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Part One

Context
Plate 1.1 Wolfgang Laib 2005 *Pollen from Pine* Art Gallery of New South Wales [photograph Lord]

Plate 1.2 Rirkrit Tiravanija (1998 ongoing project) *the land*

Plate 1.3 left Gustav Metzger 1965 *Auto-destructive Art Acid Nylon Technique* [photograph, Henri 1974]

Plate 1.4 right Gustav Metzger 2007 *Aquivalenz* *Shattered Stones* Muenster Sculpture Project [photograph Muenster Sculpture Project Catalogue]
Preface

The contested terrain of post-structuralist theory and ‘agentic positioning’ informs this study. My position as a North Queensland regional woman artist is foregrounded in this research, as one of the participants with a vested interest in how ephemera can contribute through issue-based art to visual arts discourse. Visual arts processes involving ephemera led to asking how the canon can be rewritten. I challenged certain adopted practice and asked how it could be reviewed, and this inquiry forms my thesis ‘art and ephemera’. Participants were chosen for their interest in visual arts as a way to communicate issues of our time. Two mentors who helped to explicate this role are Wolfgang Laib and Gustav Metzger. My work is incorporated to define how I will use art and ephemera in and beyond the thesis. Thus the words artist and researcher are used interchangeably in my autobiographical voice.

Art and ephemera can bring attention to the state of the natural environment, and bring awareness to the issues that I wish to address in my work: shortage of water; threats to natural environment; global warming; overdevelopment in places where this could be re-considered; and our throw-away attitude in a society of consumerism and abundance of manufactured consumable objects.

Contemporary artist Rirkrit Tiravanija is significant for his sustainable work on site and Mierle Laderman Ukeles provides maintenance as art. Primary data includes correspondence with mentors and models in contemporary art and their practice. Secondary data includes publications about models from the late twentieth century. Precursor models were established as a key to understanding the aesthetics of art and ephemera and include surviving art icons from 600 and 1300 in East and West, in states of disrepair or aged appearance. These are discussed as ‘aged icons’ and demonstrate art in states of erosion, for instance carvings and images on cliffs and in caves, specifically in the Buddhist Yungang Caves, Northwest China.
The capacity for art to show disintegration and change as a process meshed with the issue-driven aspects that facilitated my investigation. In pursuing an area of art that resonated with my conceptual rationale for making art, the field of study offered creative and practical regenerative options. Eroding materials that would be considered of grave concern to a curator of Fine Art, as art material, contribute to art and ephemera. For instance, burnt incense, delicate pollen, burnt paper and humus, are prominent in the thesis. The enquiry for ‘art and ephemera’ leads to adopting digital and pedagogical strategies.

Plate 1.5 Sheela Gowda 2007 *Collateral* incense on stainless steel [photograph Lord]


Plate 1.7 left Chia Ming Cheng 2005 *Burnt Joss Papers* joss papers in bowl [photograph Lord]

Plate 1.8 right Anne Lord 2005 *Impossible Bucket* tree humus and glue
Chapter One

1.0 Ephemera in Art, Culture and Society

Introduction

In this chapter I introduce and place my topic in a visual arts context. In order to re-contextualise aspects of visual art and introduce ephemera as an area of art praxis that has not been privileged or considered of great significance I challenge an existing canon in the arts industry, that of preserving art at great cost. Though many artworks should be preserved, an area such as ‘art and ephemera’ has in its nature the capacity to engender new ways of thinking about art.

My conceptual rationale for creating instability in artwork developed in tandem with a dialogue for change in attitude about detritus and ephemera in contemporary society. Visual art in concert with ephemera calls for acceptance of the beauty \(^1\) in old, worn and decaying objects. The study ‘art and ephemera’ speaks \(^*\) for a heightened appreciation of the natural processes that contribute to sustainable practices such as recycling of material in the broader environment. In this sense artworks showing responsibility for the product and the environment were intricately linked with Bourriaud’s (2002) ‘relational aesthetics.’

\(^1\) The symbol \(^*\) signifies the word is discussed in the Glossary in relation to art and ephemera.
In discussing new options for visual art, Buskirk (2005) calls ‘attention’:
… to how characteristics and methods associated with movements that originated in the 1960s and 1970s have subsequently become part of a far less sharply differentiated series of options taken up and recombined by succeeding generations of artists (Buskirk 2005, 16).

These options blur the boundaries between art praxis and natural environment and invite potential for the study, ‘art and ephemera’. Language, such as Butler’s ‘performative object’ (2005 Pers. Comm. 2) as opposed to the ‘performative body,’ is discussed as an aid to theoretical positioning and as the signpost of theoretical discourse. Chapter Two incorporates language and key terms from post-structuralist and visual arts theorists.

My approach to discussing sustainability of place shares a sense of aesthetics in relation to environmental wellbeing investigated in cultures in and beyond Australia. The lessons of long-surviving cultures are crucial to our understanding of the environment and the lifestyle/s we choose. Hawkins’ (2006) investigation of ideas in connection with choice and lifestyle offers an understanding about a new sense of living with and taking responsibility for our products and discards.

Background and Context of the Study

Ephemera as a term applied to visual art consists of theme, concept and aligned practice. The theme involves theoretical considerations of ephemera as a process of change and contributes to the focus of this research project. Various backgrounds to types of ephemeral art enabled an investigation into artists’ concepts in relation to key issues driven by processes of change in art material. Some of this art as creative process can epitomize environmental concerns through metaphor, where the art project is proposed as a minor parallel experience for global processes of ephemera. Subtle art processes can mirror,

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2 While accessing the NGA research library for this study I explained my interest in the way artists used their art as ephemera. Butler responded that I was interested in the “performative object” as opposed to the “performative body”. Butler’s phrase is attributed throughout the thesis.
on a small scale, occurrences in climate change and reflect subsequent catastrophic effects of physical change in the natural environment.

This research includes contingent occurrences impacting on humans and animals and how these occurrences assist an appreciation of natural environment and change in visual art. The study involving icons of change proceeded with investigations of the processes of material change over long deep time. This change is shown in rusting implements found in the earth (Plates 1.12 and 3.3). In Table 1.1 columns for art industry archives and artist’s tools clarify the context for archive and ephemera in art. The table assists in highlighting binaries or opposites and an investigation of possible tools for the research project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Art industry archives</th>
<th>The artist’s tools for ephemera</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objects / icons distinct from the natural environment and their potential as a commodity or artefact</td>
<td>Objects / icons indistinguishable from the natural environment - potential waste icons returning to earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artwork in museums (archived)</td>
<td>Artwork on sites (ephemeral)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valuable icons</td>
<td>Icons as anti-commodity statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Icons not affected by ephemera (archive or accumulated waste)</td>
<td>Icons undergoing ephemeral change (recycled waste – icon – change)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paintbrush, the printed page (high impact environmental footprint)</td>
<td>Rusted tins, the tool, mattock, tools of change (low impact footprint)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My study aims to empower the artist as recycler and agent to explicate concepts and practices involving art and ephemera. I confirm the value of old and preserved art and move to a new area of proposed acceptance for alternative art praxis.

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3 A term applied by Ross Gibson in discussion about the work involving slow processes of art and ephemera. This term is referred to throughout the thesis.
Accepted Histories

Australia’s geographic position, sharing longitude with the Orient, facilitates a post-colonial re-visiting of the way that colonial history was positioned primarily as Occidental. Both readings impact on this study. In Chinese landscape painting a human figure was often small and seemingly insignificant as it was placed at the bottom of a gigantic cliff or almost imperceptible amongst the winter snow or showering leaves. The placement and scale were commonplace in recognising the impact of nature on humans and how they would be perceived in culture. Similarly in Northern Flemish painting, Pieter Brueghel the Elder allowed his figures to be consumed by nature, notably so in The Fall of Icarus. Giorgione a fifteenth century European artist painted the landscape without need to establish the importance of a sitter in the landscape. In other words the earth emerged as the main scope: as the landscape of painting. In ‘art and ephemera’ I value the earth and natural environment as integral to my praxis and move from earlier imaging of the land to revised approaches to the topic (Appendix I, Background - Landscape to Ephemera).

Our cultural perception of the importance of land and place, and how dependent humans are on these for their wellbeing in physical, spiritual and mental health, relates to our understanding and knowledge of the world we live in. These changing concepts are interpreted visually in Appendix I, as accepted history, a chronological overview of art since the 1700s aligned with landscape and environment to contemporary visual art. Mitchell (1994) and Schama (1995) have each contributed to an appreciation of landscape in history and interchangeable economic and social causes and effects of human interaction with the natural environment.

Communication with a global community is significant for facilitating change of attitude, and I identify post-1990s contemporary art as a significant part of this communication. Since the 1980s, artists and communities all over the world recognise that global climate change is of concern to humanity (Stern 2007). Artists ask, as if it might be too late already, ‘What is it we could do for our environment?’ The hesitance / resistance of our questions bring with it
alarm in response to our growing awareness of what has already happened: though the air looks clear, it might not be what it seems. The art we make to represent and interpret our culture and society can reflect the idea, that we have reached a stage where we know that human pollution is endemic in the environment. The potential paradigm shift in acknowledging art and ephemera might assist deeper understanding of environmental fragility and change.

Art practices referencing and alerting attention to environmental issues through natural ephemeral processes have emerged since 1960s art genres, such as Environmental Art (Denes 1993), Land Art (Tiberghien 1995), Eco-Art (Matilsky 1992) and ‘new genre public art’ (Lacy 1995). The Land Art movement (1970s - 1980s) instigated projects of reclamation and often aspired to comment on environmental threat. In addition 1970s to 1980s art included more problematic instances of degradation (Lippard 1994, 1984; Matilsky 1992). Those artists investigating issues, such as waste through recycling programs and water shortage through management, in order to create art, provide relevant models for this study.

There are aspects of Arte Povera and Fluxus arguably ongoing that are relevant in the twenty-first century, even though major issues have changed since their inception. Christov-Bakargiev (2002) states Arte Povera originated during 1967 - 1970s, and Kirker (1993) places the Fluxus movement from late 1960s to early 1970s. The materials used in Arte Povera provide a background for art and ephemera, as do some used in Fluxus, though the aims of the two groups were very different from that proposed here. I refer to accepted concepts and practice as precursors to art and ephemera.

**Immateriality**

The material and immaterial become significant aspects of artwork and are identified and theorised for possible links with art and ephemera. Lillemose (2006) returns to the term dematerial defined by Chandler (cited in Lippard 1973). Lillemose and Krysa (2006) discuss the term immaterial as a concept in relation to digital communication systems, and provide consideration of digital
as ephemera. This has implications for new media processes with art and ephemera.

There is a metaphorical message and conceptual reason for producing the work I am investigating and for being able to let an artwork slip away. Issues of environment are evident through catastrophic change such as global warming, tsunami and drought with inherent concerns for humanity, as well as flora and fauna. Thus I correlate precursors of ephemeral art practice with the development of recent visual artists’ interpretation of change. Identification of key artworks relevant to ephemeral practice links contemporary visual arts contributions with my research focus. My art practice adopted methods from these key findings to investigate an awareness of the contemporary environmental situation through a focus on ephemeral time-based change.

In contemporary art, pluralist perspectives enrich responses to environment and the practice adopted by many artists resists any umbrella for categorisation of art. Rather, recent art has revealed a predominantly eclectic response to ephemera and change, through visual artists’ idiosyncratic methods to produce art. Issues of economic concern, environment, identity, health, and conflict, emerge in art and ephemera, or art with a planned short lifetime, thus artists could make use of art and ephemera as a metaphor for many ideas.

This thesis comes to terms with ‘position’ used by artists, writers and curators who have worked with the subject of change and ecology, through concepts and practice aligned with art and ephemera. An early strategy to find artists for this study was to ask some formative questions, such as, ‘Is there a point in artists’ careers when they would attempt to create work with no economic or archival base but would maintain a succinct focus on ephemera as a metaphor for the cyclical nature of being, natural environment, and / or spiritual significance of place? To what extent would these artists commit to art and ephemera as practice driven research?’ Do these artists focus on the catastrophic nature of the environment and the role human beings have played in this?
I explored the emphasis on certain works of art and the manner in which they were used as an anti-commodity statement and accepted that most published high profile artists of relevance for this study would often have two streams of practice. One would be an archival stream including the traditional arts practice of preserved and saleable work. The second could be an ephemeral practice that might be documented but existed briefly as an ephemeral stance in art. This ephemeral work would contribute, through the ability of the work to play a role in memory, as a key to preserving the idea of the work.

Contemporary Issues of Natural Environment

Multiple issues were raised in relation to the synergies between ephemeral art and the contemporary issues of environment and change. Could art and ephemera contribute to a better understanding of climate change, anti-commodity issues and valuing waste? Similarly ‘anti-commodity’ in art challenges the art market as a viable place for creative expression. Many artists realise, in their work and lives, that they can recycle for art, as well as keep and appreciate old and worn icons. In valuing waste, artists are often contributors to efficient recycling and ownership of this problem. Marketing in an age of commodity-driven advertising may be rife and could operate against my quest to contribute to valuing waste. My research interrogates what environmental message my practice could communicate. In the documentation of this, I address how digital imagery plays a part in reducing waste.

Preserving objects and artefacts involves a symptom of a society that is bent on the creation of the new, and also preserves many things at great cost to the environment. My study challenges the culture of consumption and the escalation of want, and what preservation practice stands for. In doing so I have had to ask how I will distinguish between the preserved and valuable object, and the object not to be preserved, as a lesson for sustainability. And then, there is artwork that is less important as an archive and more important as an ephemeral object that we can let go. This became my example through my art practice.
Researchers’s Prior Knowledge

Art curators, critics and directors often seek artwork or conceptual links to an artist’s complete work through searching for something that is identified as the epitome of an artist’s work. In this manner a long-standing theoretical premise can be considered an important aspect of an artist’s work. My identification of new categories in earlier research (1996) was based on existing genres and I argue that my position as artist – researcher through earlier identification of ‘ecologically oriented art’ (Lord 1996) is of critical importance as prior knowledge for the emergence of this study.

Everything can be regenerated eventually but to recognise ways to assist the process is a practice that I can contribute to. The art objects identified for this research involve materials that enable the art object or icon to be a performative object, or ephemeron. This writing parallels my art practice (2001 - 2008), specifically new work since 2004, created and reviewed in the context of Australia’s problematic water consumption and related environmental concerns. My study and my practice show that we need to do something now about the facilitation of this practice. The challenge arose in how to empower the ephemeral as a way forward in the current ecological debates about climate change and usage of water. Initially I was identifying what kinds of questions an artist needs to consider in the usage of natural resources, such as the earth and water and how these questions would assist in the development of the study into art and ephemera. Questions could be asked of management and how people address resources as commodities. Though there might be enough to go around there are also some who will not allow the equitable sharing of such a resource, and some miss out (Gross 1997). My study contributes to a questioning of contemporary human ethics and a consideration of loss towards place, and in this way is based on spiritual questioning of human ambitions and goals.

Research Questions

A post-structuralist perspective facilitates questioning across previously discrete areas of art, natural environment and ecology. As a part of my questioning, I value pluralist responses to issues, which provide potential for the adoption of art and ephemera in environmental responses. This enables me as the researcher to cross national boundaries, to see how global environmental influences in today’s societies contribute to artists’ concepts of change. Thus post-structuralist re-positioning and challenges to ascendant aspects of binaries facilitate this investigation into older sustained cultures and their relationship with environment and change. In light of these, my study addresses aspects of current global change and aims to illuminate issues of common concern in local and global contexts, through visual art. My research questions became:

1. What artistic means could illuminate environmental fragility?

2. How might ‘art and ephemera’ assist in deeper understanding of environmental fragility and change?

3. How can a post-structuralist theoretical perspective with attention to discourse analysis illuminate the juxtaposition of art, ephemera and ecology, in the early part of the twenty-first century?

4. What does my praxis, and study of art and ephemera reveal about my commitment to the issue of environmental crisis?

5. How might this research inform artistic directions and cross-disciplinary considerations, and inspire further research in this topic?

Reaching these questions coincided with construction of the methodology. I continued to search for the ways practice-based research could sanction ephemeral change in art for broader issues. My study contributed to insights about this art and involved the issue of what to use and throw away. For my own practice I asked where to place, how to place and when to place, an object...
or refuse (Hawkins 2006). My desire to advocate for art and ephemera has become a key area for my practice-driven research.

This study also relates to aesthetics in art through my focus on studying the old and an appreciation of the decaying, unravelling, or eroded object over time. The idea surfaces in the Japanese notion of ‘wabi-sabi’ *(5) (Koren 1994), a concept the Japanese declare difficult to explain through its intricacies: one that shares aesthetic and philosophical principles with the worn and imperfect.

In addition to the concept of beauty in change over time is the capacity for practice-based research, for artists and researchers from various fields, to share a perspective about our sustainable future. Changing attitudes to disposal and removal of waste or disintegrating items underpin much scientific and humanities research and art practice (Boyle 2006, Hawkins 2006, Laderman Ukeles 1994 - ongoing). In common with their methodology is my artist-researcher’s reappraisal of responsibility for waste products. Fifteenth century images exist of people throwing waste and excrement out of windows to a street below. Scientists in the following centuries unravelled the mysteries of contamination in drinking water, and the correlation of bacteria and waste. The appreciation of these associations has been at the basis of many cultures’ sustained and healthy lifestyles. Now in the 2000s, humans are currently faced with threats from our acceptance of acquisition and consumption as a cultural and lifestyle goal. The threat is to the survival of the very cultures and environments that created the understanding and knowledge in the first place. This leads to my search for how art, including my practice might learn from and respond to these cultures and places.

In the twentieth century we became increasingly aware of problems from effluent being sent freely into oceans, and to understand how behaviour in whales and other ocean life was being disrupted. In the twenty-first century the potential exists to take responsibility for the recycling of all waste through specialised places and ecologies. The business of recycling has the potential to

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*(5) Introduced on p. vii option K is a symbol that indicates the word is in the Glossary.
produce an integration of potential nutrient for formerly barren or industrialised waste sites. Artists who investigate these issues in cross-disciplinary groups and with non-archival means are discussed in the analysis, Part Two.

New industries emerge for the reintroduction of previously ignored products, to create an extension of a cycle that has been conveniently overlooked by industrialised societies of the last two hundred years. Some visual artists have challenged the culture of consumption and neglect of the natural environment and not only accept new ways to look at problems but fabricate ways and means to address these. In some cases artists adopt art practices that do not distinguish between art, life and land: they adopt approaches, which benefit the natural environment. These artists are often my mentors.

Mentors and Models

Mentors for this study are key artists predominantly post-1990s. These artists working with recognition of ephemera in their artwork as a political lever provide, through the rationale for their work, key insights into the manner in which art can contribute. They do this by asking questions about and providing answers for human interaction with the natural environment. Internationally known artists who show this concern include Tue Greenfort (2007), Rirkrit Tiravanija (1998 - ongoing) and Wolfgang Laib (1992, 2003, 2005), (Plates 1.1, 1.9, 1.10).
Plate 1.9 Wolfgang Laib sieving hazelnut pollen for installation Centre Pompidou Paris 1992 [Photograph Fondation Beyeler Basel 2005]

Plate 1.10 Wolfgang Laib (2005), Pollen from Pine AGNSW [Photograph Lord 2005]
Artists, such as Laib have enacted art practice about art and ecology and provide contextual background for the study through publications and communication via email. These artists are mentors for art and ephemera, and through their artworks they provide models. Models are the artworks I refer to that suggest practical considerations for art and ephemera. Key models are selected from different periods of visual art and culture. Precursor models are discussed in earlier artworks from pre-1990s and provide foundational examples.

In Australia, artists of interest include Bonita Ely (1980), Joan Grounds (1974) Jill Orr (1979) and Lyndal Milani (1985), as precursors in art and environment. Eugene Carchesio (2000), Robert Owen (1987), Andrew Arnaoutopoulos (2002) and John Wolseley (2005) contribute through their philosophical approaches to ephemera. Those artists who solely produce archival art to reference ephemera are outside the main focus of this study.

International artists, Hans Haacke (1984, 1993); Joseph Beuys (1970); Mierle Laderman Ukeles (1971 - ongoing) and Agnes Denes (1968 - ongoing) produced pertinent models for art and ephemera. Yves Klein, Anselm Kiefer, Jannis Kounellis and Claes Oldenberg have at some stage also developed work about ephemera and change. From the 1960s to 1980s Allan Kaprow, Claes Oldenberg, Robert Morris and Robert Smithson raised important concepts about our relationship to place and or site through temporary art. In the twenty-first century the influences from their art projects and ideas have mutated to form new art practices: some with significant common goals with the earlier eco-art and environmental art. These artists provide data concerning the natural environment for revised issues relative to art and ephemera.

**Ephemera as a Concept in Art**

My topic ‘art and ephemera’ includes work intentionally developed and executed with fragile and ephemeral material and with no longevity in the usual sense of historical pieces, artwork or artefacts. Additionally, it may implode or disintegrate during the course of the exhibition, or installation. The icon or object intended to disintegrate in a short period of time may be a found item that
is already disintegrating. In whichever state, the artist has seen the potential in
the ‘performative object’ (Butler 2005) similar to an identification of the objet
trouvé, but different in that any desire for archiving is absent. In my study the
identification and documentation of gradual transient states are important.
Those artworks that use explosive, radically ephemeral elements provide
comparison in Chapter Nine.

Key publications such as Baas and Jacob’s (2004) *Buddha Mind in
Contemporary Art* and Buskirk’s (2005) *The Contingent Object in
Contemporary Art* provide references to contemporary artists who create art
with ephemeral aspects. Lumley (2000, 2004), Christov-Bakargiev (1999,
de-material and poor material in art. Within Australia, Bond’s (2005a) writing
on Laib and contemporary issues of conservation practice, Kirker’s (1993)
references to Fluxus and Arte Povera, and Alexander’s (1988) references to
artists who made significant use of change in concepts, provide data for my
analysis.

Models from the 1960s to the 1980s re-emerge in Eco-art (Gablik 1995) and in
publications, such as Matilsky’s (1992) *Fragile Ecologies*, Tiberghien’s (1995)
Dematerialization of the Art Object*. Connections between environmental
concerns and social issues were accepted as key focal areas of art publication. In
many of these writings a holistic view incorporated the combination of spiritual
and environmental health. My study sought to redress a lesser visual arts
concentration on environment and change in art publications since 2000 than
was obvious in the later decades of the twentieth century. This changing state of
artists working with environmental concern over the last few decades provided a
gap for my investigation.

**Place**

Though much has been created in the area of art and social change this project
seeks those changes apparent in the natural environment to be used as creative
metaphors in visual art. Influential places for my own work are the
environments of North and Northwest Queensland. Records from these
locations and photographic archives and diaries contribute to my praxis. People
in these specific locations, through attitudes and actions, have emerged as
mentors for part of this investigation relating to place.

The environmental condition that I have responded to as a research artist was
initially perceived and developed from frequent interaction with the dry tropics,
mostly in drought-stricken natural environments. My considered response to
that interaction led to deliberation over and visual interpretation of locale.
Blackburn (1994) relates environment and ethics and prompted my new work as
an artist concerned with environment:

Most ethics deal with problems of human desires and needs: the achievement
of happiness, or the distribution of goods. The central problem specific to
thinking about the environment is the independent value to place on such
things as preservation of species, or protection of the wilderness. Such
protection can be supported as a means to ordinary human ends, for instance
when animals are regarded as future sources of medicines or other benefits. But
many would want to claim a non-utilitarian, absolute value for the existence of
wild things and wild places; it is in their very independence of human lives that
their value consists. They put us in our proper place, and failure to appreciate
this value is not only an aesthetic failure but also one of due humility and
reverence, a moral disability. The problem is one of expressing this value, and
mobilizing it against utilitarian arguments for developing natural areas and
exterminating species more or less at will (Blackburn 1994, 121).

The value of the environment and threat to it identified by Blackburn (1994)
strengthened my commitment to contribute to an awareness of environmental
issues. My interest in the sustainability of the natural environment and lessons
to be learnt from deterioration and regeneration assisted in addressing these
issues in my artwork, and identifying this in other artists’ works.
Researchers have often looked at sustainability as belonging to the sciences. My study combines this with visual art through iconography that demonstrates the elements of change in environment and the gradual incorporation of the art object back into the environment. The research employs my ability as an artist to create an installation from the processes of change evident in disintegration, in primarily rural environments and literally in the earth (Plate 1.11). Key environments I worked with are predominantly deprived of water with the exception of monsoonal flooding. Extreme environmental experiences have much to do with my appreciation of ephemera, erosion and instability of elements. I investigated artists’ concepts about the physical processes of change and the capacity of their art to impact on an audience to alter their attitude to over-consumption. A significant aspect of the research is my demonstration of art to influence public beliefs about the individual’s capacity to contribute to sustainability in the natural environment.

Development of a new perspective on visual art with a focus on ephemera has led my praxis in a dialogue with contemporary visual arts. Re-interpretation of previously discrete traditional disciplines corresponds with this argument, for instance, Kaye (2000) identifies ‘spaces or places defined in fluid, shifting and transient acts and relationships, [and] reveals further ties between approaches to
site through visual art and theatre’ (Kaye 2000, 7). Similarly, the relationship I establish between the performative object and time-based change is significant as an overarching theoretical concept, as it assists in linking an individual’s perspective with global concerns. My research project on ephemeral artwork and ‘performative’ objects explicates the contribution of artists working in this area.

A context of art and ephemera beyond contemporary practices provoked questions about artists’ use of fragmentation, ephemera, corrosion or erosion in practice. Chapter Seven provides appreciation of mentors from the last two decades, leading to variant readings of ephemera. Mentors assisted in recognising layers of meaning or metaphors for issues about change in the natural environment. Selected methods, to work with concepts of disintegration, were relevant for my study and artwork as a female artist 1,000 km from the nearest metropolitan art centre.

