, whereas when there is an over-abundance of water, the same plants develop an oppressed looking droop. This droop is different from that of the struggling-to-survive droop of vegetation observed during dry times when the plants appear to have a desolate

Psychologist, Bernet (1996, p.2), suggests that there are "fine nuances of body feelings that precede or accompany the awareness of emotion." Going further, in 1997 Bernet (1997, p.2) coined the phrase "somats awareness" to describe these feelings: ". . . the changing sensations within the body [that] are likely to be autonomous responses." He calls each of these physical sensations a "somat" defined as "the smallest perceptible unit of sensation . . . within the body" (ibid., p. 2) and considers them to be ". . . in-body physical responses to the environment . . ." (ibid., p. 2).

fragility.¹² Changes to plants can be observed also during growth and diurnal cycles. During the growth cycle, certain fungi seem to exhibit languor and smugness as they gently unfold into the world—an arresting contrast to some flowers that burst into life radiating anticipation and eagerness. The diurnal cycle brings other changes. As the heat of the day increases, certain plants adopt different postures, arguably attributable to the altering position or shape of leaves as they adjust to the demands of the sun. The importance of this leaf-sun relationship was highlighted recently while executing a painting. Over the course of its creation, the midday light portrayed a tree as having a welcoming demeanour although this was not evident in the late afternoon light. On looking at the tree the following day, however, I realised that the apparent change in the appearance of the tree was due to the progression of the sun across the sky and the consequential shift in position of the leaves. This realisation is shown in the Visual Diary entry dated 17.6.02 [Plate 4.1.1]. Such body-language readings of the gestures of plants are instrumental to understanding the landscape.

Body-language of animals adds another dimension to the perception of energy relationships. For instance, while drawing on The Common, observation that the angle of the neck and the deportment of the head of a blue-tongue lizard (as shown in the Visual Diary page dated 20.12.01 [Plate 4.1.2]), were mirrored in the bearing of a nearby egret was astounding and raised the question: Why? Possible explanations came to mind. The most plausible seemed to be that the animals were reacting to my intrusive energy (that is, the energy of my presence—energy that went beyond any sound I might have made—which altered the existing state of peaceful security). Other possible explanations

Regarding the projection of a personal response onto subject material not normally seen as possessing human characteristics, social anthropologist, Finlay (2002) makes the interesting observation: ". . . [the pink flowers] were not pink, they were shimmering—almost as if a heartbeat had been transformed into something visible" (Finlay 2002, p. 7). This study addresses the various landscape features with similar latitude for personal responses.

17:06.02 TREED I LEAVES IN RELATION TO LIGHT SOJACE , THAT IS ANGLES LIGHT SOURCE · UNPAIRED REAVES CONFIGURATION FROM TOPS CIRCULAR RANDOM LIGHT FACING THIN EDGE LEAP SLIGHTLY ANCLED MORE THAN ANGLE DIFFERENT FURTHER ANGLED · ANBLES OF STEMS ARE STARTING POINT. 167/01 DOAL LEADER OFPAIRS - LOWER CANOPY TREE Q ARE AT DIFFERENT PARCLES L LEAF TIPS DRIP POINTS 01 TREES FARE DOWN CONFIGURATION RITE SHAPE BOTH CENTRE VEN WITH RADIALS

Visual Diary, 2002 pencil on paper, 21 x 14.8 cm

VISUAL DIARY ENTRY DATED 17.06.02

20.12.01. T'VILLE COMMON. AN- 11.00 GOANNA - GEGTURES. LOORS SIMILAR TO COLON SIMILAN TO EGRET LANK I GOANNAS OF GOANNAS OF AREA LANING ECGS & HATCHING. VATCH SPOT FOR HATCHING.

Visual Diary, 2001 pencil on paper, 21 x 14.8 cm

VISUAL DIARY ENTRY DATED 20.12.01 11 A.M.

include: an imminent dramatic change in weather conditions, such as an impending electrical storm evoking a shared response amongst the animals; and, a projection of what I wanted to see in what might have been a simple coincidence.

Whatever the reason, the personal impact was great and led to my re-assessing the importance of what might otherwise be inconsequential relationships within the landscape. Observed relationships of energy also exist between vegetable and animal. In the Visual Diary page dated 20.12.01 [Plate 4.1.3] this relationship is between a seed pod and butterfly. In this entry, the similarity between shape, segmentation and gesture is noted. These apparent parallels led me to ponder if there might be a deeper relationship. Was the survival of this particular butterfly and flower mutually dependent, hence the similarities? To delve into animal/vegetable energy relationships at such depth, however, is a field of research in its own right. A further animal-vegetable relationship is seen in camouflage as in camouflaging itself, a creature appears to take on the very essence of the partner plant: its colour, shape and body language. There could even be the possibility that a creature may absorb the partner plant's energy. The Visual Diary entry dated 23.01.02 [Plate 4.1.4] records the observation about a dragonfly's camouflage that creates a halo-like effect.