Personal Perspective and Rationale for the Thesis

Northwest Queensland contributed to the development of my sense of aesthetics and my adoption of ephemera in art. Dramatic or radical Australian seasons, the monsoon, thunderstorms, drought, floods, grasslands and bush-fires provide valuable lessons for observing change. Subtle colours in grasses, native trees, ‘black soil’ earth and flat horizons add to my knowledge of a place. Thus rural environments create a strong awareness of cycles of growth and death and this resonates with Bourriaud’s (2002) ‘relational aesthetics’.

Lippard’s (1997) references to ‘local’ places contribute to the development of my research concerning ‘Kilterry’ in Northwest Queensland and Townsville, North Queensland. Any natural environment could provide lessons for understanding ephemeral practice, though I identify with Bachelard’s (1994) references to “known places”, and lived environments. Similarly, for many years I have treasured the fragility in archived photographs from this region. These aged photographs provide further clues to the changing environment and people and a reconsideration of history” and knowledge passed from one
generation to another. Fragile records, diaries and handiwork contributed to another version of the ephemeral in art (Lord 2007 An 1890s portrait \(^6\) Appendix XIII). The glitches that one artist might see as a technical interruption / inferiority can identify the ephemeral nature of the image. One example of the ephemeral impacting on the present is through deteriorating records. A message can be exposed in the change process rather than in the archiving. In some cases the self-destructing nature of art can be seductive and inviting to artist and viewer. There are also aspects of culture and history that can be appreciated in images or visual texts \(^6\), that cannot be replicated as well, in verbal texts referencing places and times.

My practical work from 2001 to 2008 involved material to represent and feature change. Projects between 1994 and 2000 provide a background to this research through an emerging focus on art and ephemera. Whereas my preceding work relied on recycled paper for disintegration, later projects required decaying wood or humus \(^6\) as a more effective material for icons of change. The capacity of natural materials to degenerate and regenerate showed potential to encourage artistic development. Thus, recognition of aged rusting objects and their proximity to earthiness contributed to my sense of aesthetic, developed through place, time and art. Many of our current environmental problems may be related to our non-acceptance of decay as a part of the beauty of the natural environment and an aspect of contributing to a sustainable place might be to see value in ephemera.

\(^6\) Lessons in History Vol. 1 an exhibition at Grahame Galleries and Editions, 1 Fernberg Road, Milton Queensland, March 2007.
The broken hose connector was drawn, photographed and printed on a large format plan copier. This light copy paper had carborundum grit added to the surface as another element of ephemera and the beauty in the disintegrating object is related to the concept that we, in developed countries, often have too much of the newly made material. This work in *Tools of Change* (2007) is discussed in Chapter Eleven. Over consumption was identified as the ‘material of the problem’ (Lord 1996) and is developed further in Chapter Six where my analysis links the Buddhist philosophy of change and ‘letting go’ with less ownership, and archiving.

**Ephemera as Site-work**

Audience response to art on site and the potential ephemeral nature of art became important to link my research to the capacity of the ephemeral object to impact on a broad community beyond an academic population. Further audiences were sought in the arts industry, as well as local and regional communities, to gain responses to the work on site. These responses are discussed in Chapter Eight.

Natural surfaces of sand, steel, linoleum, earth, grass, cement, carpet or glass could be used to locate / position an object in an environment where it breaks down. In this way, my chosen art material is distressed and ephemeral in a location other than an archival white cube * gallery. Humidity-controlled
galleries as environments for archive are positioned as areas of comfort. Variant substrates, such as paper and humus, respectively provide a locality for art through integral states of stress and anti-archive. More significantly for this research, the humidity-controlled environment of the gallery (archived), or the desert / beach environment (ephemeral) for art and ephemera, are locations for displaying ephemeral states of the performative object. The place or ground and the object are conceptual pointers to the issue of change and degeneration in an environment. Therefore I investigate not just the object but the object or figure identified in relation to place. The art object in these environments starts to take on the surrounding environment through time-based change; osmosis, erosion, disintegration and oxidation, rather than having its own separate identity. These processes are central to this study.

A number of issues arise for art and ephemera. The art object becomes secondary as art. What is of primary importance is the way this object is released back to the environment. The opposite happens to the archived object as it is apprehended or archived as art. The artist’s act of letting go of the performative object epitomises the act of art and ephemera. In the emergent study I considered art degenerating into something or becoming a part of something else. My initial query was to search for stages where the change process could be arrested in order to make a visual statement about the environment through a work in progress. This was based on the idea that something had to be recorded. The visual document could present a metaphor for a greater statement about sustainability.

The environment under threat has been discussed increasingly in art and news media, though recent mainstream art has favoured other topical biological issues as significant themes. The gap in knowledge about artists working with issues and environmental disasters, in an era of increasing environmental disasters in the twenty-first century, contributes to the rationale for my investigation of artists working with concepts of change. The research parameters are defined through my quest to celebrate artists’ ephemeral work and connections to environmental change.
What has not yet been done is research with a focus on artists working with concepts of change where the material of their practice is consistently ephemeral. In relation to my current research topic, and reflection on the earlier ‘material of the problem’ (Lord 1996), recent art practice with emphasis on material change reflects growing global issues. These cross-disciplinary concerns are discussed in Chapter Ten.

North Queensland’s proximity to neighbouring countries and the Asia Pacific region enables a significant exchange of culture and trade. This aligns with the third aim of James Cook University’s research strength, People Identity Place, (PIP):

To contribute to the development and evaluation of services, policies and interventions that enhance the quality of life of people in northern Queensland and the Asia-Pacific region;


This assists my identification of key visual art for the study in remote locations, compared with contemporary art practice in larger centres. These close locations and those further afield include Australia and the Asia Pacific region, China and key international exhibitions in Europe.

Cultural Diversity and Concepts for Ephemera

Inquiry into cultural diversity assisted my search for theory of, and practice incorporating, ephemera. Altered perspectives obtained through travel are often points of departure for art practitioners. My creative rationale for visual art pursued examples from culturally diverse mentors, in conjunction with the investigation, selection and documentation of found figurative elements.

Metaphors for the change process were exhibited in a number of installations and are discussed in my themed analysis, Part Two and referred to in the Appendices III to VII, IX, X, XVI, XVII, XVIII and XX.

In 2003 I developed a series of archival drawings and lithographs titled Survivor Trees to take to China. These related to environmental change concepts, such as drought, erosion and survival. The survival of native trees led to my further
reflection on environmental issues. Subsequent concepts post-2003 about change for the research practice were absence, drought, erosion and death. This research was the basis of my 2004 installation titled *Absence*. My exposure to Chinese cultural heritage and spiritual diversity assisted in developing increased awareness of connections between shared concepts of spirituality and environmental health. This awareness impacts on change processes in my installations. Re-evaluation of my installation *Absence* (2004) was pivotal for ongoing work. This drove my creative concepts and visual interpretation of change in relation to concerns for natural environment.

My 2005 projects utilising natural materials such as decomposing wood fibre were triggered by thoughts during and after an artists’ camp and workshop, *Leave no trace* in Wallaman Falls National Park, North Queensland (Chapter Eight).

Plate 1.13 Anne Lord (2005) *Discussion at Wallaman* pixels from monitor 31 x 42 cm

My response to the place at Wallaman Falls was to make a conscious effort to allow creative work to disintegrate during a specified time. Thus the idea of the ‘performative object’ (Butler 2005 conversation) became primary and relevant. Schisms between artists’ use of the performative object and the non-performative object are significant for the study. These were identified during *Leave no trace* and are discussed in Chapter Eight.
Visual art praxis demonstrates the reciprocal development of concept and image. My new work relates to aesthetic icons that show significant change processes. Thus imagery is based on iconography of transformation and degradation. Arresting the image at a crucial visual point of change or disintegration into the surrounding environment was significant for developing new work in 2006 and confirmed the direction for the work.

Aims for this Study

My aims to advance this thesis, in concert with my research questions on page fourteen, were to

1. Investigate various visual artists’ concepts involving strategies for art and ephemera, to find how these and my work provide metaphors for environmental issues
2. Explicate autobiographical voices and textual literacy to intersect artists’ concepts, and find schisms about ephemera
3. Develop a Glossary for art and ephemera to strengthen visual arts discourse in this area
4. Create ephemeral objects as metaphors for regenerative processes in the natural environment
5. Present the work through installations, exhibitions, off-site venues, and electronic and minimal print publications.

These aims assisted identification of change over long deep time as opposed to explosive actions. The visual icons of art and ephemera were refined as metaphors for environmental change and my art related to change in a number of locations, along with human impact on environment.

Digital art and new media, as well as the idea of online ethereal recording are attractive for reasons of low impact on ecology. Although concern for place and ecology underpins the work, the thesis is not about the photographic documentation of art and ephemera. The performance and sacrifice of the art object from a material state to one elevated in memory identifies objects and ideas that impact on memory as significant in art and ephemera.
The Visual Artist and Cross-disciplinary Issues

Visual artists align with disciplines, such as ecology and environment and in doing so they provide broad contributions to the concept of change for art and ephemera. Since the early works of environmental and eco-art in the 1970s multi-disciplinary combinations include: art, environment, ecology and geography (Helen & Newton Harrison 1971 - ongoing); art, ecology and suburban living, (Agnes Denes 1982 and 2000); water treatment plants and river systems (Dominique Mazeaud 1987 - ongoing), (Betsy Damon 1993 - ongoing); and art, sewerage management and community healing (Mierle Laderman Ukeles 1978 - ongoing), and Susan Leibovitz Steinman (1994-5 - ongoing).

Artists working with similar relevant topics for this study, but relating more to the ‘performative object’ than the natural environment, include Allan Kaprow (1966), Allan Sonfist (1969 and 1979) and Betty Beaumont (1978 - 1980) who were often associated with ‘Assemblage’ and ‘Environments and Happenings’ (Henri 1974).

In the process of empowering the ephemeral and developing a visual artist’s practice to link environmental issues, I acknowledge that most artists have a profound interest in and sense of global issues. That is, the natural environment is important to them personally and in their work. In the 1970s and 1980s artists rallied to intervene against the destruction of rainforests and the building of dams perceived to be detrimental to the environment. However in the 1990s and the first decade of the second millennium the plight of the environment, for example, deforestation and global warming, has not been taken up to the same extent that it was in the 70s and 80s. Exceptions occur, such as the artist Not Vital who has, since the 1990s, worked with impoverished communities to assist them against famine and in this aspect of his oeuvre has adopted an ephemeral practice that complements his archival practice.
Introduction to Perspective and Methodology

In this study the compilation of names and works is selective and I adopt strategies to look beyond the art historical accounts of specific art genres and styles (Buskirk 2005, Lippard 2002, Augé 1995, Bourriaud 2002, Kaye 2000). The methodology accommodates shifts in contemporary art praxis as I adopt the blurring of disciplines and genres. These new areas are outlined as themes in the analysis. A methodological strategy is to re-investigate site, performance, land, earth, installation, Arte Povera and site-specific art to consider potential for art and ephemera.

Tucker (2002) discusses visual literacy whereas Ashton (1999) and Davies (1996) contribute to textual literacy and these provide a basis for my post-structuralist perspective. The relationship of these methods and neo-narrative voices provided models from contemporary art. Thus neo-narrative voices in post-structuralist discourse contribute to my themed analysis about art and ephemera.

I investigate the potential for artists to engage with the debate about climate change where key artists’ ethical approaches to bringing attention to the natural environment are important. Artists’ statements about disintegration, anti-commodity and ‘performative objects’ were sought. My new work embodies concepts of the sacrificial and ephemeral in tandem with tracing and rediscovering the practice that allows change to happen during an installation. Whereas my archival work is executed and presented through traditional processes on archive quality media, my ephemeral work is created using waste to interpret issues of change in the natural environment. Thus my practice in ‘art and ephemera’ is developed and executed with fragile and disintegrating materials expected to show change during the course of an installation. The temporary work is intended as a basis for testing ideas, whereas archival artworks, drawing, painting, printmaking and printed digital imagery are instrumental as starting points for subsequent projects. This study includes artwork and writing from three major exhibitions / installations as well as a series of smaller exhibitions over the course of the candidacy.
My target audiences include the contemporary visual arts industry, the university and academic realm, and the broader community including the Northern Australian region. The regional communities of Townsville and Northwest Queensland are included for interaction with known place. Additionally, audiences from various disciplines have been addressed through papers detailing the theoretical background, and the manner in which the information and practice was processed.

It is my concern that as an artist I address people outside the visual arts in some capacity. The artist may not be able to change anything substantially, however the challenge to expose concerns to a broad audience is a major motivational factor in the production of ephemeral art work. My investigation of the object as the basis of performance and change, in the context of art installation for ephemera, enables a new reading of ephemera as a strategy to elicit attitudinal change in an audience. This potential for public interaction is of significance for the research.

My 2005-2009 visual arts practice involved arresting visual ephemeral material in the evolving process of recycling, for a short time, and then allowing it to return to the natural environment. Art and nature became the same thing through loss of boundary when I placed old survey pegs on disintegrating surfaces in order to draw and photograph objects and ground as ephemeral (Plate 1.14).

Plate 1.14 Anne Lord (2005) *Eroding Peg on fallen tree*, artists' workshop *Leave no trace* [Digital image - photograph Lord]
This act was a relocation of the obsolete (decaying) survey peg for reflection on environment and change. Old survey pegs and re-placement are discussed in Chapter Eleven. Artworks made from a number of materials, all ephemeral in some way instigate inquiry about place and our position in that place. This work could have the capacity to refer to what we do in relation to sustainable living and comment on this.

Scope of the Research

Artists, who produce work with a low environmental impact, have an awareness of environmental crisis in the second millennium, and their place in the world defines the edges of the study. I identify impermanent artwork and creation of art that facilitates reflection and better understanding of contemporary issues for the scope of this research. I exclude decorative art about the environment that is, scenic reproduction and surface decoration not in some way questioning our position and our ecological footprint via the work. Though many artists persisted after the 1990s with art and environment, there are many decorative art practices about environment that do not belong to the realm of this study. Rather, investigation and response to issues is a common methodology for contemporary artists’ extrapolation of a research project, in line with their practice-led research. I adopted this approach and expand on this in Chapter Three, Methodology and in Chapter Four, Section 4.3 A Premise for Analysis.

In the production of work with an environmental theme, I sought integrity in the work by relating the concept through topic and theme to compassion and wisdom in Chapter Six. Baas and Jacob (2004) addressed these ideas in correspondence with artist and former Catholic monk Ernesto Pujol who stated ‘We stand at a crossroads between old and new faith approaches to the planet’s issues’ (Pujol August 9, 2003 cited in Baas 2004, 11). Baas and Jacob (2004) acknowledge a corollary goal having to do with changing institutional practice.
My ideas resonate with the aesthetic of “aged icons” from Tang Chinese art and European medieval art as these reflect their cultures’ beliefs. I concur with Anderson (1996) that:

All traditional societies that have succeeded in managing resources well, over time, have done it in part through religious or ritual representation of resource management (Anderson 1996 cited in Tucker and Grim, 1997, xviii).

In addition to combining traditional cultural belief and ecology, significant publications about art and ecology emerge from within the arts industry. Andrews (2006) includes substantial facts and figures about ecology and artists working in this capacity. A change over three decades in publications about land, ecology and art is significant for the collaboration of artists and scientists contributing to the issues of natural environment, through collectives and organizations specifically seeking solutions to climate change. Artists Laderman Ukeles and Tiravanija continue their art for ecology and social interaction. The visual statement can be a metaphor for a grander statement and Tiravanija’s ‘the land’ project is where both artists and projects provide access to new ideas about art and environment


These artists communicate issues through the manifesto and web-based communication strategies and are linked with art and ephemera throughout the thesis.

Issues in my study include the manner in which artists might use their work, closely aligned with an ecological statement, by allowing the ecology to be part of the artwork. Similarly an object referencing sustainability disintegrates in order to regenerate. The contra-argument is that digital art, and art that is ephemeral, will still have an impact on the environment and have an ecological footprint. While accepting that this is the case, the thesis makes reference to art that is not tied to lasting concerns of archiving and storage in a museum, or storage-based situations. Rather it takes on a temporary existence through the artist’s awareness of, and interest in, reducing impact on environment.

This chapter forecasts themes taken up in the analysis where locality and the ability to take ownership of the problem through local action are synonymous
with artists who take responsibility for issues chosen as themes or topics in their work. Addressing the centre ~ periphery binary is significant for artists working in a region or locality away from capital cities. In relation to a contemporary context for art and ephemera, questions surface as to how other artists used fragmentation, ephemera, corrosion or erosion in practice to create layers of meaning or metaphors for issues in the natural environment.

In concluding this chapter, I refer to my first two research questions ‘What artistic means could illuminate environmental fragility?’ and ‘How might “art and ephemera” assist in deeper understanding of environmental fragility and change?’ This reference is made in order to refine the study and emergent issues in the subsequent chapters. I interrogate the accidental and intentional models of art and ephemera to bring attention to the twenty-first century contemporary situation. My questions focus on issues of regeneration and the reciprocal interplay of art and ephemera.

My investigation of art and ephemera promotes the capacity that artists have to activate shifts in public attitude. The study relies on the theoretical perspective in the next chapter to instigate language as crucial in the argument for art and ephemera. These theorists assist in the process to show how we can be agentic for change and act as exemplars for how art creates awareness of methods to reduce the size of our (human) environmental footprint.
Chapter Two

2.0 Perspective: Post-structuralist Positioning for Art and Ephemera

A Premise - Theories of Place, Time and Change

In this chapter I provide an account of key theorists and arguments that have given shape both to my artistic practice and historical and theoretical possibilities concerning art and ephemera. The research project, ‘art and ephemera’, investigates theoretical principles and visual arts discourse that inform artistic practices. The use of ephemera in visual art highlights the artist’s capacity to create, without desire to preserve or archive, and thereby has potential to provide new definitions of valid artistic practice in a society that is struggling to understand and counteract climate change.

The ephemeron can be a visual metaphor for many issues. But how to analyse its usefulness to artistic practice? As I will demonstrate throughout this thesis, post-structuralist discourse assisted timely agentic re-positioning for visual artists who choose to work with material that cannot be archived. The creation of ephemeral art provided a challenge for me as a visual artist due to disintegration or loss of the creative product. This ephemeral process also provides unusual relief from the requirements of conservation and archiving, such as presenting work behind glass, dealing with measures for humidity and temperature control or careful storage of archival \(^1\) paper. Artists discussed here intentionally incorporate ephemeral elements and remove the necessity for archival materials, that is, preservation or maintenance of an acid-free art product.

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\(^1\) Archival paper is produced from cotton or plant fibre, and then processed to become neutral Ph, or acid-free.
In this way, ephemeral art calls into question many of the standard precepts of curatorial practice and artistic evaluation. Post-structuralism’s recognition of binaries assisted my challenge to existing canons of archived art. For instance, the dichotomy of preserved, ‘sterile’ products and ephemeral, ‘dirty’ art objects forms a strong aspect of the theoretical perspective. In empowering ephemeral art and art that disintegrates at the will of the artist/s, the portrayal of art in a traditional gallery system was seldom relevant for this study.

The notion of the canon has been a topic of serious discussion in art history and theory over the past few decades. In order to formulate the perspective for my thesis on art and ephemera, I draw on the work of authors who reshape the canon of the art industry. Pollock (2003) referred to accepted canons in the art industry and notions of difference that can be due to race, gender or colonial history. A difference I adopted in my discussion of art and ephemera was to probe the longstanding commodity-driven culture of collecting and archiving art. One binary exists; those who collect art acknowledge that it is worthy of archiving and has some value, as a creative work and perhaps as a financial asset; however ephemeral art is often considered of no value or holds no significance for a collector or investor. Further to art and ephemera, art as anti-commodity resonated with the ensuing thesis. Therefore questioning archive as the status quo became a key attribute for the theoretical perspective.

I addressed the binary focus through post-structuralist theory in order to promote art and ephemera to an ascendant majority. As Ashton (1999) states:

... binaries are particularly difficult for those located in the ascendant half of the binary pair to see. They take their category membership to be normal, and normative, and those located in the other category to be marked by their difference (Ashton 1999, 98).

My critique of the structure of canonical paradigms of archive contributes to my questioning of a conservative practice and textual accounts of accepted history. Similarly, the ideologies that art institutions "maintain" could be challenged in contexts of visual arts practice. Attention to these inherent binary terms became relevant for my research for, as Amy Tucker (2002) states,
Meanings of words and images are shown to be inherently unstable and dependent on context...Traditionally defined categories of meaning such as male/female, subject/object, become blurred (Tucker 2002, 253).

Tucker (2002) strengthened my appreciation of the potential to collapse binaries. Textual and visual literacy converge in art and ephemera where this investigation contributes to discourse. Atkinson (1995) communicates these connections:

Enquiry into discourse suggests that the discourse creates the objects of which it speaks. Key signifiers (words and concepts) form our understanding which is constructed through the specific terms of the discourse (Atkinson 1995, 261).

My contribution through this thesis, including responses to the research aims, and my practice are embedded in a visual arts discourse. Investigation of the literature and visual art practice involving transient art assisted my search for ‘What artistic means could illuminate environmental fragility?’ Through curators, art writers, and art installations, I explore artwork, such as that by Wolfgang Laib, and access discussions about his humble practice to show Laib’s encompassing perspective of the world. Laib’s sensitive use of material and Metzger’s auto-destructive art assisted my recognition of an art practice, one that did not have to remain in a museum, and much less to be archived. This in turn led to my recognition that I could challenge the status quo through non-archival artwork.

In my case, I investigate the topic of ephemera in order to interrogate the category of ‘archivable versus non-archivable’ and thereby generate new knowledge concerning cyclical re-occurrences such as growth and decay or seasonal repetition. My investigation of alternative readings for previous art categorisations is pursued in subsequent chapters.

Late twentieth-century art occurrences also contribute to formulation of this perspective. Marsh (1993) discussed the experimental art of the 1970s and its association with post-modern reaction against late modernism in her critique of Greenberg’s idea that each new style surpassed the preceding one. For Marsh pluralist valuing of cross-disciplinary approaches to the visual arts is philosophically committed to a critique of ‘progress for its own sake’ (Marsh...
This view and those of Buskirk (2005) and Lippard (2006) concur with my identification of multiple strands of reading and practice for art and ephemera.

The artist is often recognised as belonging to one of the first communities to respond to concerns of irretrievable ‘progress,’ and a consideration of pluralism is critical for an appreciation of the diversity possible in art and ephemera. Thus art and ephemera is multi-layered and evidenced in past practices over millennia, in models and in recent mentors. In my study, mentors in the twenty-first century adopting an intentional practice of art with ephemeral means have been chosen for conceptual reasons similar to those identified in my practice. These artists recognise the urgency to respond to human impact in the natural environment, though their methods are varied.

Challenge to the Status Quo

The construction of this study supports an under-rated area of the art industry that is not required to archive and much less to enter into commercial constraints. In this case, entering a discourse of difference was paramount in order to find the basis of what potentially drives anti-archive and ephemera, conceptually. A motivational strategy for artists is to challenge a prior area of accepted practice in order to make a statement that has currency and can be empowered in discourse that supports their new strategies. Mentored by a critique of ‘commonsense justification of dominant and dominated positioning’ (Ashton 1999, 98), this study addresses through discourse analysis a critical look at ‘archive at any cost’. Thus where Duncum (1988) discussed an ideological seepage where ‘Ideology masquerades as commonsense’ it became evident that through ‘such taken-for-grantedness, ideology secures consent’ (Duncum 1988, 9). I suggest that in visual arts, archive is not taken for granted. In this context, art and ephemera can upset the balance of archive as the dominant visual arts position.

Potential to upset the dominant positioning of an abundance of archived art offers an alternative to the accepted place of the archive. My study does not find that the archive is totally replaceable, but argues for some forms of art that have less need
to stay housed in pristine and sterile environments or white cubes . The natural environment provides just such an alternative as a site where art can be in close proximity with earth. This is particularly so with my art involving ephemera.

Acceptance of archive in art solely for the sake of preservation can be problematic. Merewether (2006) addresses the topic ‘archive’ with a compilation of authors who provide some dichotomies. Foucault (1969) references the impossibilities of archiving everything in a person’s contemporary situation. Merewether includes Warhol’s (1975) questioning of the ability to archive ‘everyday things’ each day and these are questions that impact on my investigation of what is to be relegated to a process such as art and ephemera, through adopting regeneration. My argument is for the acknowledgment and empowering of visual art that encompasses ideas about and through its own collapse; art practices that support crucial contemporary issues of change fundamental to the thesis. These ideas are linked to how art practice and theory resound with environmental issues in the second millennium (Andrews 2006). Positioning art and ephemera with cross-disciplinary contemporary issues informs the subsequent analysis and theorising.

Pollock’s critique of the art canon advances recognition of artists marginalised by ‘market and museum’ or the art industry, and resonates with my position as a regional visual artist. Pollock (2003) demonstrates that hierarchy and privileged positioning are bestowed upon certain contemporary artists and that often the privileges are there for those who perpetuate dominant (archival) practices:

As an active element of contemporary hegemonies, the canon polices the entry to the pantheon of art by contemporary artists. Writing about living artists exposes its selectivity, exclusivity, partisanship. Working to difference the canon involves questioning divisions between the historically proven, or those validated by the market and museum, and artists whose work demands attention, the criteria for which are generated elsewhere, but without betraying their claim for being considered artists (Pollock 2003, 170-171).

I question these divisions between proven or validated practices, and argue that potential for display and selection to enter the arena requires critical reconsideration of criteria for including artists who work with art and ephemera. In this thesis I adopt the agentic position to advance artists who develop work
from the descendent position of art and ephemera. This is often produced as part of regional practice. Working to difference the canon requires a discourse that can assist empowerment and acceptance of the ephemeral art object in order to present this type of artwork and to have that work publicised.

Pollock’s exposure of existing selectivity, exclusivity and partisanship invites the alternative, that is, the practitioner adopts art and ephemera as a process, to investigate, expose and present concepts inherent in signs of decomposition and disintegration. The empowering of such practice is supported by Sullivan’s (2005) claim that the capacity for the visual arts to contribute through practice-based research lies in the artist’s contribution to debate and to investigate difference:

The agendas, definitions, and theories that inform research methodologies in the social sciences and human sciences are not so much “embraced” but “embattled” as important similarities and differences in approaches to inquiry are contested and conceptualised. This provides a basis for arguing that the visual arts have an important contribution to make in the quest to know more, but that approach to this shared goal follows a different path (Sullivan 2005, 28).

Sullivan’s reference to methods of inquiry assists my research as I identify challenges and “embattled” zones to expose how some visual artists have chosen to take a different path through an anti-archival and anti-commodity stance in their practice. This path is for me part of a creative and practical area that grew in tandem with gaining knowledge about many aspects of survival in the art-industry. For this inquiry, my journey was enriched through broadening and contextualising existing knowledge of environment, culture, history and location.

Thus I signal discourse used by artists who work with ephemera and how this references their knowledge in art praxis. Baas (2004) identifies Ann Hamilton’s “reading” and visual art where textual literacy enriches and brings with it significant contributions to areas of contemporary visual arts and beyond. Similar strategies for writing, such as the autobiographic and neo-narrative are discussed by Flood (2005), who actualised artists’ narratives by listening and recounting them, to ‘realise their desires of artistic identity…while creating her own narrative’ (Flood 2005, 36). These strategies are discussed in the next chapter.
Further to this, Augé’s (2002) concept of *non-place* contributed to current changing perspectives about place and also broadened my methodological options. The exploration specifically aligned art practice with academic research and extended art concepts to theory and practice in contemporary culture and life. Much of my writing shows that, irrespective of genre or a new title, contemporary art is made by the artist, as a person who has been able to maintain a fresh and creative outlook to create the potentially useful image, as a current way of thinking about their locality and context. Augé’s (2002) ideas of *supermodernity* assisted my understanding of being in an age of *super-post-modernity* (my term). For my thesis on art and ephemera we (artists), need to reflect this in our practice. Bourriaud’s (2009) *altermodernity* advances this idea where ‘increased communication, travel and migration are affecting the way we live,’ [http://tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/altermodern/manifesto.shtm](http://tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/altermodern/manifesto.shtm).

Writing of discourse, Fairclough (1989) states, ‘emphasis should be on language use, but language use conceived of as socially determined…language as a form of social practice’ (Fairclough 1989, 22). In constructing discourse, ‘known place’², how my visual art related to, or was driven by, notions and perceptions of a particular place, became important in establishing understanding and knowledge about both. Bachelard (1994) refers to the phenomenology of roundness, a visual clue, and relates Rilke’s poetry about a tree touching the dome of the sky. The environment and place were responsible for my adoption of a practice of ephemera and my aspiration to create new understanding of the issues inherent in location, also referenced by Lippard (1997).

My adoption of people in place resonates with Gibson’s (2002, 1992) references to place in Queensland. This aligns with my own experiences of place, where ‘workforce on the grasslands, the mining sites and the fisheries’ form the ‘three dominant frontiers of racial contact’ in tropical Queensland (Gibson 2002, 105). Familiar through my witnessing in Northwest Queensland is a ‘culture of short-

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² ‘Known place’ was a term I adopted (2001) for a series of photographic screen prints portraits of people in their known, familiar environments.
stay itinerancy...[as it] has defined much of rural Queensland’ (Gibson 2002, 105).

These literary interpretations of place and transience resonate with my previous experiences living in and investigating natural environment. Artists who create visual art from experiences of isolation and the natural environment contribute significantly to this study, art and ephemera. Influences of place contributed to my interpretation of ephemera as a creative option. The research path formed a trajectory based on how an artist’s life and work contributes to areas of contemporary art praxis, new understanding of locality and related environmental discourse. This involves an appreciation of the natural environment and the artists who work with a concern for this.

**Environment and Ecology**

Knowledge and practice, gained through art with an appreciation of ephemera, assist research into the aesthetic of impermanence and can create a powerful metaphor for environmental sustainability. In this study, art is involved in important complex multi-disciplinary areas of investigation, those interested in environmental health. Thus ‘art and ephemera’ is not about art as an aid to decorative elements, archival rhetoric or superficial issues.

The necessity for an epistemology that encompassed fields outside conventional areas of art became apparent in the selection of concepts from artists, authors and curators involved in the continuing production and engagement with art that highlights global environmental issues. A multi-disciplinary investigation contributed to my substantiation of art and ephemera as an important contribution to contemporary art and society.

A blurring of boundaries could be a descriptor at a number of levels. This relates to my desire for the object to be an integral part of the environment through my capacity as an artist to merge an iconic image or ‘performative object’ with its surroundings. The erosion of the art object by the surrounding
material and natural environment has become relevant as a process in making my art since 2005.

Artist Rirkrit Tiravanija in his work, *the land* (1998 - ongoing) shows no distinction between ‘place for a community’ and art. Schmelzer finds Tiravanija’s work ‘*the land*’ is about moment-to-moment relationship with the earth…and resonates with the placelessness of modern life’ (Schmelzer 2006). While Andy Goldsworthy (1992) created impermanent features and art pieces in the natural environment, and John Wolseley (2001) buried paper and allowed the earth and ‘environment’ to make its mark, both artists have then preserved their work as archival artworks in a gallery and / or publication through hard copy and books. In the art produced by Goldsworthy and Wolseley, the traditional language of art is of relevance to meaning, appreciation and the fact that art is to be archived and valued as a commodity. This distinction between Tiravanija’s ‘placelessness’ and Goldsworthy’s ‘environment’ is important for my perspective and study about art that does not have to be archived.

This thesis on art and ephemera has been developed in conjunction with land and place or locality, therefore metaphors of earth-derived material, as potential ephemeral art are used to challenge an existing art power base and established discourse. In the development of the study I intended to change public perception about the value of ephemeral art where artists who work with concepts about passing icons and disintegrating material could become part of a practice that is acknowledged as worthwhile and significant.

Andrews et al. (2006), Baas and Jacob (2004), Sengupta et al. (2003) and Crimmin (2007) assisted my recognition of art practice as an investigation of difference through art and ephemera. Thus, practice can act as a potential metaphor for processes in ecological clusters, such as art and ephemera as metaphors for environmental conditions. Recognition of artists contributing to discourse about anti-archive and anti-commodity is a shared concern with issue-based art praxis. Kastner (2006), and Sadr Haghighian (2006) act against global energy crisis and through them I observed new practices that address the serious issue of energy ‘as part of a larger crisis’ (Sadr Haghighian 2006, 40).
Periphery and Local Knowledge

My tribute to ‘place’ in Northwest Queensland is a contributing factor linking familiar elements of the local and global. For Sengupta, Dietz, Nadarajan, Bagchi, and Narula (2003), instrumental in establishing ‘Raqs Media Collective’ (Raqs) their base is Delhi and Raqs is visible on many web sites http://www.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-l-0303/msg00165.html.

Sengupta et al. (2003), discuss peripheral regions and provide understanding about a key location and how this impacts on my work. Significantly for my study, Raqs contributors at http://www.raqsmmediacollective.net/ position research in visual arts in remote or peripheral locations and away from the necessity of a ‘center’. Sengupta et al. (2003) explain

…those who believe they occupy the “center” are culpable of “asymmetry of ignorance”…we, on the fringes of the global space, know more about the global space than those who are at its core know about us (Sengupta, Dietz, Nadarajan, Bagchi and Narula 2003, 49).

Sengupta et al. (2003) acknowledge that being on the fringe rather than the centre offers a useful perspective, though for Sullivan the argument is also one where visual artists can move to embrace knowledge and use that to occupy a more central place:

It is a discourse opened up by artists, curators and the like, who seek new forms of engagement with issues that nowadays not only explore the human condition, but who question the very design and function of the human body and mind, … raising the possibility for the visual arts to occupy a more central place in our world of knowing (Sullivan 2005, 28).

Where Sullivan speaks of visual arts and place, in relation to knowledge, for my perspective, the ‘centre of knowing’ and the ‘periphery of place’ are interchangeable. This is aspired to in my study and practice based in regional Australia. Similarly the centre of knowing and the peripheral other can be synonymous with new knowledge where a post-structuralist perspective privileges marginalised or peripheral culture and aims to blur a binary of centre and periphery. My realisation is that aspects of each existed in the other and could be legitimised as necessary for a discussion about the potential for art and ephemera in the local and global.
Papastergiadus (2006) refers to Macedonia and how we can consider ‘the possibility of gaining a glimpse of cosmopolitanism from small gestures in specific places’ (Papastergiadus 2006, 112). In my study I explicate the special things to be shared, an appreciation of place and change, along with an acceptance of ephemera in art. The change process in ephemera enabled communication about the value of place and our role as custodians. In taking this path I could acknowledge that the balance of things for region and place can be a shared responsibility for artists and community. Sites where artists have engaged closely with a community are discussed in analysis chapters Eight and Eleven.

Beliefs and Ecology
Where Tacey (1995) discussed Australian culture and place, Harvard scholars Tucker and Williams (1997) verified that lessons about balance from cultures and spiritual beliefs outside or beyond contemporary Australia were also relevant. Indigenous Australia is respectfully included in my discussion about relationships to place and culture. Spirituality, mythology, environment, mind and body occur in relationships relevant for art and ephemera. Through them I recognise links between art, natural environment and ecology as not only worthy of more consideration, but imperative for my perspective on art and ephemera in the climate of change.

to art and multiple readings. Lateral, rhizoid possibilities were investigated to counter a linear historical or presumed teleological account.

Social Scale and Art and Ephemera

Relevant for my perspective are Gibson’s (2006) discussion of ‘Aesthetic Politics’ and the capacity of the artwork ‘…concerned to direct your thinking to transformations on a social scale’ (Gibson 2006, 18). In my thesis for art and ephemera, the significance of art’s capacity to provide ‘transformative power in feelings’ (Gibson 2006, 18) is crucial for an art object as something that does not remain in the aftermath of its own performance. Gibson (2006) asks ‘why art continues to be so important in everyday life’ and states that art ‘…is more than a polemical message. It can put you through directly felt changes’ (Gibson 2006, 18). This thesis syntheses the way art and ephemera can approach the implementation of change in attitude, through adopting metaphors of change.

Buskirk (2005) critiques contingencies of representation and industry and I concur that contradictory historical lumping together of certain artists, in periods of time, is problematic for contemporary investigations of art praxis, where

The chronological organization, physically embodied in the layout of most survey museums and present in disembodied form in art history textbooks, is a structure that contains within itself the potential undoing of its logic (Buskirk 2005,11).

Similarly, Lippard (2006, 1974) assisted my recognition that categories could be dissolved. Not only were these categories blurred in style or genre, but also in Carter’s (1987) critique of naming and spatial investigation, and Davidson’s (2003) investigation of place, location and borders. These meshed with Augé’s (1995) reference to ‘non-place’ and assisted my identification of relations with the mapping of boundaries and the potential to critique ownership. Sensitivity to place and ownership is acknowledged in my artwork with dislodged survey pegs, discussed in Chapter Eleven. The suggestions I make are about a change of attitude to place. My adoption of textual devices to highlight change through post-structuralist theorising is addressed in the next section.
Post-structuralist Perspective and Theorising

Davies (1996) provided insight into power and discourse, through the metaphor of a pane of glass acting as a visible barrier and shattering the ‘glass shards’ would create another visible layer. We see the image behind the glass and the shattered new perspective that was invisible prior to a new understanding. Davies’ post-structuralist shatter provides new visibility as the lens facilitates an altered reading. The shattering also acts for me as a metaphor in works such as Duchamp’s *Large Glass* (1920) an accidental and salvaged break, and Magritte’s *Le Soir qui tombe* (1934) a painted deliberate play on the broken window glass. Further to these readings, my questioning of boundaries concerned what could be considered an art piece and / or a conceptual art statement, through a disintegrating act.

In constructing this argument I cite Humm (1995) who concurs with Foucault about relationship to power ‘Foucault argues that we read and speak only what we are allowed to read or speak since institutions control the formation of the discourses’ (Humm 1995, 102). In this study the institution is addressed through investigation of art industry structures, personnel and events. My discussion acknowledges that institutions operate as power structures and are identified as such. Grumet (1990) describes how institutions and their discourses serve to separate, designate, and control others

...so as to maintain the privilege of those who impose it. Order, naturalised over time, becomes the ordinary; a pattern of groupings, practices, and categories that seep into the ground of human experience and perception (Grumet 1990, 167).

Recognition of this controlling factor in society promotes my interest in the development of an intellectual discussion to subvert practice that is powerful and resists questioning. I do this to promote a practice that is gentle and acknowledges a *small* environmental footprint as beneficial. For my ensuing argument about these (sometimes unpopular) activities, Patterson’s (1997) discussion of critical discourse analysis is useful for two related aspects of ‘being in the discursive world,’

The first is the relationship between ‘subjects’ and the ‘language/texts’ which both speaks them and is spoken by them ... The second is the relationship between language/texts and what could loosely be termed cultural, social and
historical contexts. In this case we might talk about ‘discursive practices’ and the ways in which they work to produce particular aspects of culture or subjectivity, including ‘agency’ (Patterson 1997, 426).

Post-structuralist theory assists my argument that language can facilitate discursive ‘distillation’ of concepts and reach beyond an institutional ordering. Fairclough (1995) refers to ‘discourse’ and is:

… claiming language use to be imbricated in social relations and processes, which systematically determine variations in its properties, including the linguistic forms which appear in text. [Thus]... language is a material form of ideology and language is invested in ideology (Fairclough 1995, 73).

Therefore the structure and weight of publication, the authority or voice of the curator and the excess and / or shortage of material for promotion of installation events, such as artists’ publications, belong to this ideology and social relationship of artist to director / curator / audience / public. This impacts on where the performative object may be located / installed as art.

Dialogue between artist Magritte and Foucault (1983) was crucial in the development of the statement:

On the page of an illustrated book we seldom pay attention to the small space running above the words and below the drawings, forever serving them as a common frontier. It is there, on these few millimetres of white, the calm sand of the page, that are established all the relations of designation, nomination, description, classification (Foucault 1983, 28).

In this respect my thesis makes use of the ‘common frontier’ – the fissure between image and text. Image initiated with text and preceded by the ‘calm sand of the page’ contributes to visual and textual literacy. Similarly contemporary digital art tools, such as image and text are separated by the same space or ‘calm sand’ utilised to establish relationships of designation, nomination, classification and description for the reader / viewer.

Mitchell (1994) refers to Foucault and Magritte to relate the concept of the ‘metapicture’ in relation to image. In discussion are Magritte’s painting of a pipe, Les trahison des images (1929) and his text in the painting, Ceci n’est pas une pipe (this is not a pipe), as well as Foucault’s (1983) published text This is not a pipe. Mitchell (1994) states

Magritte shows everything that can be shown: written words, a visible object. But his real aim is to show what cannot be pictured or made readable, the fissure
of representation itself, the bands, layers, and fault-lines of discourse, the blank space between the text and the image…Foucault calls attention to this gap in his commentary on Magritte’s pipe (Mitchell 1994, 69).

My appreciation of the gaps that occur between language and image is that they address misunderstanding and how an idea is represented. I recognise the power of text to communicate the multiple positions of authorship – textual (symbols, usually words), spoken, written, and – imagery or visual text (explained as other than words) visual arts, graph, clip art, photograph, film, painting, drawing, diagram, figure, sculpture). Written text empowers visual art practice, and I recognise the power of the image, to empower language.

Tucker (2002) relates to my concern for the way structuralism and post-structuralism contribute to critical perspectives:

poststructuralism…is a chronological descendant [from structuralism] for both approaches seek to demonstrate that the connections between the word or image and the thing it signifies do not occur naturally but rather are determined by society. [Tucker continues that] poststructuralism…formulated amidst the political upheavals and anti-colonialist movements of the 1960s and 1970s, is marked by profound scepticism regarding the ultimate truth of any interpretation (Tucker 2002, 253).

This scepticism informed my study as a potential pre-condition for change to occur in an established hierarchy of museum, gallery or pedagogical institution. New discourse challenges or overcomes a normalising vision that has seeped into everyday vocabulary. Fairclough (1995) finds that language is critical for adopting change where new ideas opposing the dominant discourse are given a platform for discussion, and Weedon (1987), that ‘At any particular historical moment…there are a finite number of discourses in circulation, discourses which are in competition for meaning’. The conflict between these discourses enables ‘new ways of thinking and new forms of subjectivity’ (Weedon 1987, 139). In recognition of the conflict I was addressing, between tradition and change, it was important to consider new possibilities and this was addressed by the development of a glossary, a textual device that became simultaneously a summary of artist ~ researcher theorising. Bourriaud’s (2002) use of the glossary, as well as that in the catalogue for Sculpture Projects Muenster (2007) prompted me to apply the empowering effect and clarification of language in
the context of visual arts research. Thus, I developed a glossary for ongoing
debate about art and ephemera. For my theorising of art and ephemera, it is
desirable that the reader has a strong, shared understanding of significant terms
within the discourse. In order to create some empathy with the language of
transience in art and my chosen perspective, the glossary prepares the ground
for the analytical process. It introduces my voice as the annotator of
terminology relevant to contemporary visual arts for art and ephemera.
Language and authorship assist a post-structuralist reading to challenge the
status quo and this was developed through the key strategies of glossary and
themed discourse analysis. This glossary, in Chapter Four, contributes to
empowering ephemeral art and to new knowledge about the use of specific text
and discourse for the topic. For the reader my glossary creates a trajectory
through the terms applied to art previously dispersed across other discourses.

Derrida’s (1994) deconstruction of discursive binaries facilitated a post-
structuralist reading where I adopted a critique of the traditional practice of
solely archival and commodity driven work. This perspective led to
encompassing a practice and theory of ephemeral art. Davies (1996) recognises
the post-structuralist voice as agentic challenger to unequal power relationships
where

…the inevitability of having to belong to one or the other category of any binary
pair, the inevitability of being powerful or powerless, depending on which
category you belong to, is called into question (Davies 1996, 42).

Binary pairs ‘male / female, abled / disabled, white / black, powerful /
powerless, are ‘put under erasure’ (Davies 1996, 42) through agentic query, as
are archive and ephemera. My perspective is indebted to questioning the archive
where I looked for new and alternative methods to erase and / or re-present and
discuss concepts in visual arts. Davies (1996), Ashton (1999), Sullivan (2005),
Duncum (1992) and Miles (1997, 2005) have addressed innovation applied to
pedagogical issues relative to this study. Their concern for agentic challenge
assisted this perspective by modelling a critical stance.

My adoption of the post-structuralist perspective and challenge of dominant
discourse led to awareness that in collapsing a binary I could run the risk of
creating a new elite group. That is, the art of ephemera could become, if imposed as ‘one’ or ‘the new’ art form, a new area of elitism in visual art. This is not my intention and to realise my goal to re-position art and ephemera I reflected on the theoretical potential of binaries. I needed to emphasise how my work could exist as ephemeral for a short time and in this way, work from a position of irritation on the fringe of institutionalised art. Ephemera in art would not necessarily collapse or reverse the power structure in an art industry where accepted commodity and archive exist, but in the subversive practice of ephemera and art that questions the product as precious, my work celebrates temporary practice as agentic to question archive. In considering the option for ephemera in art to be subversive I chose options that would flag to the viewer a change of attitude. Art and post-structuralist theorising do not necessarily resolve things comfortably, and though I could not fix anything through discourse or by making ephemeral art, I provide a richer understanding of this topic and inherent issues.

Carter and Geczy (2006) look at issues of power, discourse and positioning. In recognising post-structural agency they break with the dominant discourse, and recognise the digital as immaterial. In the art industry a high profile artist has been a sole author, and the work traditionally archived, though for Carter and Geczy (2006) digital art and an art that can be replaced by digital, resists the idea of the artist as sole author:

Since the ‘cybernetic generation’ that has come into full force since the 1990s, there has been an unprecedented amount of collaborations, a tendency which has also made artists recast their own position with regard to authorship, agency and their egos (Carter and Geczy 2006, 230).

This outlook is one that many contemporary art groups take up to create alternatives to the orthodox position of sole author and archival art. My search for artists with similar goals to create a less costly and less permanent art identifies Machan (2006), and Krysa et al. (2006) including Lillemose. The immaterial (Krysa 2006), an alternative construction of creative knowledge in digital format assists to challenge art with an environmentally heavy footprint. This is of vital relevance to ephemera as art praxis, through the challenges that change and disintegration provide, and adoption of alternative communication
strategies. Many artists adopt online publication to consciously avoid other more costly resource hungry communication devices or displays. Printed documentation, as archive is a contradiction when applied to ephemera, especially in relation to efficiencies for Internet to disseminate information and art.

Mirzoeff (1998) provided evidence of changes to the way we see and document the world and how visual image in photography offers a potentially more democratic view of the world. Further, he discussed that the photograph no longer ‘indexes reality’ because of the ease of manipulation (Mirzoeff 1998, 8). Irrespective of a previously established dominant discourse, or even discipline, Mirzoeff compiles disparate perspectives, some in concord with my critical alignment and selection of art practice and theory for art and ephemera. In relation to documentation, Mitchell’s (1994) view resonates with my interest in how the visual arts impact on today’s society:

The realisation that spectatorship (the look, the gaze, the glance, the practices of observation, surveillance and visual pleasure) may be as deep a problem as various forms of reading (decipherment, decoding, interpretation, etc.) and that ‘visual experience’ or ‘visual literacy’ might not be fully explicable in the model of textuality of the view (Mitchell 1994, 16).

Explicating the visual, Mitchell’s statement offers challenges for my praxis, beyond ‘textuality of the view’ or verbal text as opposed to visual text. I develop visual literacy and discourse about ephemera and change. Areas surrounding artists’ concepts are not always seen in similar contexts until authors such as those mentioned above have deliberately gone outside an accepted parameter to bring a new perspective with the potential to expose new and unusual genres.

Journals Artlink (2005) and Arforum (1996) have devoted specific volumes to art practices incorporating ecology and natural environment as issues investigated by artists. These incorporate art forms that, apart from being about the natural environment, are also acts of ephemera. These publications, not specifically on art and ephemera as a genre, document models and precursors and assisted my adoption of ephemera, recycling and disintegration for my praxis. Shohat and Stam (1986) discuss ‘an aesthetics of garbage’, and this is
significant to identify past practice and models, taken up in Chapters Five and Eleven. Thus, I could embrace an aesthetic of a different path, through current dialogue and a re-selection of art, culture, religious icons and their signs of change. This aesthetic is also aligned to concepts discussed in Japanese culture as *wabi-sabi* (Koren 1994) and signs of age in Eastern Tang and Western medieval icons.

Elkins (1999) and Duncum and Bracey (2001) disrupt accepted versions of a Eurocentric art history. Elkins investigates imagery beyond the disciplines of art to images in mathematics and science in order to question visual art. It is this rigorous investigation of a large area of image-making that shows how visual art can also be affected by disciplines such as archaeology, religion, geography, to name a few. Duncum (1992) referred to ‘the new art history’ as a …capacious and convenient title that sums up the impact of feminist, Marxist, structuralist, psychoanalytic and social and political ideas [and adds]…among the questions raised are: Why does art mean painting and sculpture in certain styles, and how did this come about? (Duncum 1992, 9)

Similarly, Elkins finds that contemporary art poses important questions that are ‘very hard to answer using the language of art history’ (Elkins 2000, 4). So too a public outside art institutions, art schools and professional art circles, seeks non-confrontational icons for walls, paintings to soothe the eye, or holiday photographs printed onto canvas. However, for many contemporary artists, and this applies to my practice, much contemporary art has gone well beyond pictorial or defined disciplines in what has previously been called Fine Art. Where past images of Fine Art occupied a different sensibility from the images of art in the twenty-first century, the performative object in installation or on site provide a platform for contemporary issue-driven topics, such as war, terror, angst and environmental catastrophe. Some artists in working with alternatives such as renewable energy are living their lives as art practice and looking for change. Andrews et al. (2006) acknowledge in their ‘cultural ecology handbook’ that artists seek agency through alternative technology and care of ecology. This resonates with Elkins’ (1999) criticism of divisions in ‘art, science and mathematic’ and his suggestion that transgression is critical:

Instead of preserving the differences between the histories of art, science and mathematics and studying the "science of art" or the "art of science," we should
perhaps acknowledge that in the end many divisions between kinds of images are untenable, and that it is possible to begin writing the history of images rather than that of art (Elkins 1999, 46).

Practitioners relevant to my study have accepted the removal of boundaries around, for instance, art and ephemera, or relational aesthetics (Bourriaud 2002), where art and environment cross previously discrete disciplines. My search crosses the boundaries claimed by science and humanities and values the potential for inter-disciplinary art practice to communicate about life, place and natural environment. Elkins proposes to ‘tear down the wavering distinctions between “art” and “nonart”, “expressive” and “inexpressive”, that have been obstructing the way to that wider panorama’ (Elkins 1999, 46). I put forward that ‘performative objects,’ that can disintegrate during the time of an installation provide important comments on contemporary issues.

Contradictions

The documentation of art and ephemera may be the only lasting record of performative art and it is important to recognise that the documentation is only a window to this art and not the art. Many artists have discussed the proposition that the reproduction is a tool for documenting art. Artists such as Robert Morris have aligned with theoretical backgrounds to rethink established ideas for their work. Morris discussed with Lippard his photographed changing artwork and the ‘signifier-signified relation they set up’ (Morris cited in an interview October 1971 NY with Lippard 1973, 257). Documentation and representation are continuous occurrences in artists’ practice. The issues related to this recur in memory, and are discussed in Chapter Five. In my argument to value disintegrating or ephemeral artwork, concept and memory are important aspects of the art I investigate. Küchler and Melion (1991) contribute significant cases of art and memory relevant to the thesis. In contrast problems of costly archives and documentation of practice are inherent in contemporary artists’ professional requirements. Decisions about documentation and maintaining archives, as well as my concern to cross disciplines, as an artist and citizen, impact on my practice as it deals with the concern to counter the mass-production and over-consumption of goods.
Critical writing from key authors who query a dominant past-practice of archive and commodity, primarily in the visual arts, contributes to my investigation of anti-archive and anti-commodity perspectives. Christov-Bakargiev (2002) and Celant (2002) have written about the social conflicts, which gave rise to artists’ decisions to take an anti-commodity stance. Perennial questions are asked by certain artists in relation to an art industry that can prioritise commercial aspects over the creative and intellectual substance of artwork. For my work the limited life of artwork belongs to creative decision-making that blurs a binary, as it applies to both construction and disintegration of the work. In my praxis this post-structuralist blurring informs aspects of the construction, representation and planning for installation of my work.