Previous close personal encounters with landscapes have been confined to Western Queensland, so changes in the sky over The Common are perhaps more arresting to me than they might be for other observers. In contrast to the West, the daytime sky can often appear clear but low. From a personal standpoint, this produces an inhibiting feeling. There is an overwhelming desire to push the sky up and out of the way to allow freedom of movement. At other times, the sky appears clear and high with wispy cirrus clouds and the feeling changes to one of liberty. Under such a sky the body feels light and unfettered as if able to fly.



Visual Diary, 2001 pencil on paper, 21 x 14.8 cm

VISUAL DIARY ENTRY DATED 20.12.01



Visual Diary, 2002 pencil on paper, 21 x 14.8 cm

VISUAL DIARY ENTRY DATED 23.01.02

Personal observations suggest that cloud formations over different landscapes denote different types of energies are present. Instead of being perceived in terms of generic types (the most common types being: stratus, cumulus, cirrus and nimbus), each formation is not so clearly defined and adopts its own area specific character and energy. Moreover, if a "foreign" cloud (that is, one from a different area) appears in a landscape painting, it appears to be so inappropriate and wrong that it vibrates discordantly in the painting. Regarding such a discord, I recall a friend's painting featuring a storm cloud over Magnetic Island and the jarring unease it aroused. My immediate thought was: What's a Melbournian cloud doing over Magnetic Island? Later, my friend revealed that the reference material was indeed a cloud from the Melbourne area. From my experience, this phenomenon occurs when the clouds in a landscape painting show an obvious variance in height and weight from where they would normally be stationed with regard to the ground. Clouds, no matter what the type, appear closer to the ground and heavier in the Townsville area than those of the same type in the Mount Isa area. By comparison, around Melbourne, the clouds seem closer to the ground and heavier than those of Townsville. Suppositions for these subtle variations offered by like-minded colleagues include such influences on cloud formation as: air currents arising from key landscape features and seasonal change in humidity specific to an area. Clarification as to the how and why such differences occur requires investigation beyond the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, based on personal experience, an observable correlation does seem to exist between cyclical change and site-specific cloud formations.

Regarding the affect of energy relationships on vision, passive observations during discussions with colleagues suggest that the fundamental colours and shapes within a landscape play a role in feelings aroused. However, some colleagues were unaware of any

physical feelings; namely, Bernet's (1997) changing bodily sensations. Personal experience, nevertheless, has shown that being in a landscape gives rise to physical sensations. These take the form of vibrations felt through the feet and sensations within the skin, with regard to an awareness of alteration to the skin's conductivity and temperature.¹³

Energy fields are also visible.¹⁴ From personal experience, these are seen in terms of different pulsating radiances emanating from each feature within the landscape. Yet not everyone can see them. Nevertheless, individual colleagues who are unable to do so have indicated that, by closing their eyes or looking away, they see complementary haloes of colour and tone surrounding visually arresting features. Although this may be explained as an after-image effect of colour and tone contrast, the reason might be less conventional. Arguably, these are energy fields which tend to be the spaces that some artists employ in their artworks as noetic space (viz. a pictorially blank space left around objects). One artist who represents these energy fields is Charles Burchfield (1893-1967), notably in *Gateway to September*, 1946-56; *Summer Afternoon*, 1948; *Moonlight in June*, 1961; and, *Summer Solstice*, 1961-66 [Plate 4.1.5]. In these paintings Burchfield includes the dimension of sound vibrations (*Gateway to September*), kinaesthetic vibrations (*Summer Afternoon*), vibrations of emotion (*Moonlight in June*), and temperature vibrations (*Summer Solstice*). Burchfield's paintings of the *Seasons* (Davenport 1994), however, do not match with

13

The reason for these changes is open to conjecture. Some possible explanations include: NASA Project Manager's "undiscovered force fields" (Goldsmith 1998, p.1); acoustic scientist, Richard Lord, and, psychologist, Richard Wiseman's "infrasound" (Reuters Limited 2003, p.2); and, scientist Joan King's (2002) physiological responses to thoughts, in which "[e]very thought . . . causes a physical reaction" (King 2002, p. 2).