Contemporary artists Rirkrit Tiravanija and Ai WeiWei have addressed the broad issue of impermanence through their artwork. Similarly Claes Oldenberg, Robert Smithson, Robert Morris and Marcel Duchamp have either contributed with an awareness of post-structuralist theory or preceded this theorising with their own premonition of the necessity to collapse boundaries that previously inhibited meaning. Their artworks mirror and include issues, based on concerns from socio-economic to environmental. These issue-based instances of art and ephemera are discussed in Chapter Ten.

Natural Environment

The natural environment and ecology are explored through multiple meanings where it is possible to speak of a domestic environment, a global environment and a local environment with major implications for art and ephemera. Tucker (2002) discusses the potential to bring together disparate areas of art practice and theory for a variety of new perspectives concerned with critical visual literacy and visual culture. These do not depend on a pictorial representation, though they do not rule this out, but look at crucial meaning possible through and in visual art, in relation to other arts and / or disciplines. Tucker’s (2002) blurring of the boundary between dichotomies is critical for my perspective about an art of ephemera where the separation between the object and the
environment becomes blurred in practice and theory, through a relationship to disintegration and the natural environment.

Lacy (2004) explores the role of artists continuing to work similarly to Eco-artists (1970s - 1990s) through “engaged art” within the environment, though Shellenberger and Nordhaus (2004) challenged the name Environmentalism as a movement, as well as concepts of environmental “good practice”. Their web-link ~ blog "Death of Environmentalism advocates for investment and innovation to lead to a clean future


My studio garden is an important catalyst for the connection between art and natural environment and is discussed as a site of empowerment. Thus ephemeral art permeates art making and art doing, and can be seen as an attitude to life much like a practice based on philosophical determination. This artwork, discussed in the themed analysis, is created in the manner of artists working with land. The context of Tiravanij’s (1998 - ongoing) ‘the land’ project is inspirational as an art without frames or borders. Thus my study refers to authors who critique, and artists whose practices break with, the tradition of showing in the ‘white cube’ of traditional art galleries. Collins and Goto (2005) discuss art that moves beyond the ‘visual exposition of the nature / culture relationship to the role artists are beginning to take in the public discourse of this relationship’ (Collins and Goto 2005, 39).

The disruption of the white cube and the inclusion of artists and writers attempting to blur the art - culture - nature divide are significant for art and ephemera through the need for alternative showcasing of the performative object. Horowitz and Huhn (1998) acknowledge art philosopher, Danto as an advocate for contemporary art that goes beyond the boundaries of traditional art, where art no longer needs to pursue one goal, ‘in having crafted … a philosophy of pluralism – no one has met the challenge more directly than

3 White cube is a term describing traditional art-viewing venues and reference to its critique is made in Chapter Four.
Danto’ (Horowitz and Huhn 1998, 5). In addition to diversity, Danto recognises art practice that cannot be collected as an archived work. In conjunction with the recognition that contemporary art personnel recognise a ‘philosophy of pluralism,’ Lumley’s (2004) reference to Arte Povera and Lippard’s (1974, 1984) to radical, street and public art, explicate the potential for practice to incorporate social conscience. For instance, Gandy (1997) finds that for Beuys, …nature holds innate meanings capable of guiding human thought and action. [By]…extending our understanding of “social nature” to the cultural arena, we can discern new ways of exploring relations between society and nature (Gandy 1997, 636).

Subversive or agentic practices from the last five decades act as precursors for art and ephemera and enabled me to value statements by Lumley (2004) who found that the artist ‘Kounellis was carrying out a necessary sacrilege in the face of bourgeois conceptions of art’ (Lumley 2004, 33). Kounellis’s (1969) piece Untitled (Twelve Horses) took the scope of work beyond the tradition of the white cube gallery and Lumley (2004) proposes that Kounellis ‘carried to an extreme conclusion the logic of Pascali’s statement, “I do not believe you make shows in galleries, you make the gallery, you make that space” ’ (Lonzi 1969, 318 cited in Lumley 2004, 33).

Though an artspace or venue could be determined by the artist, as a new place to create a statement, breaking with the traditional white-cube to another venue was not enough to encompass ideas behind more ambitious projects. Creative installations referred to by Bourriaud (2002) include artwork that can be off traditional art sites and on land. Schmelzer (2006) and Bourriaud (2002) discuss Tiravanija’s the land project in the context of making art in, and for, a community. I find that particular works by Tiravanija would be problematized if placed in the context of pristine gallery environments, away from the intended location for the work or amidst inflexible presentation standards. Thus my notion of art and ephemera is respectful of relational aesthetics where artwork does not fit comfortably within a white cube or any indoor venue. Alternative sites or spaces for the placing of this work have been found where curators of mega-shows (meta-practice), such as the Sydney Biennale, Kassel Documenta, Munster Sculpture Project or Venice Biennale, present installations or exhibit impermanent artworks. Allan Kaprow’s (1961) yard of car tyres was re-installed
(1990) in an external space at Art Gallery New South Wales; Joseph Beuys’ (1982) huge blocks of basalt were presented outside the prestigious Kassel Documenta venue (http://www.diacenter.org/ltproj/7000/dokumenta7.html); Giuseppe Penone’s 2007 Sculture di linfa Lymph Sculptures in a warehouse, and Penone’s tree for Sydney Biennale 2008 in the Sydney Domain. Similarly, Ann Hamilton’s 1992 aleph installation was in enormous rooms not specific to showing art and Nicholas Lang’s 1987 Colour Field in a Sydney wharf.

High profile artists providing models for art and ephemera in a major gallery might require constant attention or daily replacement of elements in the work and this is the case for Laib’s Milkstone (1975 initial installation viewed 2005). Thus many art directors, curators and administrators facilitate site-specific work in alternative venues. Two specific 2007 examples for art and ephemera on external sites follow in Plates 2.1 and 2.2.

Plate 2.1 Sanja Ivekovic’s Poppy Field (2007), Documenta XII, Kassel [photograph Lord]
Sanja Ivekovic’s *Poppy Field* (2007) incorporated two types of poppy in two large rectangular areas outside Museum Fridericianum, one of the main venues for *Documenta XII*. Ivekovic’s (2007) ‘poetic and political staging’, incorporated such strategies as revolutionary songs, sung by ‘Afghan women who struggle against fundamentalist terror and self righteousness of Allies in their country’ (Seefranz, Documenta catalogue 2007, 260). The work contributes to new knowledge about the development of a voice through artwork as ephemera. Additionally, post-structuralist binaries are exhibited in the theme of this work, presented as concepts and tools that reference drug lords and landowners against workers, wealth against poverty. The dichotomy is that the beauty of this piece belies the embedded anguish and repression of the topic it confronts, while presenting a performative act.


Artist Sakarin Krue-On’s (2007) *Terraced Rice Field Art Project*, Plate 2.2 presents a number of dichotomies underlying a mix of ecology and art in an ephemeral relationship. Ammer states:
Hand in hand with the creation of “heroic” natural images goes an artistic as well as botanic interest in vegetation and the collection of the most diverse plant varieties. … Sakarin Krue-On’s rice terraces appear as a puzzling image that negotiates between two monumentally stable perceptions: east and west, farming and park cultivation, history and present (Ammer cited in Documenta Kassel XII 2007, 274).

For the development of ‘art and ephemera’ it is critical to present writers who accept the diversity of representation in sites on and off gallery premises. In selecting two prominent and recent examples (Plates 2.1 and 2.2), I argue for a perspective where art might exist outside the gallery and that this practice can become more significant in art discourse. For Duncum the ‘aesthetic discourse views art as objects in themselves and celebrates individuality and a personal sensuous response’ however, ‘the social discourse is interconnected with social struggle and exercise of political power’ (Duncum 1990, 8). Sakarin Krue-On’s Terraced Rice Field and Sanja Ivekovic’s Poppy Fields, in Kassel Documenta XII, are involved conceptually and artistically in presenting power relationships. This is not just in what artists say about social relations and ecology, but as art these are part of my explication of how ‘art and ephemera’ is part of a larger discourse than either art or ecology.

While Duncum was addressing a global perspective, Elkins (2002) encouraged individuals to gain a personal perspective of art history by creating drawings or maps. The relevance is that a post-structuralist perspective embraces diversity allowing previously devalued or silent voices to challenge the status quo. My research gained strength by adopting a theoretical perspective to actively support resistant strategies. Similarly, Gair (viewed 2007) recounts how Bourriaud’s (2002) Relational Aesthetics is a concept underlying a broader consideration of relationships to venue and art and interprets this as

A set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space <http://www.gairspace.org.uk/htm/bourr.htm>.

In this respect the showcasing of artworks, specifically those selected for this study, extends beyond the boundaries of four walls or the white cube, in order to respond to the issues that artists work towards. These may be a local and / or global community. In presenting work, artists rely on their assistants and
curators to install the work so that it is located professionally. What I demonstrate with these examples is the location of art and ephemera in a number of alternative venues or on sites.

Art writing for academic, philosophical and art industry purposes demonstrates how a number of the various stakeholders have interpreted art in a contemporary situation. And this relates to how ‘art and research’ adopts various discourses.

Art Research and Discourse

Conceptual challenges and problem solving in art assist my recognition that the processes of art making and of research have many similarities. Thompson (2006) concurs with Sullivan’s (2005) proposition that ‘…the imaginative and intellectual work undertaken by artists is a form of research’ (Sullivan 2005, 223). Thompson consolidates the position:

Works of art are made through a process which, in every significant respect, mirrors processes of inquiry in other fields; they result in products that embody those processes through which information was generated, analyzed, and interpreted (Thompson 2006, 3).

This study consists of artists as mentors who generate information about temporary art, and authors who present how it is analysed and interpreted. In my analysis I discuss visual artists who work across disciplines in environmental sciences, ecology, writing and art to act as agents in challenging an art industry that is also coming to terms with social and economic impact endemic in the twenty-first century. The potential to respond to social and ecological issues drives my creative practice and my aim to contribute to current discourse in visual arts and beyond. Atkinson (1995) finds ‘Discourses are not about objects; they do not identify objects, they constitute them and in the practice of doing so conceal their own invention’ (Atkinson 1995, 260). Though discourse and practice are identifiable as separate, they contribute to understanding, and for Atkinson,

Such perspectives help us to deconstruct or question that which is often assumed to be ‘natural’…the discourse can expose historical and social factors [thus opening up] ways of understanding social relations which deny the constructedness of history and the possibility of change for the future (Atkinson 1995, 260-1).
The implication for art is that artists, who challenge accepted ideas or art as archive will set up alternative ways to communicate and seek creative expression about social relations. Many artists question dated power structures, through practice engaged with theory and discourse. They do this in such ways that they are also questioning social, economic, ecological and other power driven relationships. I interpret ephemeral work by artists acknowledging conflict inherent in a world with historically embedded binaries and find with Sullivan (2005), and Thompson (2006) that there are ‘connections between the promotion of arts-based research as a legitimate means of knowledge construction and the ways in which art practice is understood, valued, and approached within schools and cultures’ (Thompson 2006, 4).

I propose the adoption of temporary art for gaining some of this understanding and concur with Thompson about the significance of those forms of art education, ‘that support the construction of meaning and generation of understanding in visual form’ (Thompson 2006, 4-5). Potential models for new approaches to learning through adoption of temporary art, build on ideas of knowledge construction in the analysis chapters. Thus, art and knowledge construction are intrinsically sympathetic, and art and ephemera can contribute significantly to building new knowledge. For Mitchell (1994) ‘The dialectic of discourse and vision, in short, is a fundamental figure of knowledge as such’ (Mitchell 1994, 70). Artist Magritte (1929) and writers Foucault (1983) and Mitchell (1994, 2002) have contributed to discourse about the potential for text and image to be integral to the re-production of ideas and I develop this as a strategy for theorising about and making art.

The artists’ manifesto and text including ‘blogs’ generate further discourse in relation to art, and I adopt these critical devices for the analysis of art and ephemera. The manifesto in art recurs in recent arguments put forward by Machan (2006) and Krysa et al. (2006) who propose that the Internet is a creative instrument of discourse and curating of installations, exhibitions and new media presentations or downloads. Further Gibson states that ‘…new rituals have started nudging the world in unprecedented ways (Gibson 2006, 21). Gibson’s timely work with the blog in conversation (2007 - ongoing)

The Internet solves some issues of communication over distance and this dialectic posits the potential to develop a discourse beyond centralised paradigms, such as a Eurocentric one. This potential is important in the recognition of Australian pluralist culture and increasing opportunities to engage with neighbouring countries so closely bound by geographic, environmental and economic imperatives. Therefore my research approach moves beyond traditional art centres; a concept supported by Rogoff (1998), Sengupta (2003) and Shohat and Stam (1998) in relation to a number of ‘centres’. For Shohat and Stam (1998) ‘visual culture’ as a field

... interrogates the way both art history and visual culture have been narrativized so as to privilege certain locations and geographies of art over others, often with a stagist and ‘progressive’ history where realism, modernism and postmodernism are thought to supersede one another in a neat and orderly linear succession (Shohat and Stam 1998, 27).

Figurative and visual literacy, such as Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) rhizomatic organization, a multi-branching system of roots or ideas, challenges hierarchical linear construction of earlier dominant narratives. This strategy assists a re-writing of perspectives in standard historical texts where I question the standards that accept only archived artwork and the preservation of most art as an important professional requirement. Davies (1996) referred to ‘Emancipatory practices [that] erode the power of hegemonic discourses to deny the right of individuals and groups to speak differently, to speak and write against the grain of dominant power-knowledge regimes’ (Davies 1996, 8). Concurrently, Shohat and Stam (1998) state that ‘dominant’ narrative ‘collapses if we take non-European into account’ (Shohat and Stam 1998, 27). In my case, as a regional artist, Shohat and Stam’s perspective of a ‘very different aesthetic that held sway in much of the world,’ (1998, 32) and over millennia, urges agentic valorising of not only regional practice, but the incorporation of unorthodox ephemeral material in visual artwork.

Perspectives other than those from ‘power-knowledge regimes’ come into play and an appreciation of alternative opportunities and rhythms are relevant. Many
cultural groups support the adoption of cycles as opposed to linear systems. This in itself is part of art and ephemera. Vatsayan (1987) states that there has been over time a ‘manifestation in the arts of the belief that time is cyclic rather than linear’ (Vatsayan in Armes, 1987). This perspective is sympathetic with my theory that an ephemeral artwork contributes to a cycle rather than a rupture in time. This belief concurs with re-visited narration that includes indigenous views of world and culture, Buddhist philosophy and contributions from people ~ societies who rely on, and are familiar with, natural environmental cycles.

This compilation of sources assisted contribution to new praxis and to new dialogue. I pay tribute to influences from separate disciplines such as ‘art, environment and ecology’ and the mutually reciprocal effects of philosophy, art and pedagogy. Hawkins (2006), Muecke (2003), and Morgan (1996) have informed my perspective and investigation of anti-commodity and ephemera in art. Resistance to archive in art is taken up in my analysis chapters about waste and commodity in relation to issues compounding on the natural environment and alternative art practices, specifically through art and ephemera. Kwon (2007), Guattari (1989, 2000), Kraft (1997), and Schroeder (1997) provide agentic strategies to explicate my chosen topic of art and ephemera, with a focus on natural environment.

While recognizing the heritage of major icons in museums and some contemporary archived art, my thesis develops a theoretical stance that some artwork is necessarily ephemeral and can be empowered as such through memory and language. Lambert (1995) stated that

> Discourse is recast to refer not just to language but also the historically and culturally specific categories through which we give meaning to our lives, practice our lives, invest emotionally in our lives and constitute our social structures (Lambert 1995, 41).

In this respect discourse is driven and perpetuated by language and social practices and also driven by image. I present some of my own work and demonstrate a theoretical perspective through praxis, as well as challenging commodity-driven work.
The thesis challenges accepted notions of beauty and pleasure, and this is taken up in Chapter Five as *perverse art*. My recognition of aesthetic and anti-aesthetic in relation to an art object is about recognising shifts in knowledge about the natural environment. Similarly reconsidering waste and its impact on the senses portrays another binary of delight and revolt. For some, there is anti-pleasure, and this contributes to understanding some of the realities confronting societies in the second millennium. The dichotomy of pleasure and revulsion are integral to this reality, especially for art and ephemera. Duncum’s (1992) post-structuralist reference to pleasure claims it as a key aspect of ideology, whereas Hawkins (2006) and Simons (2004) refer to our aesthetic conditioning as a deterrent to adopting practices such as creating humus and compost. Hawkins (2006) discussion of our moral contribution to an ethics of waste assists my adoption of discourse to empower acceptance of these practices, and facilitates my discussion to address positive attitudes to ephemera in art. Acceptance of an anti-aesthetic and interest in refuse (Shohat and Stam 1998) are aspects in the development of work with ephemeral material and the relationship of this practice to new ways of thinking. Alternatives to archive can assist in encompassing an adoption of remedial practice for the challenges occurring due to waste and global climate change.

My position as an artist who can ‘slip between institutional walls’ (Lippard 2006) facilitates the empowering of a voice and places the artist in a political arena due to an ability to highlight issues such as anti-archive art, an art that acknowledges we have too much. This recognition leads to a desire for alternative energy, and, in some artists’ groups and cooperatives, is driven by the adoption of a practice that seeks to find expression through solving contemporary issues and blending the concerns of contemporary life with the search for alternatives to those problems. Bourriaud (2002) discusses blurring of boundaries and accepts practice that disappears as it is affected. Through recognising this relational practice, an interface with ecological issues, such as sustainable practice for waste and water, emerges in artwork selected for this study.
In concluding this chapter I re-establish my post-structuralist perspective to indemnify art and ephemera, and what it might stand for, through discourse analysis. Through visual arts praxis I aspire to contribute to a greater awareness, and better understanding of art and ephemera, and its connectedness to respect and fair dealing for the natural environment. Thus in accord with Weedon (1987) language can be the site where meaningful experience is constituted, and language can also determine how we perceive ‘possibilities of change’. In the next chapter these perspectives contribute to the development of my methodology.
Chapter Three

3.0 Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter, methods and theories relating to ‘art and ephemera’ explicate the practices of allowing art to change as a statement. Revisiting non-archival art from the last fifty to sixty years exposes the relative changes in motivational issues over this time, especially in light of recent ecological issues. The theoretical perspectives introduced in the previous chapter facilitated my choice of methods for working across art boundaries and re-visiting certain artworks from a number of previously defined genres or movements. This methodology, revisiting art genres in relation to current cultural and environmental beliefs, presents new practice and theory.

In Section 3.1 the generic aspect of methodology is prioritised, in 3.2 primary data and in 3.3 secondary data. Lippard’s (2002) interest in ‘widely differing phenomena’ belongs to the diverse authorship that complemented my qualitative research. My intent to empower previously undervalued practice linked through art and ephemera contributes to a discourse, and my contributions emerge in the glossary (Chapter Four).

Text and voice assist in identifying and narrating artists’ concepts and visual images. Autobiographic, neo-narrative and published voices ~ texts, assist the collection of data for theorising about the manner in which artists can present art as metaphors for issues of environmental sustainability. The processes of ephemera have been applied as metaphors for regeneration and cycles of nature in the larger environment to bring agentic * realisation and possibilities to the field of art and ephemera.
Viewing post-structuralist binaries in relation to art, and other disciplines such as Buddhist philosophy and ecology, assists this development of practice and theory in keeping with a consideration for ecological wellbeing. I constructed dichotomies from concepts and meanings in art, and accessed data from the visual arts to pose questions about artists’ concepts and their connection with artists’ lives. The post-structuralist lens was used to empower the *dis-empowered* and to assist recognition of further dichotomies in art discourse and relationships, such as the ephemeral art object in relation to the archived object. This theory assisted my connection of fields beyond art making through recycling in concert with ‘an ethics of waste’ (Hawkins 2006) so that the empowering cultural work using ephemera could contribute to the reappraisal of a commodity-based and overly consumerist culture.

In formulating my methodology, the development of my visual artist’s concept of art and ephemera was explicated as a potential metaphor for change, where I link art and environmental issues with universal concerns. These connections created a major focus for practice-based research, through visual arts. Thus in response to my research questions and aims, the methodology values the previously underprivileged arena of the ephemeral in art, culture and society.

Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy (2006) provide a figure (Figure 3.1) presenting the potential for a body of knowledge in conjunction with theory and method to contribute to the orchestration of the methodology.

![Figure 3.1 Methodology: A Bridge between Theory and Method (Nagy Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2006, 21)](image)

Nagy Hesse-Biber and Leavy’s figure demonstrates significance of the
relationships, and the potential to interpret disciplines, such as visual art, in the context of theory and method. My visual re-presentation of this figure is Figure 3.2 and maps ideas for cross-disciplinary input into major visual arts projects and research. Post-structuralist and visual art theory assisted a re-positioning of my methods and the way creative artistic works can be seen via a research perspective.

Epistemology - the nature of knowledge, ‘foundations’ ‘scope’ ‘and validity’
Interpretation for ‘art and ephemera’ the study (Lord),
‘Foundations,’ Visual Art, archaic icons, and tools of change, ‘scope,’ historical and cultural icons over millennia, ‘and validity,’ pertinence to culture, society, and environment today: Emergence of ephemera as practice-based research in visual art.

Theory - body of rules
visual culture, ecology, ideas, ephemera + aesthetics, ‘principles, and techniques that apply to a particular subject ephemeral art as philosophical metaphor, - distinct from actual practice [wabi-sabi]
- abstract thought or contemplation, metaphors for change - idea of or belief about something arrived at through speculation or conjecture’ beauty in disintegration - set of circumstances or principles that is hypothetical, links; ephemera + art + environment + change + reflection.

Method - way of doing or carrying something out, especially according to a plan’ Practice based research in visual art + ephemera.
- orderly thought, action, or technique investigate icons of change in nature, culture + spirituality
- body of systematic techniques - search for art, for ecological concern + disintegration during installation.

Methodology - methods or organizing principles underlying a particular art or other area of study’ Post-structural discourse analysis, art as a metaphor for; change in environment, issues of ephemera/waste as research based practice in creative visual arts. - study of organizing principles and underlying rules; ecology, action, spirituality + art. - study of methods of research, how ephemera and art can be applied to new ways of revering environment.

Figure 3.2 [Centre] Nagy Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) Methodology. Defining terms are from Encarta (2003). My voice (Lord) in blue interprets and extends this diagram for Art and Ephemera.
Theory and methods, developed from ‘epistemology,’ contribute to the area of study ‘art and ephemera’. In accordance with Figure 3.1 and the epistemological area behind this study, I recognise visual arts as the central body of knowledge, from where I can interpret my areas for theory and method. My interpretation of the Nagy Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) diagram for qualitative research allowed me to visualise strategic components of my study. I add definitions in black and my voice in blue to clarify my position and actions as artist – researcher.

**Widely Differing Phenomena**

My reconsideration of ‘visual art and ephemera’ recognises Buskirk’s (2005) concern that chronological organization in survey museums and art history textbooks ‘contains within itself the potential undoing of its logic’ (Buskirk 2005, 11). This idea assists the development of my methodology in addition to Lippard’s (2002, 1973) ‘widely differing phenomena’ (her reference to the dematerial in art). I chose precursors from earlier art periods and models from recent visual art for this study. Diversity in practice and phenomena led my investigation of the way artists have worked with variants of art and ephemera. Buskirk and Lippard present diversity and re-reading of art, irrespective of art genre boundaries, as a method in writing and this is significant in selecting artists working with ephemera. Thus my interest in processes and their implied messages in ‘art and ephemera’ are important as conceptual premises for discussing the ‘performative object’ (Butler 2005).

Buskirk (2005), Elkins (2000), Kaye (2000) and Lippard (2006) advocate departure from a study comprising discrete genres of twentieth century modernism and even post-modernism. Buskirk (2005) discussed her methodology via ‘the contingent object in contemporary art’ through working with a ‘…less sharply differentiated series of options’ (Buskirk 2005, 16). Comparatively, Kaye (2000) created organization around a number of areas of art and a focus on site. He states:

Referring this eclecticism, and the importance of the exchanges between visual art, architecture and theatre in which site-specific work has been defined,
[Kaye’s publication] …is organised around a series of thematic points of departure rather than any formal codification of site-specific practice. In considering various approaches to spaces, site, materials, frames, as well as documentation as an instrument of site-specific work [his publication] … moves across conventionally distinct kinds of practice, ranging from minimalism to land art, contemporary architecture, theatre, happenings, Arte Povera, body art, as well as formally evasive interventions into urban spaces, gallery sites, and even into reading itself (Kaye 2000, 11-12).

Kaye (2000) and Buskirk (2005), through their complex diversion from conventional, prescribed notions of visual art praxis were inspirational as exemplars for my model to investigate ‘disparate areas of visual arts’ in order to investigate ‘art and ephemera’. Where Kaye takes up options for presentation, artist Ann Hamilton incorporates reading and profoundly asks not what the question is, but how to go about seeking what question to ask. As an example, Kaye’s ‘documentations … draw on formally diverse areas of work, [and] … make radically differing responses to the paradoxes of presenting site-specific performance to the page’ (Kaye 2000, 11-12).

My investigation of ephemera as art across various installations ~ performances links the praxis of anti-archive and anti-commodity art. Artists sympathetic to the natural environment in theory and practice have facilitated my adoption of methods as I sought compatible areas of visual art, conscious of less impact on the environment. A point of distinction for selection is that though many artists and their works are sympathetic to the natural environment, some artists, significantly in the art movements named after land and earth, 1960s to 1990s, were also inconsiderate of any concern for natural environment. These distinctions informed my selection criteria.

Instances of the ephemeron discussed in this thesis belong to an area of art practice that cannot be archived in its own right. The time based-process or performative object prohibits such a fixed position for the ephemeral object.

**Introductory Positioning**

In order to intersperse my own contemporary art practice with contemporary theorists such as Bourriaud (2002), Danto (2006), and Baas and Jacob (2004),
and artists such as Tiravanija and Laib, I chose to create links across similar conceptual approaches to art-making processes. My searches revealed conceptual similarities where artists use ephemera as strategic processes in their art. I linked these key areas as firstly, art and ephemera, incorporating shifting icons and Bourriaud’s (2002) ‘relational aesthetics;’ secondly, natural environment and ephemera (in art); and thirdly, spiritual wellbeing and ephemera (in art).

![Figure 3.3 Key Areas for Synthesis of Art and Ephemera](image)

Collection of data from a variety of fields exposed new ways of seeing issues for art and ephemera and presents a relationship between my art practice and diverse disciplines that informed this practice. Though it is not new for artists to be influenced by and contribute to fields outside their own domain, an important method was to locate crucial links across areas with environmental concerns – concerns that I work with as an artist.

My reflexive researcher role is to state unambiguously my own position, including cultural and spiritual beliefs and how they have impacted on my practice and research. Ashton (1999) stated ‘Had participants simply drawn [practised], and not spoken or written, this reflexive aspect would have remained largely invisible’ (Ashton 1999, 179). I have added my voice and positioning to
recount that early spiritual guidance and seven years of boarding school exposed me to the discourse of Roman Catholicism. While attending art school in Sydney in the 1970s and since, I have accessed Buddhist teachings, the processes of meditation and emphasis on preparing for ‘right mindedness.’ Thus an eclectic mix of Western and Eastern spiritual belief is behind my adoption of an attitude to making art that passes away.

Socio-political Contexts

My interest in disintegration, and aesthetic of decay, resonates with Shohat and Stam’s (1998) ‘multiple historical trajectories, rhythms and temporalities’ and references their ‘aesthetics of garbage’ (Shohat and Stam 1998, 29). These and my interpretation of an aesthetic accessed through subtle ephemeral and environmental change are part of the analysis in Chapters Ten and Eleven.

Many societies have contributed their collective knowledge toward specific intentions to live within the capacity of their region and environment. Written contributions to cultural and spiritual ideals have been constructed over millennia through diverse creative cultures and belief systems. Seeking key references within some of these cultures, and their creative response to spiritual beliefs, provided comparisons to an Australian context and our endangered environmental health. In Chapter Six I explore some connections between Eastern and Western culture, some experienced first hand, and adopted changes in my work, inspired by other cultures and beliefs (Tucker and Williams 1997).

Contemporary visual artist Destiny Deacon (2006) stated that an artist’s voice could empower culture and referred to the artist as a cultural provider, asserting that a contemporary artist has to know what is going on around the world www.abc.net.au/messagestick/. This reference to broader knowledge contributes to seeing the local in the context of a wider community. Mason (1996) endorsed a socio-political context for research. In this respect visual artists have often developed their practice as research and asked questions through their work and its context in broader fields. Mason’s (1996) description of qualitative research was instrumental in my pursuing this type of research. The broad areas
addressed by Mason in developing questions for a research project, indicated a number of commonalities with the manner in which artists often develop a project and find ways to solve the problems and the inherent challenges within a creative project. Mason (1996) addresses methods to ‘broach the global and local’ and I acknowledge her considered purpose for qualitative research to include

…not only familiar academic arguments about increasing or challenging intellectual and theoretical understanding, plugging gaps in knowledge, extending debate and so on, but also issues about the socio-political context of … research practice (Mason 1996, 18).

Socio-political references contribute to re-positioning Australia’s traditionally European ‘colonial’ and ‘post-colonial’/ ‘post-European culture,’ in the context of growing cultural exchange. Gibson’s (2006) reference to contemporary art group, ‘The Long March,’ identifies such revisiting. Australia’s exchange is not just with the Asia Pacific region and cultures, but globally. This forms part of my research methodology in that a visual artist’s philosophical attitude to change and acknowledgment of the practice of ephemera is grounded in many cultural backgrounds within – and countries beyond – Australia.

My praxis adopts cultural influences seen in major Australian galleries and art collections in Asia and Europe. Medieval and Tang sculptures hold important references for my re-interpretation of ‘precursors’ for art and ephemera as ‘aged icons’ showing signs of erosion. Relevant collections are in Australia, China, Thailand, France and Italy.

Research about Art

My methodology prioritises the academic ~ artist’s struggle for recognition of the visual arts in research. Fitzgerald (2003) stated that

Until such time as government agencies recognise works in the visual or creative arts as “research”, instead of branding it “research equivalence” … universities will not value the research output of many academic staff (Fitzgerald 2003, 10).

Fitzgerald cites Strand from Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs who states these academic staff are employed as ‘artists, rather than as theoreticians or historians’ (Strand 1998 cited in Fitzgerald 2003,
10). Academic Nigel Lendon (2001), contributed to a debate for postgraduate students saying, ‘it remains the case that the artistic outcomes of such processes (what artists do in their professional practice) are never self-evidently or independently able to be judged as “research” ’ (Lendon 2001) [my italics]. Lendon (2001) referred to ‘mute research’ where the area being put forward for research was left at the ‘mute’, ‘blind’ or un-argued stage. Thus for my methodology I needed to avoid the problem of ‘mute’ research and contextualise ‘art and ephemera’ within a research framework, such as this thesis.

Much artistic practice has similarities to data collection. Sullivan (2005) considers that artists’ development of work for exhibitions, installations or performances is practice-based research, and many artists are skilled at reflection through creative visual artwork and transforming this into visual and verbal text as a means of synthesis and communication ¹. My research builds on prior knowledge (Chapter One) and previous research, as well as publications from academic art institutions.

Primary data and detailed references to my visual artwork are theorised and valued as research. The visual arts hold a considerable position to debate, reflect on and create umbrellas of knowledge. Visual arts research areas span many disciplines generating new perspectives about the contemporary world and through generating a thesis for art and ephemera my academic ~ artist’s voice argues for the artwork and potential outcomes from this practice-led research. My research approach acknowledges Lippard’s (2006) view that art can act ‘...as a catalyst for envisioning alternative futures, new ways of seeing land, “nature”, “landscape”, and built and unbuilt environments’ (Lippard 2006, 15).

¹ My search for ephemera, as a library topic or category, exposed a certain class of material between desktop publishing and published bits and pieces such as flyers and invitations to exhibitions.
3.1 Gathering Data

Collection Strategies

Collecting data for this thesis involved mentors, models and precursors for art and ephemera. The mentor is the artist – maker and the models are visual objects including their disintegration. These could provide and act as metaphors for natural environmental and time-based change. Precursors are early, often unintentional, mentors and models, as well as my experiments. They are from art and non-art sources (Elkins 2000)\(^2\). Searches included art museums, gallery collections and libraries, as well as online sources. Primary data includes conversations, memories, interviews, written text and email for ‘regional’ and ‘global’ networking.

Internet data searches provided important access points for collecting information from the region I live in and enhanced the printed publications accessible in libraries. Web-based sources include professional sites, such as major galleries or those with a reputation for presenting information in the field, and archived data that has been submitted to a peer review process. I cite various international exhibitions hosted in Australia and overseas with substantial web sites where professional curators, writers and artists have contributed to the online publication of these events.

The research strength, People Identity Place (PIP), JCU, [http://www.jcu.edu.au/research/ars/pip/JCUDEV_001879.html](http://www.jcu.edu.au/research/ars/pip/JCUDEV_001879.html), facilitated confidence to research local contributions from the arts. PIP validates my topic and assisted in consolidating my research in a field of visual arts, researchers and the researched creative artist, especially within particular locations and cultures included for the study.

\(^2\) Elkins’ (2000) reinterpretation of visual iconography and symbols across disciplines, science and the arts, including cultural heritage, influenced my adoption of cross-cultural relationships.
Data was sought which could illustrate how artists might influence audiences’ attitudes to commodity and acquisition of excess. Some participant data illuminated how attitudes might change with exposure to the ideas of ephemera in art. In a time when finite resources are discussed frequently in news bulletins (ABC Television, 12 December 2007,) it was essential for the design of this research to show the consumer, the benefits of greater recognition of finite resources. Boyle (2006) and Kastner (2006) present cross-disciplinary activity for art and ephemera with ecological / environmental concerns. Carson (1963) contributed to my prior recognition of ecological concerns and Andrews’ (2006) compilation ‘land, art’ provided distinctly new and revised issues opposed to Tiberghien’s (1995) Land Art. My quest to apply art and ephemera required a methodology that sought authorship and voices of diverse artists, arts writers and theorists, as well as my own work.

**Autobiographical Data**

The autobiographic voice retells the artistic processes that drove the textual literacy and discourse. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) and Davies (1996) argued for, and justified, autobiography as a qualitative method and place value on reflexive thinking by and about the researcher. My recognition of the autobiographical voice (Flood 2005) and neo-narrative (Stewart 1995) provided strategies for the write-up of my analysis for art and ephemera, including Stewart’s use of the neo-narrative to re-present participants’ narratives. The artist’s practice and theory, through the autobiographical voice, constitutes data. Stewart (1995) finds, ‘As “tales from the field” they story issues of production, and the effect of the social and political environment on professional practice’ (Stewart 1995, 18). Tales from the field include researcher and participant memories where even casual comments can be significant and share a role with memory. In my study tales relate to ephemeral processes and the clash of archival and ephemeral practice.

Researcher and participant memories are methods to explicate how the ephemeral has played an important role in learning and knowledge development in local and regional histories. In accordance I re-assembled aspects of my
visual art diaries and stories from the regions where I spent time investigating and collecting visual and textual data. The stories range from the personal to collective tales from the field, as a way of connecting time, place and people. Stewart (1995) discussed the ‘development of neo-narratives as different stories which represent views from the fields of the participants’, and that the ‘presence of a dissonance between the theory of the provision of artistic learning and the actuality of artistic learning is a shared perception of … artists and art educators’ (Stewart 1995, 18). In my work, neo-narrative and artists’ statements give a direct link to recording artists’ voices and concepts for the analysis of their work with ephemera. These involve writings from artist ~ researchers who tell their stories about the conceptual development of their work.

Attribution and Ethics

In order to record artists it was necessary to apply for Ethics approval. James Cook University Ethics Approval number H2255 and Forms are in Appendix XXII (b). In relation to seeking responses to my questions, I concur with Nagy Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) ‘…the researcher seeks descriptive data from the research participants’ for a qualitative approach and, that ‘they are the origin of the data and also to a large extent influence where the emphasis will be placed during data collection’ (Nagy Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2006, 5). My data for visual artists was checked for accuracy with participants ~ artists via email. The genre allowed artists to author their own data via email and retain the right to modify their text in line with my ethics approval. The process developed along the lines of conversations similar to that of semi-structured interviews but over a more extended timeframe. This resounded with the post-structuralist intent to empower participants through the research experience.

The research convention to acknowledge or relinquish participants’ names in medicine or social sciences is often very different from the arts. In keeping with a visual arts industry standard, I adopted the Moral Right’s code to publish names with artists’ work and statements, crucial to put right ‘mute’ research (Lendon 2001). Artists are introduced with first and second names as for professional recognition. Published artwork and artists’ statements or didactic
labelling in the industry would be given this consideration (Arts Law
www.artslaw.org.au and the National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA 
www.visualarts.net.au) ³. Attribution is a professional necessity in the art
industry and is a variant from scientists’ research where participants’ privacy
must be safeguarded for ethical reasons. I recognized a number of visual artists
not previously published. This was important in order to give voice to artists
and their work, especially where the ephemeral nature of the work might have
excluded documentation in journals or catalogues. Thus artists’ voices are
included and empowered in their own right.

Textual Devices for the Thesis

The glossary for ‘art and ephemera’ exists as a unified section. While the words
in this glossary have been defined in dictionaries, the glossary allowed post-
structuralist theorising around words such as ephemera and its binary opposite,
archive to be considered. My analysis of, and context for, these words are my
contributions to this field. In recognition of post-structuralist theory my
additions – to discourse, text and language – can be strategies to empower
change. My selective additions through autobiographical and neo-narrative
voices are identified by these strategies.

Plates have been interspersed with text throughout to aid critical analysis and
connections between my visual practice and theorising. Plates, figures or tables
in the thesis explained in the context of the written research, privilege the image
adding visual literacy to the research. Visual arts imagery is positioned as
indispensable where a picture or plate could sometimes equate to a thousand
words. Though my work appears in the thesis, a DVD of my artwork during the
study is in Appendix XXIII.

³ Arts Advocacy Organizations lobbied the Australian government, and this was
legislated for as the Artist’s Right to Attribution as a Moral Right (2000),
http://www.copyright.org.au/information/introduction/moral-rights. These automatic
rights provide for the participant artist to be acknowledged correctly with their name,
title of work and date of work.
Qualitative versus Quantitative

I compare qualitative and quantitative research models as in the adopted Table 3.1 where my adaptation re-presents Nagy Hesse-Biber and Leavy’s (2006, 10). My voice is included in the Qualitative Model column in square brackets […] and in blue. Though Nagy Hesse-Biber and Leavy contribute this information for social science models they assist my planning and revision of data.

Table 3.1 Research Models in Table Format adapted from Nagy Hesse-Biber and Leavy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualitative Model</th>
<th>Quantitative Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Topical Area</strong> [Art and ephemera, anti-archive + archive, waste, change and climate, artists]</td>
<td><strong>1. Formulate a Research Question</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Analyse Subset of Data</strong> [Conceptual development of ephemera + art, artists’ metaphors for environment + recognition of change, issues of waste + anti-commodity]</td>
<td><strong>2. Develop a Hypothesis</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Generate Codes (Literal to Abstract)</strong> [Ways to address the above, Post-structuralist lens, art classifications, ephemera + digital, democratic voices. Identifying Precursors, Models and Mentors.]</td>
<td><strong>3. Define Variables</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Re-analyse Data; Analyse Additional Data</strong> [Re-classification, new areas of practice, new attitudes and new media, Glossary. Blurring boundaries or cultural difference.]</td>
<td><strong>4. Construct measurement Instrument</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Memo Notes</strong> [Primary data, visual diary, computer diary, journal entries, drawings, art making, digital images, textual devices, memories, autobiography]</td>
<td><strong>5. Coding</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. Analyse Additional Data</strong> [Explore further relationship between practice and theory in art and change, new artists, exhibitions and catalogue statements, neo-narratives and new memories. Illuminate discourses in visual arts and related areas.]</td>
<td><strong>6. Sampling (Random Sampling)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7. Refine Codes; Generate Meta-Codes</strong> [Refined areas of practice, key mentors for recent and emerging art and ephemera. Identify new responses to change process.]</td>
<td><strong>7. Reliability and Validity Checks</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8. Analyse Additional Data</strong> [Responses from the public and creative industry to art and ephemera, audience participation and papers presented.]</td>
<td><strong>8. Statistical Check (if necessary)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10. Representation</strong> [Presentation / installation of visual art. Document data with image + textual devices, as well as visual documentation added to thesis.]</td>
<td><strong>10. Represent Results (typically on charts or graphs)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nagy Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) and Mason (1996) posed a number of questions that assisted in formulating my own questions and in selecting methodology. I considered the influence ‘ephemera and art’ might have on attitudes to commodity abuse and the conceptual reasons why some artists produced ephemeral art rather than archival work.

Bamford’s (1999) analysis of art and practice assists in recognising depth of inquiry inherent in much artwork, and was useful when looking at art and ephemera, as a ‘complicated endeavour’. Bamford sees that

…the role of the researcher in art is filled with contradictions, conflicts and tensions. Art is about feeling, intuition and thought. The function of art is to capture the essence of human experience in a form that makes the indeterminate ‘known’ at a level that combines intuitive vision with a more cultivated approach to aesthetic comprehension (Bamford 1999, 26).

Similarly I recognise that the visual artist can simultaneously engage in philosophical enquiry and theoretical and conceptual redefining of art. Thompson (2006) also advocates arts practice as research as it ‘increases the complexity and the wonder of things,’ and that this is a preferred option than to be ‘…tidying the scruffy fragments of experience into neatly labelled compartments and categories’ (Thompson 2006, 3). These references were vital for my study and encouraged me to write as potential exemplar for other artists.

Sullivan (2005) values visual artists’ work, beyond making, for in-depth critical reflection and how artists connect theorising and philosophising through practice-led research. Sullivan is an art educator and argues for art practice as research and for this study the ‘researcher as artist’ is potentially a blurred artist ~ educator binary. Similarly Thompson finds Sullivan’s text is distinctive in its ‘highly explicit formulation of connections between artistic practice and research, and … recognition of the uniqueness of the situation of the researcher as artist’ (Thompson 2006, 2). In this way critical engagement with theory and art practice enriches my interpretation of art and ephemera.
Dullness and Richness

Much of the data for this research comes from an appreciation of the work that artists have produced with little demand on the natural environment. Artists’ contributions to ecology and art can be located in a reciprocal process. In secondary data collections, conceptual statements recorded in catalogues or acquired through published interviews with artists were paramount for providing insight into the production of art that contributes to the concepts of return. Selected artists’ abilities to work with humble and potentially dull materials in order to produce a transformative experience led to their inclusion in the thesis. Their action parallels a philosophical goal similar to the alchemist’s search for the metaphysical philosopher’s stone, transforming the dull earth to metaphysical gold, and philosophically from an ignorant state to enlightenment. My study also melds some common spiritual beliefs of East and West through shared iconography and common environmental concerns. This cultural blurring is discussed in Chapter Six.

Through post-structuralist theorizing my art practice collapses an aesthetic ~ (anti-) aesthetic binary by using material such as waste, humus and detritus. These materials demonstrate potential to associate richness with ephemeral practice and promote the acceptance of degeneration and renewal. In my work, the mundane nature of many materials used in producing the artwork assists in promoting ephemera as a metaphor for change. Thompson’s (2006) identification of the strategies used by many artists to work with basic materials or earth resonates with my approach to use rotting matter in ephemeral works. Thompson recognizes that in the

…transformative potential in the messiness and complexity of works of art, we must think differently about the process of reading and interpreting research and the process of conducting research. Both artist / researcher and audience / reader are confronted with challenges that differ radically from the dispassionate encounters we have come to recognize as research (Thompson 2006, 4).

My work claims this encounter and places visual art on sites where the material alters as a performative object. Ice sculptures melt quickly and the little impossible bucket (Plate 1.8) made from humus or tree litter dropped pieces of itself in a white cube * gallery. Audience’s responses to these activities place my
work in the context of Thompson’s ‘transformative potential.’ Thus ‘when art practice becomes research, … ambiguities and marginalities are preserved and honored’ (Thompson 2006, 4). So with the ephemeral or performative object I chose to make disintegration and regeneration the subject of my research. My primary data provides processes and alternatives to traditional archived visual art.

3.2 Primary Data

Key Primary and Autobiographical Data

My conceptual planning and development of projects with directors, curators, other artists, colleagues and people in the community incorporated specific primary data. This data includes artists as participants, and my work, in the following text box. Interstate and overseas travel to see contemporary practice and meet artists enabled a two-way and web-like process of searching, seeing, listening, reflecting and making. These processes assisted questioning and intersecting the creative production of artwork.

| Dialogue with mentors and art colleagues, art industry personnel | Visual diaries, sketches and notes |
| Art making strategies | Research journal entries |
| Ephemeral objects | Digital files |
| Exhibitions ~ Installations | Digital photography as record |
| Catalogue notes, statements and documentation | Digital photography as art image |

Email and letters followed verbal communication with a number of artists and writers, a dialogue providing contributions for my study and analysis. Mail enabled visual imagery, for instance a watercolour to be posted, thus artists ~ participants communicated visually with original drawings and hand written
documents, as well as with digitised texts. Participants interested in discussing the topic included artists and writers.

Visual art images are crucial to meaning where drawings and digital images are juxtaposed with literary texts to create meaning about art and ephemera. Found objects, fragile forms and art making for installations became rich data. My pursuit of eroded objects was often in the studio garden, a place where I have unearthed old metal tools, left behind by previous occupants of the place.

Plate 3.1 Lord 2007 Old metal rods dug up in studio garden – graphite on paper

These objects became tangible evidence of my interest in the disintegrating object. Sullivan (2005) argued that

…the experience of the artist is the core element in the creation of new knowledge and the potential for new understanding is further enhanced through research projects that may take varied forms such as exhibitions, performances, and publications (Sullivan 2005, 191).

These rusty implements formed part of my repertoire for image making and were later presented as fragile icons for installation. The objects in states of corrosion added to my findings, through parallel ideas about faded photographs on aged paper, where the imperfections of the photographic paper and chemicals contributed to my conceptual development for art and ephemera.
Old photographs from 1920s when initially processed were only duplicated in two or three copies and many negatives were lost or thrown away. Scarcity enhances their appeal. Alternatively, processing digital imagery for my installations required considerations for concepts involving scale and related cost through impact on resources. I produced single digital images as prints and kept digital files for reference rather than expensive and resource-hungry editioned prints on paper. I prioritised keeping images and icons of disintegration in a digital file format. These decisions mirror my commitment to make the process, the artwork.

Plate 3.2 Flood over a work yard behind Kilterry house N W Queensland – [photograph 1930s Bert Seymour]

I acknowledge that digital technology has gained a privileged position as an advanced tool for reproductive techniques of visual and textual documentation. Similarly the advantage digital has in accessing and retaining information is a device that contributes to my visual artist’s data collection. In my documentation of ephemeral art, this emerged as a potent tool to empower ephemeral creative work and enable new metaphorical ways to consider issues of impermanence. Thus looking at immateriality as a set of cognitive or digital relationships has a conceptual relationship to the work I investigate. Immaterial

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4 Editioned prints in visual arts are identical hand produced, numbered prints on paper signed by the artist and available for purchase, collection and archive.
as digital provide the potential to build image and idea on an ecological premise and is taken up in Chapter Ten.

Digitized Objects and Memory Work

In my work where I reference aged photographs the slippage between memory and amnesia emphasized the dichotomy of archive and potential loss of image. This led to uncovering slightly altered versions of historical records through acts of disintegration and ephemera. In developing these ideas about art and ephemera, I concur with Thompson (2006) and Sullivan (2005) that artists are involved daily in research practice and:

… that works of art are essentially theoretical statements, interpretations of lived experience, positions on issues of great human significance, on par with philosophical tracts, or with research studies as they are more traditionally conceived (Thompson 2006, 3).

I collected iron tools dug up in the studio garden and these contributed to reflections, where rusted objects and aged icons feed ideas for metaphors in nature and culture. Memory plays a vital role to reconstruct events through recall and as a method to engage with new practice in art and ephemera. I adopted memory as an important aspect of art and ephemera.

The digital image provides new opportunities for the analysis and treatment of art and precious objects. Old images were selected for the process of digital documentation and creation of new imagery. New digital images also show stages in time, important for the ephemeral work, but also how thought processes and metaphors could be highlighted in the work. These links to memory as well as digital record and memory are relevant for art and ephemera.

Senses, (sight, hearing, touch, odour, taste) can act at the scene of the performative object as triggers for memory. The construction of memory through senses other than sight contradicts art historical precedents whereby visual aesthetics are archived. The (anti-) aesthetic as opposed to the aesthetic is problematic for many art contexts. The concept that subtle ephemeral processes can stimulate senses other than sight is developed in this thesis and assists in a critique of the idea that all things good are sanitised. Hawkins (2006) and
Simons (2004) contributed material about waste important for the study and further contextualisation of social issues that can be addressed by artists. Hawkins’ (2006) ‘ethics of waste’ and Shohat and Stam’s (1998) ‘aesthetic of garbage’ are cases in point for this investigation: they draw parallels with critical theory and visual culture and contribute to these common issues.

Place

Gibson’s writing since 1992, as visual artist and author, provided insight into ‘posing orientating questions’ (2005) and assisted my claim for local narrative as an important contribution to knowledge construction. I have applied post-structuralist theory to acknowledge and problematize dichotomies of personal ~ local, and global ~ communal, in order to take my thesis through and beyond a familiar zone or place. Specific places and environmental influences have gradually contributed over a number of years to my awareness of environmental issues facing rural populations.

Human beings can simultaneously contribute to the devastation of the natural world and the planet’s resources, and be part of the process of sustainability (ABC Television, 2007). Critically, Swearer (1997) established that

Only in recent years has it been commonly understood that the destruction of the Brazilian rainforest or the ocean dumping of toxic waste affects the entire world eco-system; or in more immediate or personal terms, that whether I personally conserve water, electricity, gasoline, and so on affects not only my utility bills but the health of the entire cosmos (Swearer 1997, 28).

In order to do something about environmental impact, many of my art pieces are intentionally digital imagery for presentation on monitors, projection and the Internet rather than as products. It is important that these are produced ~ stored digitally rather than on paper or other substrates that add to strain on natural resources such as the natural environment and specifically the habitat of trees. The web site www.annelord.com contains many of my reproducible images.
Exhibitions ~ installations and Publications

My studio practices which culminated in exhibitions ~ installations, during the time of my candidacy, are listed in Table 3.2 and the three most important are shown in bold.