Regarding energy fields, social anthropologist and journalist Victoria Finlay (2002) suggests that "[e]verything in the universe . . . is shimmering and vibrating and constantly changing . . . the phenomenon of colour is about vibrations and the emission of energy" (Finlay 2002, pp.4, 7).

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

Gateway to September, 1946-56 watercolour on paper, 108 x 142.5 cm.

Summer Afternoon, 1948 watercolour on paper, n.s.

Moonlight in June, 1961 watercolour on paper, 114 x 83.75 cm. Summer Solstice, 1961-66 watercolour on paper, 49 x 69 cm.

CHARLES BURCHFIELD (1893-1967) SEASONS, (DAVENPORT, 1994)

my perception of pulsating colour radiances. While Burchfield portrays them as flowing bands of colour, incorporating his ". . . detailed system of personal signs . . ." (MacEvoy 2002, p.2),¹⁵ as shown in *Golden Dream*, 1959 [Plate 4.1.6], I see them as if looking at the landscape through a dragonfly's wing.

Like Burchfield, personal experience has revealed that relationships between landscape features become markedly different as the mass of each feature alters with the seasons. For example, the transition from Winter's dry to Summer's wet is characterised by the spread of surface water, an increase in the quantity of undergrowth and an increase of foliage density. Accompanying these changes of mass are changes of colour, tone, shape and texture. During the Dry the landscape looks dour, imparting an overall impression of masculinity with its stark grey vertical silhouettes, along with the angularity and rough texture of tree trunks. This masculine energy is strengthened by the slight touch of feminine curves seen in leaf-litter covering the ground (Visual Diary entries dated 20.12.01 [Plate 4.1.7] and 29.12.01 [Plate 4.1.8]). After the first rains, as shown by the notation in the Visual Diary [Plate 4.1.9], the scene turns to "a cleaner, happier landscape." Once the Wet sets in, the landscape transforms itself to one exuding feminine energy with cool, mid-tone colours and horizontal bands of soft shapes. This feminine landscape alludes to underlying masculine energy by the occasional appearance of very strong verticals; for instance, in the form of a dead tree protruding from the softness. Interestingly, in the Visual Diary entry dated 23.01.02 [Plate 4.1.10] made during the Wet, "the colours 'seen' and colours 'felt' are at odds; too green to feel like Townsville; the strength of the green overtakes all else; bands of colour . . . after rain." In short, this entry suggests that my response to the landscape goes beyond the purely visual.

On the subject of personal signs, Burchfield 1963 (cited Davenport 1994,) writes that to paint "what is there not what is seen . . . he [the artist] must invent symbols . . . " (cited Davenport 1994, dust jacket).

THIS IMAGE HAS BEEN REMOVED DUE TO COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

Golden Dream, 1959 Watercolour on paper, 80 x 96.5 in

CHARLES BURCHFIELD (1893-1967) SEASONS, (DAVENPORT, 1994)

20. R. OI. TOCONSULLE COMMON AM. · MASSULINITY OF TREES - TRUNKS, COLOUR, SMARS · FRANNINITY OF LEAF GROUND COVER - COLOUR SHAPES INTERACTION. TROPICAL CAMOFLAGE- AKNY/FORCES COMOFLAGE SEE JEZZINE + AIRTORCE MUSEUM LOCAN IN DIGINE ARTISTS - SEE PINNARUES FOYERS LEAF LITTRI FEM ININE

Visual Diary, 2001 pencil on paper, 21 x 14.8 cm

VISUAL DIARY ENTRY DATED 20.2.01



Visual Diary, 2001 pencil on paper, 21 x 14.8 cm

VISUAL DIARY DATED 29.12.01



Visual Diary, 2002 watercolour on paper, 21 x 14.8 cm

VISUAL DIARY DATED 06.01.02



Visual Diary, 2002 gouache on paper, 21 x 14.8 cm

VISUAL DIARY DATED 23.01.02

Revisiting the notion of mass with regard to vision, the change in water-mass can create a change in mindset. A colleague put forward the viewpoint, that during the winter months, the dry colour of foliage and jagged shapes of exposed terrain induces a quiet contemplative state. By contrast, during the summer the cool colours and rounded forms of vegetation induce a lively state of reverie. This viewpoint differs from my own. For me, the *wow* factor of looking at the landscape is not to be found in a broad panorama but rather in the infinite details of landscape (Section 1.2) that reveal ever-changing energy relationships. For example, as the *Wet* progresses the visual affect of the landscape features transfixes the mind to see relationships that seem almost surreal. In this vision, the marshlands of The Common transformed into an expansive sea are seen as a huge mirror in which, whether one looks up or down, there are only vast expanses of sky. In this altered reality there is a momentary conflict between knowing and seeing. But as author, Stoffel (1998) insightfully proposes: "... the world is a stranger place than we had decided it was on the day before." (Stoffel 1998, p. 9).