Table 3.2 Studio Practices Culminating in Exhibitions / Installations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exhibition / Key Artworks</th>
<th>Venue/Location/Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban Topographies / urban flags</td>
<td>Umbrella/Townsville 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange / survivor trees</td>
<td>Pickled Art Centre/ Beijing 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strand Ephemera / Contemplating the future</td>
<td>The Strand tidal area 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence/ eroding Buddha series</td>
<td>Umbrella/Townsville 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corresponding Latitudes / Ephemeral Beings</td>
<td>KickArts/Cairns 2004-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habitus Habitat/ impossible bucket</td>
<td>Perc Tucker Regional Gallery / Tsv 2005. Touring NSW &amp; Qld 2008-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watersheds and Basins/ impossible bucket, peg for non-site, ephemeral milestone</td>
<td>MDP Palimpsest / Mildura, 2006 and Flinders Gallery / Townsville 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools of Change/ bottomless billy, axe-head with no back, 1890s portrait</td>
<td>Umbrella Studio Contemporary Arts / Townsville 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strand Ephemera /</td>
<td>The Strand Townsville 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Site Out /</td>
<td>Orange Botanical Gardens 2007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Catalogues are included in Appendix IX, XVII and XVIII, where publications make explicit, praxis about art and ephemera. The exhibitions produced in relation to this thesis added complexity and focus to the topic of investigation and invite further dialogue. *Tools of Change* (Lord 2007) incorporated a display case of rusty or deteriorating objects that assisted my investigation of visual forms through erosion and change. These objects attracted comments from people about their collections of old implements and memories of the past. Though reflection and discussion they became more meaningful.
Site, Art and Ephemera

Site events for ephemeral and semi-permanent art on The Strand in Townsville and In Site Out (2007) Orange NSW have been focal points for this study. In Townsville local, interstate and international artists presented their ephemeral work on site. The inclusion of my work in 2001, 2003 and 2007 has been an important opportunity to test ideas and gauge audience reaction to my work and are discussed in Chapter Eight. These opportunities for installation work contributed significantly to the development of concepts throughout this study. Thus my own work was central to the data collection process and to the autobiographic mode (Davies 1996, Stewart 1995). The development of my work is interspersed throughout the thesis and key projects are discussed in Chapters Eight, Nine and Eleven.

In the development of my three main exhibitions ~ installations, Sullivan’s (2005) approach to visual arts research complements part of my process where it is

...crucial to be aware of the value and necessity of using strategies embedded in the everyday strategies of artists . . . Whether working in the studio, in the museum, in the classroom, or on the Internet, particular approaches prevail, such as visualizing, sensing, intuiting, focusing, reasoning, questioning, grounding, comparing, and interpreting. These are the kind of capacities that characterize the ways artists work and are also attributes needed for conducting effective research in the field (Sullivan 2005, 192) [researcher’s bold].

I acknowledge these capacities to align my study with practice-led research and multi-disciplinary influences. Comparative developments of my works and artists’ practice are discussed in the themed analysis. Carter and Geczy (2006) and Hawkins and Muecke (2003) assisted my recognition of inter-disciplinary activity in visuals arts, culture and society.

Bamford (1999), Carter (2004) and Sullivan (2005) referred to a nexus of art practice and theory that mirrors the realm of artists’ primary knowledge. Their publications facilitate the development of my research methodology and adoption of imagery related to the environment. These are not directly iconic of landscape, and led to my interest and adoption of the ‘performative object.’ My disintegrating objects were also encouraged to perform in a location where they
demonstrated a sustained capacity to host creatures such as termites and this practice stands the art-preservation tradition on its head. My archiving artist’s interest in preservation of the art product or form was replaced by the ability of the ‘performative object’ to create and disintegrate (recycle) at the same time. My intention to facilitate an artwork’s return to the environment assists the continuing process of decay and regeneration, thus my concern for sustainability is central to my methodology.

Visual Diaries and Researcher’s Practices of Ephemera

Primary data for my visual arts research practice included disintegrating objects and these were studied, digitised, and re-created as ephemeral art. Memories develop with drawings in my practice of keeping Visual Diaries. My drawings and digital images kept reinvigorating ideas about how the image can be crucial to the development of a theory and a practice involving ephemera. These images contributed to developing ideas about materials, transformation and processes of decay for publication.

My visual data was largely comprised of naturally occurring materials such as earth, cellulose, fiber, clay and humus or tree rot. One set of work was derived from badly rusted metal tools and these formed the basis of a message about ephemera, and my desire to empower the mundane in ephemera over implied time. These objects, such as a corroded piece of metal impressed with dirt, a rusted and partially disintegrated soft-drink tin, or decaying flora and fauna half-covered in earth, contain references and proximity to the earth. My collection of artifacts for my practice contributed to forming theories about ephemera and art.

Eroded Materials as Tools for Art

During this study awareness of arresting imagery during the processes of ephemera and art making contributed to the development of new work. Digital capture to arrest imagery and process was both an aid to memory and publishing work online. My selection of objects and timing of image-capture identified an
iconography of degradation. Problems of archive and art, when photography is not intended to be the art, became another area for my theorising. Reference tools, objects showing age, rust and imperfections shown in Table 3.3 provided evidence of change over time.

Table 3.3 Tools, Objects and Materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tools / Objects</th>
<th>Material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spike</td>
<td>Steel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hammerhead</td>
<td>Metal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Axe heads</td>
<td>Metal and Stone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand-saws</td>
<td>Metal and Wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shifting spanners and others</td>
<td>Metal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keys</td>
<td>Brass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hose connector</td>
<td>Metal and Plastic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Padlock</td>
<td>Metal/Brass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horseshoe</td>
<td>Metal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My repositioning of old worn-out tools of change led to empowering them as art and ephemera, eventually relating them to change processes in the natural environment. Initially these worn objects were selected because of the evidence of slow change and the ephemeral state of the object. Some had been neglected, and others lost, such as old metal tools in my studio-garden. The studio garden seems to have been a site for a foundry in Townsville prior to development and continues to provide exciting and thought provoking ‘artefacts’.

Plate 3.3 Lord (2006) Metal axe-head, rusted and split along the back that holds a handle [photography by the researcher ~ artist of personal work is not acknowledged further in the Plate information, as here]
The development of concepts and theorising about the lesser importance of an artefact and more interest in the changing object enabled new practice, such as creating an impossible bucket from tree rot and / or humus.

Plate 3.4 Lord (2006) the *impossible bucket* and humus materials

Performative objects referenced in the thesis were photographed in various stages of their ephemeral lives and are listed in Table 3.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title / Year</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Impossible Bucket</em> 2005-2008</td>
<td>Leaf Humus</td>
<td>decomposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ephemeral Milestone</em> 2005-</td>
<td>Humus</td>
<td>decomposing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Peg for non-site</em> 2005</td>
<td>Eroded log</td>
<td>decomposing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Buddha with wings</em> 2007</td>
<td>Ice</td>
<td>melted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Praying kangaroo</em> 2007</td>
<td>Ice</td>
<td>melted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Winged gecko</em> 2007</td>
<td>Ice</td>
<td>melted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Toward Installation and Site

My ice sculptures for Strand Ephemera in September 2007 and *In Site Out* in November 2007 expanded the presentation of work and led to making important links with community (Chapter Nine). My work for installation and on-site grew from my exhibition practice previously reliant on archival work and this progression is tracked in the thesis. Key works in alternative or off-site venues from 1996 to the present enter the study to show my progression from archive to
ephemera, and contribution to practice of anti-archive and anti-commodity. From 2005 I advance the disintegrating object as art and ephemera in my work.

My published catalogues became important aspects of my visual artist’s collection of data, and as primary data include visual documentation and references to earlier notes in visual diaries or sketchbooks. They form my personal and professional data as a visual artist. My artist’s statements were initially tools for disseminating ideas and knowledge about the region and to provide audiences with information about how art activity also strives to develop further understanding of our place and time. These catalogues act as textual and visual data to expand on praxis for analysis and contribute to chronological and formal organization and context for stages of the research project, for instance, the performative object that has already disappeared.

Paper and or Digital

My decisions to reduce paper consumption and make references to digital files interrupt my earlier art practice of multiple prints: a professional standard where archival or editioned digital prints are necessary. Since commencing this study, I have developed a process of printing on demand. In 2008 book publishers mentioned similar printing on demand (ABC RN Book Show, 12 March 2008). My current decision was influenced by my knowledge of traditional fifteenth and sixteenth century printmakers, Albrecht Dürer and Piranesi, who printed images on demand rather than completing a print edition. In accordance, my visual records are organised in digital folders and file names, and these files have been maintained since 1988.

3.3 Secondary Data

My premise for selection of artists and writers is that their interests in publication and research encompass ephemera as a time-based process in art. The Criteria Checklist indicates that specific art and ephemera could be a concept in art or used as a theoretical construct in writing about art.
Criteria Checklist and Mentors

In selecting participants and/or relevant artists (Mentors) and authors I required that they work with at least two of the following areas:

- ephemera as a concept in art, preferably as a metaphor for change aspects of the natural environment
- a concern for humanity, ecology and environment and an awareness of how these are linked
- an aesthetics of change [or the ephemeral object]
- ephemeral material, with a change process in a short space of time, such as during an exhibition
- low consumption of material or environmental footprint to showcase art
- meaningful ways to produce art and showcase art beyond the gallery
- low cost and sustainable methods to record data such as digital media

The selection criteria were applied to artists, academics or curators as participants who provided their own, or other artists’ ideas about ephemera, methods in artwork, and whether the process of change was related to their concern for environmental factors. Contributions from written publications were selected from professional arts writers and curators of contemporary art acknowledged as experts in their field. Artists’ installation and exhibition publications were selected from prominent, professionally run galleries or those supported by a professional organization and / or university. Participants’ responses and knowledge related to the point made by Nagy Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006), that

…qualitative research produces both exploratory and highly descriptive knowledge while de-emphasising the solely causal models and explanations that have historically dominated the research process (Nagy Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2006, 5).

The ephemeron is not just the performative object for these participants, it may be a relational process exemplified by visual artists, who investigate profound social issues. Gibson (2008) investigates Australian culture through conversations; Haacke (1993) investigates institutional morality; Beuys (1983) social and environmental change; and Tiravanija (2005) an art for ecology and sustainable energy. A method I adopted was to consider the manner in which
artists have responded to a creative challenge, through art and ephemera, sometimes involving investigation of sinister problems as in Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla’s *Land Mark (Footprints)* (2001 - 04), (Chapter Ten). My study led to illuminating a previously less known position or practice as well as identification of specific artists as mentors. These artists assisted my positioning of art and ephemera as a potent metaphor for environmental change and anti-commodity.

Key artists from the literature are discussed in Chapter Seven, Mentors. Ambiguities and marginalities supported my strategy to highlight artists and their specific work in ephemera such as Wolfgang Laib’s *Milkstone* (2005), Gustav Metzger’s *Aequivalenz- Shattered Stones (Aequivalenz- Zerschmetterte Steine)* (2007), Rirkrit Tiravanija’s *Untitled* (2005) and collaborative project with Kamin Lertchaiprasert *the land* (1998 - ongoing), and Sheela Gowda’s *Collateral* (2007). In all phases of this research from data collection to analysis, I have valued art practice as integral to the study. My understanding of art and ephemera led my (2005) adoption of this process to address attitudinal change in art audiences.

Participating artists’ concepts and work, mutual collections of art and ephemera as material, and the processing of information about these contributed insights for my themed analysis. Information and knowledge from theory and practice-based research have emerged from the participating artists.

Face to face communication with some participant artists included:
Wolfgang Laib (2005) – Swabia
Ross Gibson (2008) – Sydney
Madonna Staunton (2005) – Brisbane
Eugene Carchesio (2005) – Brisbane
Barbara Pierce (2005) – Townsville
Linda Ashton – Townsville
Marion Gaemers – Townsville
Troy Whelan – Warrgamaygan Country, Wallaman Falls
Many more artists have contributed information and vignettes are used throughout the thesis. Meeting with artists and viewing their work first-hand meant it was sometimes possible for me to photograph the work. Accessing published reproductions relied on my academic and research privileges to reproduce artwork for study. Luke Jaaniste brought my attention to subtle interventions in his 2005 installation, QUT Brisbane, and my photographs of these are significant for the study. Similarly, Tim Silver’s 2005 work made of water-soluble crayon and photographic records demonstrates the ephemeral in his work.

My secondary data includes artists’ work and writing as well as texts by arts writers and art theorists including their references to literature on art and ephemera. Curators and artists’ writings have assisted in adding depth and authority to my thesis. Many administrators in art organizations made catalogues accessible during organized appointments. Suggestions from the professional art community, directors, artists and curators in the contemporary visual arts resulted in accessing key artworks and publications relevant to ephemera in art.

Critical essays were crucial to link artists’ past practice to contemporary art practice involving ephemera. This also led to linking contemporary visual arts practice with contemporary issues of the natural environment. My theorising considered the nature of knowledge in visual art, and its relationship to age-old religions, philosophies and diverse concepts about the potential for renewal through art and ephemera.

Aged Icons to Multi-Media

In China, 2003, I extended my search for art and ephemera. Buddhist and other cultural icons in cities and remote rural locations contributed greatly to my awareness of erosion in icons and their relevance to land and place and were significant in developing work for Absence (Lord 2004). Chinese cities including Beijing, Shanghai, Linfen, Datong and Pingyao provided important experiential viewing of extremes in aged and new work. These ranged from
deteriorating, preserved icons to digital, high definition work. The latter included large digital projections and installations in the Shanghai University International Inaugural Digital Seminar (2003) and Shanghai Digital Exhibition (2003) Mogunshun Lu, Shanghai.

Prior knowledge of Thai Buddha and European medieval sculptures as icons was crucial for this study. In 2007 I reviewed aged, eroded and preserved cultural icons in China and Europe. I collated imagery for signs of age in surviving sculptures from two key areas, 600 AD Buddhist bodhisattvas and 1300 AD medieval saints. Diverse and disparate examples extended my viewing of these cultural icons in Australian institutions where medieval and Tang sculptures are housed in NGVI, AGNSW and NGA. Excavated sites in Paris, under the Louvre, the Cluny Museum and the parvis of Notre Dame presented medieval work in situ.

I found significant data in 2007 exhibitions of art and ephemera at the Venice Biennale, Kassel Documenta and Muenster Sculpture Project. My photographic records have assisted visual revisiting of these aged icons and reinterpretation as icons of change in digital media. Blurring of some traditional boundaries was visible in some artworks in these locations and impacted on my new work. This blurring, of iconic signs in cultural relics, is discussed in Chapter Six.

Mentors, Models and Maquettes

In this thesis I intentionally promote visual arts-based research as knowledge construction. Sullivan (2005) cited architect ‘Gehry’s planning process’, displayed in the Guggenheim Museum in 2004 ‘in the form of sketches and models…[that] undergo progressive stages of refinement as they approach the solid assurance of a “master model” ’ (Sullivan 2005, 207). Thus models and maquettes as stages in the visual planning process enable new projects in visual arts praxis and research. In my studio and studio-garden, the found object, worn tool, even tree rot served the same purpose.
I chose to thread the literature review throughout the thesis. Creating pathways to link mentors from the literature with my new work assisted in generating the gradual development of my argument with key works, both visual and theoretical. This strategy led to research findings that could potentially impact on policy-making in art contexts and in favour of the environment. These findings summarised in the final chapter suggest future recommendations and directions for research and praxis through ‘art and ephemera’.

Access to many galleries and installations, and collection of catalogues with curators’ essays and artists’ statements and quotes, facilitated my study. ‘Research Galleries’ and ‘Research Libraries’ accessed are in Appendix XXII. My visits to these institutions and collections enabled my consideration of the thought processes behind other artists’ work with ephemera over the last five to six decades, as they demonstrated some empowering of ephemeral artwork. In making the concept of art and ephemera explicit, I worked towards contributing new knowledge about ways to produce and perceive art with outcomes for new and ecologically considerate practice.

Contemporary visual art installations that made use of ephemera and art concepts were seen in a variety of art venues and sites. In addition to contemporary visual arts referencing age, the collections of art objects from antiquity to medieval cultures display many important features and evoke thought about change over millennia.

Valuable references to old and worn objects, and concepts about iconic artefacts important for their age assisted my investigation of the context for some of these objects and images. They contribute to a balance: appreciating the binary in ephemera; art admired as a fleeting process, and art as an age-old process and visual experience, available from ‘long deep time’ (Gibson 2007 in discussion). The diverse range of art and methods facilitated my reduction of the field to include art and ephemera and to eliminate work not relevant to my focal area of anti-commodity and concern for the natural environment.
Academics ~ Artists

The input gained by discussion with artists ~ academics was important for formulating ideas as I was seeking and reading about other visual artists’ PhD work. These people are acknowledged in Appendix XXII. Dialogue with artists ~ academics furthered my knowledge of their capacity to present papers from their area of practical expertise, and facilitated my delivery of two academic papers in 2006 and 2007.

The study revealed how artists are often quoted as less significant voices when reference is made to their art ~ research. Artists’ statements, published in catalogues for their exhibitions, are often not valued as important citations of the artists’ first hand knowledge, research and vision in relation to the production and creative development of their work. My methodology includes and values statements by artists as primary data and essential knowledge sources. Primary data, quotes from artists and interviews about their work are positioned equally with the voice of the published author. My neo-narrative method attempts to empower artists’ voices by operating from a position of empathy and resonance as a peer artist.

This secondary data based on artists’ creative and conceptual development for exhibitions and installations, from catalogues and artists’ statements, was important to identify aspects of their artwork. These became crucial for my research to capture the development of my investigations, into art and ephemera as a process for change, and into how other visual artists’ concepts applied to art and ephemera.

People from the commercial gallery scene, though not directly involved with ephemeral art, especially as anti-commodity, contributed to my research topic. Sydney based art professionals include, for instance, Conny Dietzschold, Director multiplebox@conny-dietzschold.de and many suggested a number of artists involved in the critique of consumer-oriented art.
Mentors and Eco-systems ~ Environments

Within the topic of art and ephemera I explored possible relationships between the artist as aesthetic provider and the artist as activist or concerned environmentalist. Neither was sufficient in itself, but together aesthete and activist could be relevant to Bourriaud’s (2002) ‘relational aesthetics.’ Bourriaud’s (2002) and Lippard’s (2006, 1997, 1983, 1973) visual arts writing and notions of ephemera in art provided key data.

In this methodological focus I also sought artists who had the potential to work across disciplines. Pre-1990s artists and artwork, selected as mentors and models respectively, include Laderman Ukeles’ *Maintenance Art* (1969); Morris’ *Reclamation* ¨ Pit King’s County (1979); Beuys’ *Thousand Oaks* (1982) and Haacke’s *Grass Pile* (1979) for investigation of art and ephemera as precursors to the contemporary situation.

Selected mentors and models post-1990s include Ivekovic’s *Poppy Field* (2007), Gowda’s *Collateral* (2007), Tiravanija’s *the land* (2006 ongoing), Metzger’s *Aequivalenz- Shattered Stones* (*Aequivalenz- Zerschmetterte Steine* (2007), Laib’s *Pollen* (2005) and Hans Haacke’s *Germania* (1993). They provided rich mentoring for the production of impermanent art in different guises. The processes employed by a number of these artists contributed to my realisation that important messages can be inherent in the collapse of an otherwise archived object.

Artists have responded to the interplay of change in the natural environment and the ecological shifts occurring in the first decade of the twenty-first century with impassioned calls and action to relieve dire situations. Artists keen to work in a discipline outside their art-knowledge have experience and professional training in other areas, for instance, Laib is a Buddhist and medical practitioner, and Tiravanija’s project *the land* engages people skilled in eco-system management.

Combined methods and theories led to my methodology where art and ephemera as ‘performative object’ (Butler 2005) provided the potential for
cross-disciplinary investigation, particularly with regard to the process being a metaphor for change in contemporary, local and global issues about the environment. Though many artists contribute in some way to caring about environment and place, the potential to contribute through their art as action can have more impact through concepts identified in a research topic, such as art and ephemera. My study explores this potential.

Grierson’s (2003) field of research is ‘the arts in education, or particularly visual arts, otherwise known as fine arts or art,’ and she emphatically supports interdisciplinary modes of enquiry. This applies to educational discourse ‘wherein the disciplines are undergoing transformations as interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary modes of enquiry [that can] reshape the borders of institutional practice’ (Grierson 2003, 2). This is concomitant with my inclusion of themes beyond traditional practice. In accordance with Grierson (2003), and as an artist involved in tertiary arts education, I adopted modes of enquiry across disciplines to contribute to my enquiry for art and ephemera. Similarly Lippard (2006) advocates the artist’s ability to search beyond discipline boundaries and I applied this option to my study. My subsequent analysis includes immaterial and de-material as acknowledged strengths for seeking alternative solutions to creative and ecological challenges. Thus considerations of ethics relating to finite resources as art-making commodities and the ‘culture of waste’ are related as themes. In a review of visual arts education, Davis (2008) states ‘the opportunities for visual education are probably greater than they have ever been before’ (Davis 2008, 85), and includes ‘ways of thinking, skills and imaginative capacities generated by visual education’ (85) as potential contribution to cultural capital. Though cultural capital may not engender care for environment I refer to new ways of looking at art and production in relation to place as vital for contemporary art and education.

My working methods to investigate earlier artworks as models assisted in clarifying my themes. Key artists often realised the connections between ephemera, art, ecology and the natural environment. Themes for analysis emerged from the research quest to empower ephemeral artworks as potential metaphors for environmental issues. My studio working method investigated
processes of natural change in the art ‘object’ and how these could be linked to environmental issues.

My selection and investigation of writings, including artists’ manifestoes, theoretical influences and cultural beliefs sought insights into change and transformation across diverse cultures and locations. Intentional blurring of boundaries, evidenced in the exploration of the data, occurs in the analysis chapters.

I have provided the context for, and outlined strategies and methods adopted in order to focus on, yet add diversity to, concepts about art and ephemera. The potential emerged through my ‘artist ~ researcher’ positioning, in theorising art and ephemera, for my concept of change to intersect with other artists’ views. Visual artists and arts writers chosen for their concern for environment and using concepts about change through a focus on transformation and / or disintegration are linked to issues of environmental concern and through that to compassion. I did not intend to focus on humanitarian issues as such, however, the mutual health of humanity and the environment was relevant to, and became evident in, many artists’ works.

The potential for productive pedagogical strategies around art and ephemera is outlined in the conclusion of the thesis. Grierson refers to deconstruction as a methodology and cites Booker’s (1999) explanation, that it is a ‘critical attitude or way of reading’ (Booker’s 1999, 63 cited in Grierson 2003, 4). Grierson also refers to Derrida (1978) and his statement:

… it is a question of explicitly and systematically posing the problem of a discourse which borrows from a heritage the resources necessary for the deconstruction of that heritage itself… (Derrida 1978, 282).

For Grierson, heritage in the arts is

… steeped in the metaphysical ground of liberal, humanist aesthetics, and rationalist discourses, through which the humanist academies of fine arts … have been founded (Grierson 2003, 4).

Grierson (2003), Pollock (2003) and Buskirk (2005) deconstruct and critique this heritage and assist my choice of methods to inform critical enquiry and
question an art canon. My appreciation of ephemera from disintegrating objects, crumbling statues and eroding walls provides a space for art and ephemera to be *agentic* and *re-positioned*, in relation to *dominant* archived art. These processes are expanded on in the next chapter, the glossary and following analysis chapters.
Chapter Four

4.0 Glossary: Art and Ephemera

Introduction

In this chapter I demonstrate that language is not transparent and reflects embedded power structures, for example, the word ‘gallery’ belongs to a discourse in historic social practices. The significance of any word, such as ‘gallery’, changes dramatically in the proximity of ephemeral practice where the accepted notion of ‘gallery’ is challenged as a viable venue for some art practice and theory. This glossary is designed to assist in making some language transparent with reference to challenging a canon through agentic positioning of art and ephemera. My annotation rather than any prescriptive text enables my voice to emerge to make explicit the nature of ‘art and ephemera’. The glossary is not intended as an exhaustive list and was guided by glossaries from the literature.

The Glossary in Art

*Sculpture Projects Muenster 07* catalogue includes significant terminology through the glossary with 131 contributions by 74 authors (pp. 323-475). This information on current terminology as well as significant ideas for contemporary art supports the construction of my glossary. Halert’s (2007) contribution ‘Culture as Event’ states, ‘That culture is to be produced as an experience is one of the unspoken maxims of the structural transformation from the industrial to the post-industrial society’ (Halert, 2007, 349).

Post-industrial is cross-referenced in ‘land, art’ and Ebeling’s contribution, ‘Site [could refer to Sitelessness / Un-Site / Non-site / Genius Loci]’ (2007,
448-9) is significant for my study and includes the distinction between Smithson’s Non-site and Augé’s theory of non-place, ‘non-lieu, which sooner refers to airports and escalators’ (Ebeling 2007, 449). Montman references Bourriaud’s Relational Aesthetics in this glossary (Montman 2007, 433-4) and Kwon’s entry discusses ‘Public Sphere’ (Kwon 2007, 432-3). These provide models for my study.

Bourriaud (2002) devised his own strategic and critical glossary, and shapes my use of the glossary as a strategy to challenge power relationships in visual arts. This glossary is agentic in affirming that my topic is not just about art and ephemera: it addresses the art industry’s accepted notions of place and naming and the manner in which we perceive and address commodities. It contributes to discourse about art in relation to ephemera, environment, regionalism and place.

Words are part of the story of power struggles, of discursive binaries and how binaries can be challenged, even collapsed. ‘Ephemeral art’ is often relegated to the post-structuralist descendant position, as opposed to being in the traditionally powerful ascendent position for ‘archived art’. Archived objects are in a position of power over the other descendent ephemeral, humble performative object of disappearing art. Dialogue about collapsing the binary of archived ~ ephemera demonstrates these as potentially complementary and even interchangeable. Thus acceptance of old and new, of beauty ~ ugliness, and of archival and ephemeral, are all part of reading art.

Important terms belong in this glossary and facilitate further discussion and shifts in attitude about the value of the metaphorical ephemeral art object and its relationship to finite natural resources. This area of acceptance of the ephemeral in art and nature and in our refuse is partly undervalued while there is no shared language for constructing discourse. This glossary creates greater agency in claiming the strengths and beauty of ephemera as an art form and as a model for alternatives to archiving many things, including art. It does not claim to replace the archive, but learns from the precious and archaic forms of art.
The symbol º (Option k) indicates that a word is in this glossary. The circle is relevant in this study through its association with return and renewal in many cultures, the snake devouring its tail, the clasped hands, the Japanese idea and word enso, and Buddhist law or Dharma represented as a wheel.

### 4.1 Glossary for Art and Ephemera

**Academics and the Institution** – In post-structuralist theorising the arts writer, curator º and director º are a part of the art institution. The institution is a structure through which the dominant discourse is perpetuated and post-structuralist thinking irritates or offers alternatives to its dominance. Art as ephemera could be unsettling for the ascendant group and powerful role-players include writers, directors, curators, academics and even some artists.

Pollock (2003) refers to the difficulty that regional or marginal artists encounter when attempting to enter the ‘canon of the established art industry’ (Pollock 2003, 170). Foucault (1980) critiqued the institution as one that belongs to powerful structures and discourses. In this study the questioning of archived art and my quest to empower art and ephemera, relegate the curator in state and national galleries, including museums of contemporary art, to this power structure. Academics, both as lecturers and postgraduate candidates in university art schools are included in the institution where many new forms of visual arts enter multiple discourses.

Foucault’s references to the political status of science and the ideological functions it could serve provoked a number of questions. In relation to power and knowledge, Foucault wrote that:

…all these genealogies…combined of popular knowledge and erudite knowledge, were not possible…could not have been attempted except in one condition that all the … tyranny of globalising discourses with all their hierarchy and all their privileges of a theoretical avant-garde was eliminated (Foucault 1980, 83).
In a similar manner hierarchy and privilege may stand in the way of redefining practice, and of enabling change in attitude to art involving ephemera as a process and a method for viewing change.

My thesis is in a privileged position as academic work, a position made clearer when visiting academics in other university art schools in Australia. Duxbury’s (2002) PhD thesis and documentation consists of substantial visual documentation. Duxbury’s (2007) online book, Thinking Through Practice Art as Research in the Academy, has contributed to positioning and the empowering of art discourse in the research sector of universities. Duxbury poses art as research and queries ‘…what it means to work through practice for the process of this thinking and coming to know the world through sustained enquiry’ (Duxbury 2007, 6). Finally, much visual arts post-graduate research is driven by praxis, supported by the institution.

Artworker – is often in an administrative position where the art director, art curator and art writer belong to a particular part of the structure or institution. Artworkers also take up particular positioning and discursive practices. Arts writer Smee (2007) allowed an ambience of ephemera to enter his discussion of selection, presentation and installation in Venice about work ‘…hinting not just at death but at absence, at voids, at emptiness.’ Smee stated also that ‘There is something tragic about the fate of every work of art from the moment it leaves the studio and enters the world’ (Smee 2007, 19). Smee’s discussion was about artwork in a Venetian palace and the ambience of this setting. He refers to his experience through author Romanelli as ‘…the brilliant but piercing sensation that everything is perfect and at the same time excessive, that the completeness coincides with the ruin, that the splendour is the decay itself’ (Romanelli cited in Smee 2007, 18).

Smee’s apt description exemplifies artworkers’ voices as art writers, academics and artists. In post-structuralist theorising they form an important part of institutional dialogue. It is possible to add my voice to
the hierarchy to speak about ephemera as a process in art, and one that can be of value.

**Aesthetics** – is the study of beauty and as such is the conventional basis for many art texts and philosophising about art, though in my thesis the term problematizes the accepted notion of beauty and contemplates the binary (anti-) aesthetic. Shohat and Stam (1998) have discussed an ‘aesthetics of garbage’ as it applies to creating art from rubbish or recycled material, and often from the perspective of the less privileged in a society. In my study the aesthetics of disintegration and ephemera are sought after as potentially ascendant survivors and renewal in considering the natural environment. Some critics have referred to the practice of art with recycled elements and relating to ‘garbage’ as a perverse activity compared to the privileged positioning of art as ‘commodity’.

**(Anti-) aesthetic** – provides the opportunity to problematise the binary of aesthetic. At the basis of an art praxis working with ephemera and detritus is a reversal of the archived and sometimes sanitised art object. Ashton (1999) states

… ‘aesthetic’ has particularly powerful meaning when presented on its own in art talk. But ‘aesthetic’ can be understood differently when connected with its binary opposite, ‘anaesthetic’. … the powerful member often owes its privileged positioning and its dependence on the different and usually absent other (Ashton 1999, 109).

**Agency and agentic** – In post-structuralist theorising, to be agentic is to change the position of power from descendant to ascendant. Accepting art and ephemera that relates to contemporary issues could change the status quo, or an accepted canon. I provide art and ephemera with the capacity to become agentic and change positioning in relation to current descendancy of ephemera in art. A significant agentic aspect of ephemera and art is that it can question the status quo of art practices that have an environmentally heavy footprint. Theories behind this practice can be used to question attitudes to consumption of finite resources.
Archival – an aspect of the commercial and institutional art world and part of a dominant discourse is where the privileged product is kept at great cost in humidity and temperature controlled rooms in buildings administered by artworkers. In my study, the precious medieval painting or Tang dynasty sculpture that show signs of disintegration, flaking paint, eroding or chipped appendages, are important aspects of valuing the less-than-complete object or icon. These preserved and archived objects are also fragile works that teach us about erosion and disintegration. There are questions to be asked about what can be archived as art icons or precious objects.

Arte Povera – translated as referring to poor art materials, the name Arte Povera was given to an art movement relating the poor material or unorthodox art material with a statement against the hierarchy of institutionalised bourgeois art in 1950s post war Europe. Art critic Celant was the originator of the term and the artists were mostly working in Turin, Italy. This art movement has some principles in common with an art of ephemera, especially as an art form celebrating use of poor material.

Binary – Ephemeral art and archival art are traditionally in opposition to each other due to archived art practice and value placed on archival art. Through post-structuralist critique I attempt to blur or collapse the binary by arguing for a more valued positioning for ephemera as art, through its acceptance as viable practice, especially in relation to contemporary environmental climate issues. Davies (1996) stated,

> These binaries are particularly difficult for those located in the ascendant (sic) half of the binary pair to see. They take their category membership to be normal, and normative, and those located in the other category to be marked by their difference (Davies 1996, 13).

Collet (1995) refers to the origins of binary logic

> …relating objects or concepts based on the notions of superior and inferior, superordinate and subordinate. This became fundamental to the development of Western philosophy. So we have the establishment of dichotomies such as: man/woman, public/private/ subject/object, culture/nature and others (Collet 1995, 13).
**Beauty** – my interpretation of beauty challenges some traditional conventional notions of beauty, such as modernist conventions surrounding beauty. New and shiny may be dominant signs of beauty however in ‘art and ephemera’ aged icons or objects undergoing time-based change are beautiful.

**Blog** – coined from words ‘web’ and ‘log,’ the blog is crucial to the deployment of the performative object in Internet and from the thesis. This is possible with the engagement of other researchers via the blog http://www.visualarts.net.au/discussionsblogs/navamemberblogs/annelord/impossiblebucket

**Canon** – high profile artists, administrators, gallery directors, critics and curators belong to the canon of the art industry. Pollock (2003) discusses entry to this canon and denial due to difference and I discuss ephemera as part of this difference. Humm (1995) writing from a feminist perspective finds

> The canon is too powerful a hierarchy to be undone simply by adding texts by women or by creating an alternative canon (useful though this activity can be in raising the status of women) …(Humm 1995, 101-102).

And Fehr (1994) asserts that

> …attempts to insert minority and women artists retrospectively into a visual canon constructed by white males is not enough. Such an approach misses the point (Fehr 1994, 214).

Mierle Laderman Ukeles’ work choreographing trucks in a street ballet (2003) defies the canon of archive and monument.

**Capitalist** – In the socialist / capitalist quandary, many policies seem to be in opposition to each other. Many grey areas are demonstrated in Australian politics where opposition and government, in a two-party system, could prefer capitalist or socialist policies. Politics can also appear to merge many policies especially in relation to financial gains made from environment and industry, though some are in favour of environmental
health. In this study the political strength to act in favour of the environment is compatible with art and ephemera.

**Centre-Periphery** – Though the technology is available to showcase much art and ephemera in regional centres, it is the larger centres that traditionally afford the publicity necessary to bring this work into a large public arena. This study also asks how a sustainable and ephemeral or immaterial art practice could become viable outside the clusters of population in big centres. Interactivity through sites and organizations such as Multimedia Art Asia Pacific (MAAP) 2006 assists regional to be part of a global network, also shown in Queensland State Library. Institutional web sites such as QAG, and Gallery of Modern Art, (GOMA) Brisbane for the Asia Pacific Triennial, (1993 - ongoing) assist in the dissemination of art to peripheries. RAQS Media Collective, mentioned in the thesis Chapter Ten, is agentic in this quest.

**Creativity** – is at the heart of discourse about art. I problematise creative acts by welcoming disintegration processes, not as nihilistic acts but as imaginatively redeeming natural processes. Ephemeral art can collapse the binary by breaking down and embracing the process.

**Curators of visual arts** – are often working from a recent history of academic theorising. Though the curators’ perspective and reference to current dialogue are important, it is often the case that the curator is in a position to plan what artists and work will be selected for prominent venues. This is usually planned and orchestrated through invitations to artists to submit work to themed exhibitions or address a curatorial rationale. In this way the Curator belongs to Foucault’s notion of the institution (Foucault 1980).

**Curators** – usually belong to the canon of the art world. Their academic rigour and perspective enlarge on the theory and practice of visual art and culture. They have an influential and privileged position in the commercially driven art world. The curator can be instrumental in
promoting certain artists, styles and practices over others. In other words
the curator’s position of power is significant for an artist’s entry to the
canon of the art world and the maintenance of the canon. Some curators
are artists and act from the artist’s perspective where their insight into
praxis is invaluable. A binary suggested here is presented as ‘artist
curator’ ~ ‘administrator curator’.

My study recognises curators, directors and artists who mostly
demonstrate balanced practices for the acceptance of art and ephemera
discussed from the literature. Many artists, curators and directors have
contributed to this discussion.

**Curators as academics** – are included in my study and have contributed to
acceptance and denial of the ephemeral object within the institution of
gallery, art school or public. A dominating practice that might deny the
important contribution from art and ephemera to contemporary visual art
is one I seek to unsettle. My acknowledgment of the transfer of material
from one state to another is an important and timely reminder that there is
something beside an archived system for presenting art. Acknowledging
the binary system does not put issues into black and white, rather there is
a blurring of boundaries where new ideas and relationships between the
institution and artists meet to illuminate difference. In this study an
agentic questioning of archive and institution provides the opportunity to
present practice that is not archived.

**Dada** – an art movement generally recognised in conjunction with Marcel
Duchamp from 1910 to 1920. The nihilist tendency could be aligned with
ephemeral art as an anti-commodity stance. The *ready-made* such as
Duchamp’s bicycle wheel, snow shovel and urinal have impacted on
many artists. My understanding and adoption of Duchamp’s *ready-made*
is most apparent in finding and realising the shared importance of aged
cultural objects e.g., the eroding Buddhist icons. My digital images of
eroding Buddha statues in the Yungang Caves, near Datong, north-west of
Beijing are acknowledged in my thesis as another form of ‘ready made’, and contribute to striking images of erosion in sacred imagery.

**Deconstruction** – Derrida and Baudrillard are key theorists relevant to this investigation of art and ephemera for their contribution to blurring boundaries, and for my study I found I could adapt this to achieving strategic balances in the art I was creating. Lather (1991) identifies Grosz’s three levels of deconstruction:

… (1) identify the binaries, the oppositions that structure the argument. (2) reverse / displace the dependent term from its negative position to a place that locates it as the very condition of the positive term; and (3) create a more fluid and less coercive conceptual organisation of terms which transcends a binary logic by simultaneously being both and neither of the binary terms (Lather 1991, 13).

**Degradation** – associated with negative connotations of erosion, damage and destruction. In this study a previously bright and glossy object ~ sculpture could go through a process of degradation. Similarly an object intended as an ephemeral art piece could be positively subjected to a degrading process. For Humm (1995) ‘binary oppositions must be teased out and taken apart (or deconstructed) for their socially imposed power differences to become obvious’ (Humm 1995, 118). In the case of degradation this would be agentic in reversing the archived or preserved.

**Detritus** – in art and ephemera, relates to Shohat and Stam’s (1998) ‘polycentric aesthetics’ and refers to recycling and refuse in art. It has been taken up by authors such as Derrida and Benjamin, and practised by many artists. The option to use detritus as an art material is often in poorer communities where the necessity of recycling for art is not optional.

**Directors** – are in a similar position to Curators in that their work is often in the administration of the canon. The director holds a powerful position in the art industry, plans art events and decides which artists are shown and promoted. Directors decide what curatorial direction a (their) gallery will present to the public. Feminism has contributed significantly to redressing
the gender imbalance, though not necessarily ridding the art world of patriarchal or matriarchal dominant positioning.

**Dirt** – in ‘art and ephemera’ facilitates a critical review of earth, humus and bugs in a natural world, as opposed to preservation in a ‘white-cube’ humidity-controlled venue, with clean white gloves, acid free paper and vermin-free environments. The sanitising act of putting my artwork, *Impossible bucket*, (2005 - 2007) made from humus, in a freezer is part of the dominant discourse for protecting archived art from bugs and preserving artwork. Preserving art under glass is also part of the archiving act and directly opposed to presenting ‘art and ephemera’ on site.

**Discourse** – For the specific field of art and ephemera, my study adopts a discourse wherein an art practice can be spoken of through a number of disciplines and through language. The resulting dialogue involves transformations as interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary praxis, and a shared new language through the enquiry. Davies (1996) states:

> Generally, discourses and their attendant storylines are taken up as one’s own in a way that is not visible, since discourse is understood as a transparent medium through which we see real worlds Just as we disattend the pane of glass in order to look at the view out the window, so we generally disattend discourse (Davies 1996, 153).

**Eco-art** – along with Eco-feminism shared beliefs about the nurturing aspect of the female, and the ability artists have to work in a positive and sustainable way for ecology and natural environments. Eco-art exists in built, as well as natural, environments. I acknowledge the groundwork made by this art movement in the 1980s as a precursor for art and ephemera. Similarly Environmental art was closely aligned with this movement and should also be acknowledged as a practice contributing to awareness of the natural environment and highlighting human impact. Andrews’ (2006) compilation of ‘land, art’ contributes to current dialogue relevant for art and ephemera.
Eco-feminism – Irene Diamond (1990) wrote that ‘what might be called the “eco-feminist arts” function ceremonially to connect us with the two powerful worlds from which the Enlightenment severed us - nature and the spirit world’ (Diamond 1990, 279). Merchant (1992), Lippard (1984) and Ewington (1994) contribute to the dialogue and its evolution. In an art of ephemera, my understanding is that eco-feminism has contributed and still contributes to the agentic maintenance of art practice and life, to nurture and protect natural environment and ecology.

Empower – reversal or agentic challenge to those in positions of power can come from less empowered individuals. Ephemeral art is often seen as less important than, for instance the grand archived work, celebrated through both the history of art and modernism. Aspiration to change the ascendant position by constructing a discourse around ephemera as a more accepted art genre can potentially create a new imbalance. However the practice of ephemera as a metaphor for environment and anti-commodity, even while descendant, can be promoted through research. In this way it can also contribute to a powerful and urgent shift.

Empowering the ephemeral – is about empowerment of an area of art that could make a difference to attitude in communities about commodities people see as important. Creating dialogue about ephemeral art can also reclaim practice for a locality using local materials, potentially in a region, as opposed to a centre of art.

Environment – can encompass the natural and the built environment, as well as many others, such as the domestic environment. The natural environment in this thesis is aligned with ecology, in that the interdisciplinary fields of place, plant, human and animal and their connectedness can be considered. In this thesis environment is also aligned with Buddhism where the nurturing of natural environment is a central concern.

Environmental sustainability has been relegated to a descendent position when faced with the power of real estate development. A struggle exists
with commercial and economic agendas, commodification, advertising, the capitalist desire to own and produce more, and even a contemporary socialist desire to produce and own more. Though the environment has the capacity to reclaim nature in its own manner, with or without human actions to assist, our actions interrupt sustainability of the natural environment. Art and ephemera is more than just exhibiting ‘stuff’ in a gallery. In telling my story of an appreciation and acceptance of ‘art and ephemera’ by the art industry I re-position my work especially from an environmental standpoint.

**Ephemera** – In literature, theorising ‘ephemera’ is a noun, and not given the status as an art genre. A significant shift in my thesis is the way I have combined ‘art and ephemera’ as a single term and used the ephemeral as the definitive descriptor. The term or phrase is my legitimising invention for diverse and disparate forms and concepts of art that do not last beyond an exhibition or installation.

‘Art and ephemera’ includes work developed and executed with fragile and ephemeral material and has no longevity in the usual sense of art historical artefacts. The icon or object may implode or gently disintegrate during the course of the exhibition ~ installation, in a short period of time, or may be an item that is already disintegrating. An ephemeral art piece will relay a message or act as a metaphor through an act of change or disintegration, hence becoming a ‘performative object’.

**Fluxus** – is a significant art movement and Fluxus artists provide some precursors to art and ephemera, and assisted in defining an art that is anti-commodity. Kirker (1993) states

Dick Higgins developed the term ‘intermedia’ to explain these shifting sites of artistic expression, to cover works that might fall between the visual, musical and literary. His publishing enterprise *Something Else Press* became one of the most important disseminators of experimental activity of the 1960s and 1970s, serving happenings, poetry, events, art theory, music and literature (Kirker 1993, 6).
Though many ephemeral art ‘happenings’ such as Alison Knowles *Make a salad* could be included in my thesis, the Fluxus artists generally broached a broader and more encompassing art genre than my reference to ‘art and ephemera’.

**Fold** – is the title of a collaborative two-person exhibition at Umbrella Studio Contemporary Arts by Shaun Kirby and Anne Lord (1997). Kirby investigated the Townsville region from a distance (Adelaide) and Lord investigated the Townsville region as a local microenvironment. *Fold* was an indication of theoretical topics and visual images both artists adapted to reference fabric, geography, society and environments. My work about fragile shorelines was instrumental in the development of art and ephemera.

**Formalist** – refers to artwork of the modernist, primarily caught up in a formal approach to questions by artists about art. In this study artists were chosen for an anti-form or the ‘formless’ (Bois and Krauss 1997) through practices involving ephemeral elements in the work. Preferable for this study is inclusion of natural environmental or climate change or issues.

**Gallery** – a traditional structure, often an imposing venue with administration to present art to an audience. In the 19th and 20th century, the gallery usually had four white walls, In the 21st century this is challenged by artists and viewers to present work off site as well as online.

**Glass Ceiling** – In this thesis I make use of the feminist metaphor for a number of readings, one a closed environment in a glass brick (Plate 11.2). In this case the glass brick traps moisture and facilitates condensation even more obviously than a greenhouse. My new reading is a reflection on past work (Davies 1993) that has been crucial in leading to a thesis on art and ephemera. My comparisons are to greenhouse gases and global warming.

**Glossary** – is an annotated textual device with currency in contemporary art and post-structural theorising (Bourriaud 2002), Muenster Sculpture Project.
This glossary for art and ephemera is designed to assist in generating shared and appropriate language for discourse analysis and further empowering ‘art and ephemera’. Researchers are invited to add to my theorising with multiple and diverse voices.

History – ‘The History of Art’ is a problematic construct for authors such as Elkins. In my thesis this relates to how art and ephemera or the ‘performative object’ can, simultaneously, be art and not archive. For Ashton (1999),

The authenticity of art history continues to be reinforced by countless colourful texts which provide ‘documentary evidence’ and visual illusions of objectivity. Through the poststructuralist lens, I have come to see my extensive previous knowledge as partial … (Ashton 1999, 250).

Sullivan (1992) finds:

Lyotard’s rejection of ‘metanarratives’ in favour of ‘little narratives’ is a plea for the authenticity of alternative perspectives. But there is a need to keep both parts of the picture in view (Sullivan 1992, 11).

Many authors, including Buskirk (2005) and Pollock (2003), assist in providing options for alternative perspectives crucial for the theorising of an anti-archive art.

Humus – for my artwork is prepared from old pieces of wood in my (studio) garden as art material for ephemeral objects. Tree rot and other plant litter are potentially art objects waiting to be ‘performative pieces’ and present inherent issues of environmental heritage and destination.

Illuminate – is a key poststructuralist term where clarifying agentic theorising, such as exposing power imbalance, is through textual discourse. To illuminate a topic accesses knowledge where language can develop meaning and challenge dominant discourses. The term is applied to art and ephemera where my responses to research questions reveal new outcomes for the topic.

Immateriality – used in digital visual arts authoring (Krysa et al. 2006), this is a notion about how art can change or belong to a completely ephemeral and conceptual realm. Particularly, transformation is in the digital realm.
of computer virus as art. Lillemose (2006) compared Lippard’s de-material (1973) as material preceding the immaterial. This provides a parallel consideration for art and ephemera.

**Impermanent** – Permanent – are binaries for ephemera and archive. I flag the fact that all art is ephemeral, even massive stone structures, in the context of the earth’s ancient geology and ecology. My position is that the ephemeron is useful in visual art installations to learn from gradual change over long deep time.

**land, art** – the compilation ‘land, art’ (Andrews et al. 2006) addresses many important art and ecology relationships that are ongoing, and significant changes in the way artists consider their relationship with the natural environment. Artists also look for sustainable and alternative energy solutions to consider climate change from an artist’s space. Alternatively Land Art (1970s) was a high profile art movement led by writings from artists Robert Smithson and Robert Morris and art writer Lucy Lippard, amongst others. The two movements evolved in different decades and in contrast to each other: ‘land, art’ has ecological compassion as a basis, whereas Land Art was at times environmentally insensitive.

**Letting go** – From the literature ‘letting go’ is discussed in Buddhist philosophy and linked to this study in Chapter Six. The concept, in relation to art and respect for land and trees, was at the basis of my decision to include this as key to my ensuing artwork. In recognition of some of the Buddhist fundamentals of meditation and attitude to ownership, a growing awareness of how an art form could also be made to pass from a tangible state to an ephemeral state in a very short space of time became important as a cultural link to environmental issues.

**Line ~ Boundary** – In the construction of the ephemeral object and disintegration through the performative object, the blurring of boundaries and the removal of lines occur. In the creation of ice sculptures, as
ephemeral objects in the tropics, the loss of any defining edge happens very quickly. The ultimate outcome is the witnessing of time-based disappearance of art. It has some connection of the idea of digital immateriality and though recording disappearance is important, the digitised image is only a record, not ‘the art’. This leads to the capacity for the digital to be a tool for democratisation, for publicising through the recording and communication of ideas rather than the presence or ‘aura’ of the artwork (Benjamin 1935). His reference to the reproduction of art and mechanisation of printing approaches concepts put forward by Krysa (2006) and Lillemose (2006) as ‘immateriality in the digital realm.’ The extension of art and ephemera is where nothing tangible remains, and boundaries dissolve as in the ambience achieved in Laib’s Pollen (2005).

**Maintenance** – Laderman Ukeles’ (1978) ‘Manifesto for Maintenance Art’ connects women’s domestic value overlaid with the human value of maintenance in (non-domestic) industry and ecology. The connoisseur of art, the person only interested in the archival, could be repelled by the slippage between art and maintenance. Laderman Ukeles’ ongoing ‘maintenance’ occurs across art activity and ephemera, and revisits ideas of maintenance in both traditional roles and community relationships, Unburning Freedom Hall (1997).

**Manifesto** – a new positioning for artists’ voices in manifestoes is available on Internet. Arguably for ‘art and ephemera’ it breaks down a power base, where printed matter is both ethically and financially a burden. Lumley (2004) finds:

… *manifesto* can mean ‘poster’ or ‘billboard’; equally, it can mean ‘manifesto’ in the sense of a public statement, as in Futurist Manifesto. The adjective *manifesto*, meanwhile, can be variously translated as ‘manifest, ‘apparent’, ‘obvious’, or as ‘notorious’, ‘well-known’… (Lumley 2004, 6).

Relevant to artists, the *manifesto* can be a number of things and a strategy. Lumley (2004) refers to Celant’s 1967 ‘Arte Povera: Notes for a Guerrilla war’ in Flash Art 1967, and Alighiero Boetti’s 1967 ‘Manifesto’ a yellow poster containing names of artists in a cryptic manner:
[These] … manifestoes belong to the same broad tradition of the avant-garde in which artworks, often using words, co-existed with and implicitly commented on the public proclamations of the group or movement (Lumley 2004, 9).

I promote the textual and visual tool, the contemporary digital manifesto democratically available on the Internet.

**Memory** – can be played out in a number of ways in relation to art and ephemera. Memory of the ephemeral act can be agentic to change attitude to consumer habits. Reference to memory in this thesis problematises how audiences recall certain ephemeral art pieces or performative objects. The photograph is not always the best means to portray a past act of ephemera and significantly the photograph is not ephemeral art. If memory is about how an image can be memorable, then traces of a ‘performative object’ can be retained. Küchler and Melion (1991) describe memory and art through Malanggan rituals of exchange, where ‘The embeddedness of sculpting in gift exchange confers political and economic importance on image transmission’ (Küchler and Melion 1991, 32). The concept of artist as author does not exist when Malanggan funerary sculpture as memory is relayed to the carver from an elder. Ephemeral acts as well as the part played in memory and exchange are addressed in the analysis.

**Mentors** – are key people, primarily artists who have developed praxis with an appreciation of ephemera in art. For these artists, the act of producing anti-commodity work with little impact on the environment is one reason behind their practice and can be a way to contribute to change in attitude about unsustainable practice. The ABC TV 7.30 Report, 25 September 2007, included an interview about changing attitude and how we need to live with less. Many contemporary artists have preceded this advice as a way of living their practice.