Beyond sight, the other senses of hearing and smell also play a role in the perception of energy relationships, particularly in the marshlands of The Common. Here, the increase in water-mass generates waterbird activity with the associated flurry of sounds made by wings and calls.

The relationship between sound and silence is marked during Summer's wet. Sometimes the flurry of sounds seems continuous while, at other times, the flurry is punctuated by periods of silence. Both instances have me wondering: What is causing the intervals of silence and what is causing the sudden burst of activity? Frequently, I find myself counting out the seconds between the gaps of flurry and silence to see if there is a pattern. No answers and no patterns, however, emerge. By contrast, the Winter's dry with its reduced waterbird numbers, does not raise such pondering. The sounds are quieter during this time and become even softer during the heat of the day. Nevertheless, minuscule sounds are still to be heard within the silence and attention becomes directed to the source of the sound.

Regarding the sense of smell, whiffs of degenerating vegetable matter pervade the air during seasonal change from *Wet* to *Dry*. During the change from *Dry* to *Wet*, however, the growth season teases the nostrils with sporadic hints of native blossom fragrances. With these changes, both sound and smell have a direct relationship to my personal vision of energy relationships. In the Visual Diary entry dated 02.02.02 [Plate 4.1.11] the inscription points out that there is ". . . still the smell of old fire. Hence the colours felt . . . [as if they were] pink noise . . ." This note illustrates a very personal way of responding to sensory triggers. In this response, sounds produce flashes of colour and/or movement whereas smell produces flashes of colour only.¹¹ Interestingly, some colleagues who share my predisposition also experience the added sense of taste associated with smells, a way of responding that is possibly a form of "sensory blendings" (Cytowic 1995).¹²

In essence, my particular vision of natural energy relationships is layered. Firstly, there is the human-landscape interaction affecting me physiologically and emotionally. Secondly, there are the ever-changing energy relationships within the

11

In describing this response, I have refrained from using the term "synaesthia" to avoid any stigma of abnormality sometimes associated with the term (Romano 2002). Syn[a]esthia, as defined by psychologists Palmeri, Blake and Marois (cited Weinstock 2002) is ". . .an anomalous blending of the senses in which the stimulation of one modality simultaneously produces sensation in a different modality" (Weinstock 2002, p. 1).

Regarding "sensory blendings", neurologist, Cytowic (1995), writes that these blendings are ". . . a normal brain process" (Cytowic 1995, p.1) and suggests that the process is "ineffable" (ibid, p. 3).



Visual Diary, 2002 gouache on paper, 21 x 14.8 cm

VISUAL DIARY DATED 02.02.02

landscape itself, which are experienced by the senses. In both layers, lies a constant source of wonder. However, constancy dulls the initial *wow* factor. Therefore, recording immediate responses and that such responses be intuitively driven are imperative to the development of an idiosyncratic visual code to portray such vision.

4.2 ENCODING IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

Three important decisions which, from personal experience, underpin the practice of making art, need addressing when encoding an immediate response: choice of suitable medium for the undertaking; choice of approach allowing for recording *gut reactions*; and, choice of subject material appropriate to an immediate response.¹³

Regarding the first consideration, etchings taken from lino plates prepared with a beeswax ground meet [Appendix A] the above needs. This perception is based on the speed with which a lino plate must be drawn. Speed in working on the plate is vital when recording reactions out-of-doors as wax melts quickly in tropical heat. More critical to the printmaking process, as the wax melts it will deeply penetrate the lino thus making the plate almost impossible to etch. Hence, the time-frame from plate preparation to completion of mark making is short, minutes only. Such enforced speed and reliance on "nonconscious traits" (Wilson 2003, p. 4) applies only to lino plates, other mediums such as pencil, charcoal, metal plates and traditional painting all allow for leisurely execution of creation and strong conscious input.

Regarding the importance of these decisions, artist, Grant, (Simpson 1989, p.15) reveals his need to have the right relationship between artist, subject and medium. While fellow artist, Howard, (1989) suggests gut reactions are the instigating factor for a painting.

By a twist of logic, the difficulty that an artist experiences in seeing marks drawn on the translucent beeswax also helps to make this medium suitable for recording unpremeditated responses. This difficulty in seeing what has been drawn on the plate encourages reliance on motor-sensory mark-making processes (rather than deliberate line drawing) that is in tune with *gut reactions*. In addition, the earth-like colour of the lino plate, together with the necessary incising method of drawing into the wax ground, is similar to drawing directly into the earth with a stick. This feeling of drawing directly on the landscape fosters a subliminal connection between the artist's mindset when making marks and the land itself.

On another level, parallel incidences of serendipity can occur when working with such a mindset. For example, should a gum nut fall and leave its impression on the plate, then a print pulled from such a plate adds another dimension to unpremeditated image making: the notion that external happenings and personally desired outcomes are integrally connected. Of this connection, physicist, Peat (n.d.) argues thus:

... the things around us, the significance of what we are about to do and the pattern of our life becomes unified within a field of meaning, a meaning that is at one and the same time universal, yet highly specific to the details of our own particular history and character. (Peat n.d., p.2)

The extent to which these chance marks play in the expression of an immediate experience is dependent on the subtleties that the lino printing process can provide.

From the practical standpoint, drawing on lino allows for intuitive creativity. No special tools are required for incising through the soft wax ground—a stick, stone or piece of detritus from the land works just as well as a traditional etching tool. Consequently, the process of drawing on the plate opens the mind for the flow of intuitive invention that helps with recording feelings without conscious planning.

Regarding the two remaining considerations, (choice of approach and subject material), they are very closely intertwined with the feelings aroused: that is, the *gut reactions* to the experience of natural energies, as discussed in Section 4.1.

In choosing the approach, the most appropriate way to portray intangible feelings with a sense of immediacy is to show the dynamic tensions underpinning a response as an analogue.¹⁴ Such an analogue cannot be pre-planned, as the disposition of pictorial elements must be driven by the response. Moreover, in this study an analogue is a window to the artist's subconscious and, as such, the prints are considered as diary jottings rather than a display of technical bravura. Nevertheless, from a viewer's standpoint, the disposition of pictorial elements of the analogue becomes the formal composition for each etching in expressing the artist's response.

Choice of subject material is similarly driven by this primal experience of landscape. In choosing the appropriate subject to express a *gut reaction*, however, the disposition of dynamic tensions underpinning the analogue form of each composition guides the artist in choosing landscape features on which to focus. These features become nodal points of interest when transposed to the etching plate. Such fleeting feelings aroused by landscape, of course, are inconstant, so choice of subject must change as the response changes.

To record immediate responses associated with natural energies of cyclical change, necessitates personal experience of these energies. To accommodate the

In Burchfield's portrayal of intangible feelings (Section 4.1), there is analogy between shapes and feelings (MacEvoy 2002), for instance the inverted "V" denoting "hope and redemption". On the other hand, Adams (1997) holds the view that clusters of associations apply to the letter "V" [and Gothic arch], as the context of use governs the association.

transition of an experience as these energies change, weekly visits over a twelvemonth period, were undertaken.¹⁵ The results from these visits are the first process on the journey towards the idiosyncratic visual code, recorded in forty lino-etchings.

4.3 PRACTICAL APPLICATION FOR ENCODING AN IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

4.3.1 Introduction

By personal selection, twenty of the prints (the first process) are perceived to capture the notion of change in the five cycles discussed earlier in Section 4.1: growth, diurnal, seasonal, migratory and tidal change. These twenty prints have been grouped in five suites of four prints with each suite conceived as exemplifying one of the cycles.

In the following discussion, analysis of the practical application of the intuitive encoding process focuses on three factors perceived by the artist as contributing to the ability of each suite to capture the artist's feelings:

- an exploration of the artist's motivation at the time of executing the prints. The approach for this exploration will take the form of a reconstruction of events, as the personal drive was often no more than gut feelings (Section 4.1) arising from a range of different circumstances. Moreover, the use of reconstructed events (in terms of an "*experience engineer*" [Section 2.5]) is appropriate, as the intention when drawing on the plates was to create prints capturing *gut reactions* without calculated intention as to the outcome.
- 15

The idea of recording such changes over an extended period is not novel. For instance, Monet is famous for recording changes in light (National Gallery of Australia 2001), the North-West Australian Aborigines return to the same site to record "happenings" (Gwion Gwion 2000) and, specific to the Common, Brown returns to paint its changing physical features (pers. com. 2003).