**Models** – in my thesis are precursors for the ideas being developed for art and ephemera. Models exemplify how a material and an idea can be put
together in art. I choose the word precisely because multiple readings are possible for ‘art and ephemera’. In order to tag the meaning of model that I intend for this thesis, ‘models’ should also be seen in the context of the argument for art and ephemera where materials are always about to change. Models facilitate diversity of methods to create and provide ways for artists ~ researchers to recognise practice based on the ephemeral. I refer to Encarta # 6 ‘an excellent example that deserves to be imitated’ (Encarta 1999).

**National Association for Visual Arts (NAVA)** – assists a paradigm shift for artists’ manifestoes through website and blogs. My establishment of a web page for exhibitions / installations online is possible through Arthives [http://www.visualartist.info/visualartist/artist/?artistId=1276](http://www.visualartist.info/visualartist/artist/?artistId=1276) and the Dictionary of Australian Artists Online [http://www.daa.org.au/main/read/7091](http://www.daa.org.au/main/read/7091). My contribution to a blog on the NAVA website assisted in transmitting a message about art and ephemera as a way to show concern for natural environment. Blog communication extends a Euro-centric or New-York-centric worldview or even one from Australian capital cities. In those centres where much cultural promotion is concentrated, the web enables a fairer playing field, and assists in producing a digital art project to contribute to a larger centre from a smaller ‘centre’ (Sengupta, Dietz, Nadarajan, Bagchi, and Narula, 2003).

**Non-site** – is a term referred to by Ebeling (2007) in relation to artists and theorists. It is a contrast to the theorist Marc Augé’s (1995) ‘non-place.’ Robert Smithson, wrote of his fascination for hurricanes, and the spectacle, ‘…I’m more attracted to mining regions and volcanic conditions – wastelands rather than the usual notion of scenery or quietude, tranquillity – though they somehow interact’ (Smithson 1972, 196). In my work, the idea of art and ephemera facilitates a relationship between position and non-position. My ‘peg for non-site’ (2006) was a play on survey pegs and un-mapping previously defined territorial boundaries.
**Oeuvre** – a body of work in the visual arts. French words are often capable of encapsulating a concept that does not have significant currency in English. *Oeuvre* captures the whole work of an artist, the body of work, catalogues as a history, curriculum vitae, accomplishments and working methods. It is relevant in this study to refer to extensive *work* by Metzger, Laib and Laderman Ukeles as their *oeuvre*. In this thesis *oeuvre* covers a lifelong commitment to a body of work that is mostly about art and ephemera, and as such the artists’ mentoring is across decades.

**Performative object** – Senior Curator Roger Butler, National Gallery Australia, NGA discussed the idea with me in Canberra and mentioned the ‘performative object’ in contrast with the ‘performative body’ (Marsh 1993). This was in response to my search in the National Gallery of Australia (NGA) research library for the intended disintegration of artwork and how artists were making use of this as an element in their work. It is similar to the identification of the *objet trouvé*, but different in that any expectation for archiving is not intended or present.

**Position** – Post-structuralist theory invites deconstruction, questioning of implicit truths, and detection of power and positioning in texts and praxis. My ‘positioning’ is an artist in an art world with a tradition of power imbalance, evident in archived art. I am also positioned as a regional artist and my work may be less valued due to regional proximity as opposed to ‘knowing’ the centre.

In my study I argue that my regional positioning is appropriate, especially in a digitally networked world. Davies (1996) states ‘The processes of meaning-making, of establishing and maintaining hegemonic beliefs, of setting up patterns of power and powerlessness are thus made observable and revisable by the individuals who do the meaning making’ (Davies 1996, 12).

**Post-structuralist** – critical perspective assists in illuminating and challenging dominant power relationships through discourse with access to
deconstruction strategies. The perspective facilitates ways of speaking, and suggests that some subjects take up contradictory or challenging discourse unintentionally. Through the post-structural lens I am aware of power issues, privilege and agency in my field. Post-structural theory acknowledges multiple discourses making possible the notion that I can re-iterate a dominant discourse or resist it. Resistance can lead to more agentic positioning.

**Reclamation** – is used by Robert Morris for an artwork *Untitled Reclamation Pit King’s County* (1979) identified as an earthwork and an activity that ‘art and environment’ implemented to reclaim degraded environment. Some artists have reclaimed land as an artwork and this is an aspect of art and ephemera where no monument and no artwork exists after the fact.

**Rhizoid** – referred to by Deleuze and Gauttari (1987) in their work for multi-lateral ways of seeing. The word refers to non-linear and non-hierarchical methods for investigation and perception. My thesis presents these ways of reading across cultures and genres.

**Schisms** – recognising the antagonistic factions between the use of the performative object and the non-performative object is significant for the study. It assists to establish my concern for commodity and embrace of anti-commodity. These options are identifiable in the art industry.

**Slippage** – Buskirk refers to slippage and the ‘absurdity of isolating’ pop, minimalism, earthworks, conceptual art and performance. Or of trying to identify each with the ‘brief period of initial formulation and success’ becomes ‘apparent in the slippage of artists from one designation to another … in the ongoing production over many decades by artists identified with these categories’ (Buskirk 2003,11).

In this sense slippage is also about the difficulties of designating artists to, or reluctance of a creative practitioner to be designated into, a particular category. The concept gives credence to the idea that ephemeral practice
in art has developed over decades and contributes to a sense of aesthetics that is not bound by genre, but by a number of questions to be addressed by material substances. In this respect the thesis looks at the impossibility of adding yet another name to a supposed genre and I acknowledge that the practice comes in many variations of form and scale.

Slippage 2. can be a gap, an unknown area between two accepted areas of a discourse. In an ephemerist and archivist binary there will be many areas that allow for slippage and shifting subjectivities. The geographic movement of tectonic plates results in formation of new minerals and in this thesis the meeting or clashing of opposites may give rise to new practice and new cultural identity. Ashton sees ‘subjectivity as always historically produced in specific discourses, and never as one single fixed structure’ (Ashton 1999).

Speak – Learning to speak about practice in the visual arts, common in ‘Artists’ Talks’ is practised by tertiary art students giving presentations about their work, often referred to as ‘speaking to their art’. Putting that practice into written discourse can be problematic, due to artists’ preoccupation with making art rather than writing about art. Addressing this challenge can contribute to the contemporary position where artists seek methods for practice-led research within research environments. Recent challenges from the university management to art schools to provide information about ‘impact’ and ‘research quality framework’ offer artists an opportunity to speak from a position of confidence in art as practice-based research. In this study, the autobiographic voice and the neo-narrative contribute to discourse for ‘art and ephemera’ and the importance of the anti-archival and anti-commodity in the art industry. A practice empowering speech has implications for reflection in communities beyond the art industry.

Text – is a vehicle for discourse, and every text – spoken, written, visual – is revisable. From a post-structuralist perspective there are no absolute truths only multiple perspectives. My thesis on art and ephemera contributes to a particular time and age; when we speak of commodity in the context of
surplus and over-consumption, and the finite resource is under scrutiny in a world fixated on supply and demand.

**The art industry** – absorbs art practice through the conceptualisation and theorising of art, and in entering a discourse this practice becomes part of an established way of looking at the world. Much new practice is rejected in early stages of development ‘through difference’. Ephemera in art can be seen in this descendent position where some works are refused entry to exhibitions, in reality or reproduction (Impossible bucket Habitus 2008 to 2011). Some exceptions are made for high profile artists ~ mentors, and are included in this study.

**Unmapping** – opposes what has happened in most places in the world through disruptive power relationships impacting on place. The concept has become more widely known because of the post-colonial practice of re-visioning Australian naming systems, for Aboriginal places, most famously, ‘Ayers Rock’ reverting to Uluru. Carter (1987) refers to the naming systems adopted by Cook, Banks and early explorers in Australia. Some attempts to keep a place name from the Aboriginal name resulted in misinterpretations of the actual meaning and place, mostly due to language barriers and loss of linguistic meaning. In most cases re-naming transferred ownership. I produced artwork with eroded survey pegs to reference these acts through horizontal dis-placement. I was given the ‘original peg’ that was replaced with a new peg by my surveyor husband. Pegs located in earth mark boundaries and their removal and erosion were reinterpreted for my visual artwork. This is similar to **un-naming** – and this recurs as one of my concepts for ephemeral artwork where un-naming undermines naming. Ashton (1999) stated

> Aesthetic terminology concerning creativity, suggests differences in status between reproductive copies and rare valuable originals; between named individual artist’s works and artefacts by anonymous artisans; between ‘highly expressive’ male art, and ‘merely decorative’ feminine craft. These discursive binaries are fingerprints of the aesthetic hand, which holds fast to hierarchical linear thinking (Ashton 1999, 182).
The concept of authorship and artist can be read differently when Malangan figurative funerary sculpture is considered important for the memory relayed to the carver via an elder (Küchler 1991).

In ephemeral art, my concept for removed and replaced objects of disintegration, such as old removed and now replaced survey pegs, is to demonstrate the transient nature of naming and possession. The surveyor’s new, ‘renewed’ peg is identified and located according to strict surveying rules. The removed and exhausted peg is placed horizontally in a non-position. The overlap here for me is with Marc Augé’s ‘premiss of the object.’ Augé (1995) asks if there is a necessity for a contemporary anthropology and

…whether there are aspects of contemporary social life that seem to be accessible to anthropological investigation, in the same way that questions of kinship...

[etc.] came to the attention of anthropologists of the elsewhere, initially as empirical objects, then as objects of reflection (intellectual objects). [Augé adds that, in this connection] …and in the context of the (perfectly legitimate) concerns about method, it is appropriate to refer to what we will call the “premiss of the object” (Augé 1995, 16).

The value for my thesis in Augé’s argument is related to this ‘premiss of the object.’ The surveyor’s replaced peg is referred to as the Original Peg (OP) and once replaced does not have an identifying name. It becomes an un-named piece of wood.

Visual culture – is part of contemporary art discourse and this incorporates a broad range of high art as well as popular everyday imagery. It is valuable as part of an art discourse for art and ephemera that reaches beyond institutionalised rhetoric towards identifying and discussing previously unaccepted art forms.

Visual literacy – is about linking images, words and ideas through language. Every text is authored and / or manipulated by an author and constructed. I can make obvious my visual literacy and meaning through textual, visual and theorised discourses. This is essential for both the artists’ manifesto and an art-based research perspective.
Wabi-sabi – is a Japanese concept intricately linked to their culture, custom and philosophy. In the context of art and ephemera a relationship with wabi-sabi enables a reading of ephemera in relation to dichotomies: of sensitive and strong, fragile and tough, eroding and stable. Koren states that the closest English word to wabi-sabi is probably “rustic” (Koren 1994, 23). Encarta (1999) provides for ‘rustic’ 4. ‘with a rough finish’. Koren’s (1994) explanation communicates wabi-sabi in relation to Western cultural concepts. This identification of duality in the aesthetic of wabi-sabi is relevant for art and ephemera. Table 4.1 is my interpretation of Koren’s (1994) descriptions and concurs with his statement ‘In the realm of aesthetics, reason is almost always subordinate to perception’ (Koren 1994, 18).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wabi-Sabi</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wabi</td>
<td>sabi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A way of life, a spiritual path</td>
<td>Material objects, art and literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The inward, the subjective</td>
<td>The outward, the objective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A philosophical construct</td>
<td>An aesthetic ideal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spatial events</td>
<td>Temporal events</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Wabi-sabi links my search for influential models from old cultures with a contemporary re-kindling of concepts to do with reclamation and recycling through art and ephemera. The Japanese idea supported my recognition and my valuing of the eroded and disintegrating artefact.

White cube – also refers to the white box gallery. Though gallery directors are often reliant on a white wall, there is a critique of the tradition in visual arts that places art in a white cube gallery. In 2003, Charles Saatchi attacked the concept of the white wall gallery, calling it ‘antiseptic’ and a ‘time warp ... dictated by museum fashion’ (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Cube). The ephemeral art object makes this tradition of the white cube obsolescent.
4.2 Locality - Inland and Trees

The contextualisation of art and ephemera in my glossary concurrently supports my relationship with an influential place, and the influences of mentors and models from this place. Locality, as an aspect of my upbringing, has impacted on my current research and striving for an aesthetic that is about letting go of the object. In Part Two, my analysis adopts this aesthetic as a metaphor for letting things pass in cyclical patterns. My senses, enhanced by being in a special place demonstrating natural rhythms, contributed to a consideration of recycling in a meaningful and sustainable way for a viable future.

My study for implicating ephemera in art, both as a material and as an influence on ideas and change in attitude to archived art, pays tribute to rural Queensland, my home in formative years. Trees that survive the droughts and harsh elements of northwest Queensland’s black soil plains impress me. Trees, for instance the Coolibah and Gutta Perchia growing on the sides of creeks show signs of survival over hundreds of years.

In Part Two, the analysis, my themes ‘Locality - Inland and trees’ and ‘Environment & land/earth’ are linked through art and ephemera. Comparative data from a combination of artwork and photographs based on locality and inland assisted the analysis. People in a regional location are a valid and important research focus and I include observations of the way people relate to place. My inclusion of the Asia-Pacific region has become an important comparative area for my visual investigation of land and place, with an emphasis on precursors of ephemera in art. The implications that ‘art and ephemera’ hold as exemplar for other issues arise from important early findings in northwest Queensland. These were transposed as ideas to similar findings in northwest China. Early drawings for my research project incorporate Chinese Mandarin radicals as visuals in the work. Comparative studies led to the formulation of my new work and analysis of mentor artists’ concepts. These concepts were similar though outcomes in their work could be substantially different.
A digital diary kept since 2003 is titled Anne’s Diary and files are, for example, <1.0 Choosing Location> and <1.2 Trees – Place>. Some typical excerpts are in Appendix XXI (c) Finding Links.

The literature revealed that theories and practices relating to my topic, art and ephemera, are often more concerned with enhancing relationships in a location, such as a natural environment and ecology, than placing visual art in a museum or art venue. Conversely, the archiving of objects or artefacts far removed from a person’s living place to a capital city belongs to an archiving practice in conflict with my research. Though many archived and precious objects are rare and inspiring, they are exceptions to witnessing the creative performative object
in contemporary art and what that can mean to the development of new perceptions about the natural environment. So to add to the empowering of the performative object as an ephemeral and creative act is to reveal many of my observations about icons of change and the contextualisation of a certain place or locality, within my thesis. What became important was the recognition that inherent in my upbringing and earlier practice in art was the appreciation of change that referenced the age of things. In combination with my fascination for the seasons and the overwhelming grandeur of natural occurrences, the natural environment offers lessons. Seeing evidence of change in the natural environment led to actively engaging with and searching for evidence of change, so that the ephemeral nature of things could be recreated in a performative art object.

In this respect I could pay tribute to a locality and work with the research strength of People Identity Place, PIP and their aims ¹. My area of research, ‘art and ephemera’ complemented PIP’s aims as a metaphor for land-based issues, important in looking at land erosion. My practice-based research led to my realisation that some comparative areas, from the Asia-Pacific region and China, could contribute to the study.

1 ¹ To build on the rich historic origins of individual, social, cultural, economic and environmental values and practices of northern Queensland and the Asia-Pacific region;
2. To inform the management of a world of change which enhances the individual, social, cultural and environmental values and practices of northern Queensland and the Asia-Pacific region;
3. To contribute to the development and evaluation of services, policies and interventions that enhance the quality of life of people in northern Queensland and the Asia-Pacific region;
These comparative icons of change contributed to my thesis through my growing awareness of the potential of disintegration and “aged icons” for art and ephemera. My experiences of erosion as art and ephemera in a number of locations contributed to this idea.

My search for artists who work with a concern for the natural environment unearthed some ambiguity, that is, most artists, irrespective of the work they do, are aware of the dangers posed by humans to environment, and the natural catastrophic causes and effects of these on people and place. The natural environment was influential for my study through my appreciation of the survival of flora and fauna in a harsh climate. Northwest Queensland has little rainfall for most of the year and the monsoon’s global weather influences can create deluge within days, as well as extremes of high and low temperatures in [Traditionally painter Margaret Olley, primarily concerned with interiors for her painting subject, revealed her passion for the natural environment. Olley spoke animatedly about the necessity for individuals to contribute to caring for natural environment (Perc Tucker Regional Gallery 2007 Artist’s Talk u.p.).]
one day. The natural erosion and *re-cycling* that happens with seasons, and the evidence of ephemera in drought and flood, demonstrate nature’s potential to provide lessons about ephemera in art and life and contribute to an appreciation of growth and decay. Icons of decay or ephemera can act as metaphors in art for renewal. How the identification of an icon and its use in art can determine one or the other, contributes to the challenge I have identified.

My discovery of photographs in a family collection from this region, dating back to the 1890s, awakened new interest in the fading photograph as a metaphor for change through ephemeral states.

![Plate 4.4 unknown photographer, 1890 photograph, left original disintegration in silver-gelatin, right Lord 2007 An 1890s Portrait, digitally enhanced image of woman [re-photographed Lord 2005]](image)

Changes in these photographs were due to the unstable chemistry of silver-gelatin and exposure to light. One in particular was more vulnerable to chemical changes due to the fact that it was a proof and writing on the back of the photograph stated it should not be exposed to daylight. The implication of a portrait, barely surviving from 1890 to 2007 when it could only be preserved in the absence of light, has important inferences for theories of ephemera and art.
and what it means to archive or let something slip away. This photograph travelled with my grandfather in the early 1900s to northwest Queensland.

Questions of the most ordinary kind can be interpreted theoretically as issues of archiving and discarding and these lead to my consideration, in 2007, about what is to be archived or returned to a cycle as ephemera. In 2007 the 1890s photograph defied disappearance again when it was digitised many times and altered radically in digital form. A number of digital variants were incorporated into my artist’s book *An 1890s Portrait*, including text about the origin of the photograph in Tasmania and my grandfather’s travels to Africa and Queensland. Even in the recomposition of a single photograph the onus to keep, re-introduce or destroy are evident. The cycles of disintegration and new growth are obvious; however, amongst the contemporary pressures of commerce and salaries, these are not heeded in a way that could contribute to further understanding of place. In relation to our capacity to burn fuel, waste or misuse water, or throw out garbage, it is as though disintegration could be placed anywhere but in our home.

The quandary about what to do with art, leftover domestic items, and many other things including excess from our garden, contributes to a conscious act of recycling. These actions led to my resolution to promote part of my practice to the ephemeral. This decision was not to put aside my art practice but to make the artwork do the performance as an object returning to something else. Thus Butler’s term ‘performative object’ used in contrast with the ‘performative body’ was helpful in identifying and recognising an area of work that I felt was not voiced enough in relation to our current environmental plight. In this study I implement findings about an esoteric and compassionate approaches to concern for the land.

Kaza’s (1997) *ecosystem cultures*

My distinctive preference for a place concurs with Kaza’s (1997) inclusion of Snyder and Dasman’s *ecosystem cultures* where he finds ‘natives and rural peoples are almost entirely ecosystem-based cultures, generally having less
impact on the health of the surrounding system than biosphere cultures’ (Kaza 1997, 226). Kaza adds the idea of *Reinhabitory peoples*:

... those who are committed to a life based in place, “making common cause” with the life-styles of the original inhabitory peoples. This means a life identified with a specific place, understanding the local community of plants and animals as companions, neighbours, and supporters of human life. Over time this sense of place deepens with familiarity, and place-based knowledge is passed on from generation to generation (Kaza 1997, 226).

My discussion of the known place of ‘my home’ resonates with Kaza’s view and my responses to abstract qualities in the natural environment, even in drought contributed to my decision to make use of flora that was beautiful and yet dying, as stages in a cycle. The proximity of yellow and mauve grasses to colours of humus, not the opposite signs of lush growth and greenery, contribute to my formation of ideas for new artwork.

![Plate 4.5 Lord 2008 Kilterry signpost, 100 metres from house, and the ‘Lane’ going north [photograph Lord]](image)

In response to research question one, what artistic means could illuminate environmental fragility? Images from the land could show the plight of the natural environment and its beauty. The ephemeral qualities of this place range from raging bushfire infernos to subtle changes in colour. Those changes leading to my creative ephemeral work are taken from seasonal changes.
Appendix II refers to drawings of survivor trees and photographic documents of the visual stimulus for my work. The subsequent praxis in ephemera and art was to address the challenges of working with the natural environment and commenting on this without side stepping important issues about the future of place in the natural environment.

Still photography assisted capture of a transient state of place and was important for my creative development. Recognising slow or long deep time as a requirement in my work suggested the potential for moving images to appear online as an outcome for the recording of the performative object, as documentary. This idea is discussed further in relation to memory and how art and ephemera could exist without documentation. The photographic image is a tool I use for this process and is discussed further in Chapters Eight and Nine. In conclusion to this section the work developed for the complete study, part-time over seven years, and the future development of my visual artwork remains constant with attention to lessons from the natural environment.

4.3 A Premise for Analysis

This section is a bridge to Part Two, the themed analysis, and moves from familiar topics, natural environment and locality, to topics such as artists and their work in conjunction with disintegration, waste and ephemera.

Waste and decay are often seen as taboo topics, part of an end product. This is where the artist can be a mediator. Whereas artists previously gave their individual perspective of a place through painting, I present my perspective through ephemera in art and an aesthetic of disintegration. An art of ephemera does not have to deal with waste, however in this study I am concerned with misplacement of our consumer-generated off-cuts. For artists interested in art and ephemera, placement of ephemeral by-products is not about just accepting responsibility for our products, but finding strategies for reclaiming. This could be through addressing garbage that is closer to ephemera, a type of taboo material for traditional art practice. The compilation of recycling, detritus, humus and many other things can be discussed as waste, where the term waste
is used as a collective noun and a provocative name to bring attention to how we might consider our waste as another step in the way we lead our lives. Some artists do cross disciplines and cultures to act for an environmentally sensitive aesthetic as well as environmentally sound policy.

The post-structuralist lens assists to empower the object of disintegration, or erosion, as one returning to a new and vital phase. The creation of the performative object gains accolades as opposed to derision, and leads to a number of possible outcomes. On one hand, there is acceptance in an altered perspective of super-modernity and appreciation of the ‘premiss of the object’ (Augé 2002). The idea is taken up in Chapter Nine, Objects. On the other hand, a further appreciation of immateriality (Krysa et al. 2006) is where the realm of no substance is a substitute for new ways of managing concepts. Inevitably authors and artists share the perspective proposed by Grierson (2003), wherein

The twenty-first century has seen a shift from thinking about the art object as a discrete bearer of meaning or truth of the visible world, to seeing the image, object or artefact as a signifier of multiple meanings situated in the multidimensional social, cultural and political domains of a global world (Grierson, 2003, 4).

These and other means of bringing interdisciplinary ideas into art making and development of aesthetics are shared by Lippard, who states:

Art is a framing device for visual and / or social experience and artists can be good at slipping between the institutional walls to expose the layers of emotional and aesthetic resonance in our relationships to the world (Lippard 2006, 14).

This section provides a brief insight into the themes adopted for my analysis and how ideas overlap and feed each other. Themes were based on my growing comprehension of the artist as a person who could make a difference and give voice to contemporary issues. Themes connect ephemera as a possible construct in visual arts, via the appreciation of the ‘performative object’. Overlapping themes emerge from an artist’s oeuvre where creative work in developmental stages could link with: ephemeral materials in visual art (Models); earlier environment and land art as un-intentional art and ephemera as influences for ephemera and art (Precursors); environment and land in relation to ephemeral

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3 Premiss meaning from ‘Logic, a proposition or one of several from which a conclusion is drawn’ Macquarie Dictionary 2005.
art; the use of ephemera in Dada, Arte Povera, Fluxus; conceptual areas in art and ephemera; contemporary art and shifting categorisation; spirituality and cultures with respect for land and trees; locality, inland and trees – (Queensland); key people, artists (Mentors), Wolfgang Laib and Mierle Laderman Ukeles; a second ‘land, art’ movement associated with artist Rirkrit Tiravanija; objects, fabricated and disintegrating: commodity and anti-commodity; immateriality, performative object to documented moment, and immateriality and publication online.

The themes emerged from blurring lines between disciplines and are significant to emphasize priority areas of the study, the perspective and practice of the artist and researcher. My work is woven through the thesis as examples in the field I investigated. Outcomes from the themed analysis for the ephemeral to communicate significantly to communities beyond the visual arts are proposed at the end of the thesis.

Environment and Earth

Contemporary areas of concern, natural environment and land or earth, impact on everybody and are especially important to artists who comment on contemporary issues. Further to this, artists have that flexibility and boundary shifting, that scientists may not have, to investigate areas of contemporary concern. Visual artists need to be good at ‘slipping between the institutional walls’ (Lippard 2006, 14) to expose the layers of emotional and aesthetic resonance in our relationships to the world. Artists also contribute to the intellectual and rigorous debate of issues, such as concern in the environment. Through breaking with rigid conventional perspectives, artists may offer a more flexible alternative for reviewing topics of concern. The global concerns for this area of study, the natural environment, are also linked by local concern, through personal experience and recognition of regional communities.
Environment: Locality, Inland and Trees

My sense of place is intricately related to and assists in locating the local as a key area of concern used to inform an appreciation of ephemera. The inland place also empowers my desire to act locally and contribute to art away from a metropolitan centre. The autobiographic post-structuralist voice is an important part of the analysis and my ‘inland voice’ speaks through my diaries, kept throughout the study for references to the development of work. Files in the Appendix XXI (c) from Anne’s Diary, such as 1.0 Choosing Location, are from the developmental stage of the study. Files referenced for the thesis include Anne’s Diary 2.0 and 3.0, documented memories of China and reflection on changing perception and practice. These also show links to the local and the global and emergence of ephemera as an art process.

Spirituality and Cultures: Respect for Land and Trees

Chapter Six theorises about the wisdom contributed by cultures revering the land and the environment. Referencing long surviving cultures gives examples of various ways to sustain a relationship with the land. Overlapping concerns with art and spirituality are evident in the work of artists such as Wolfgang Laib, Tosi Lee, Telching Hsieh and Ernesto Pujol. Marcia Tucker describes Telching Hsieh’s practice as exemplifying ‘in a strikingly literal way the concept of living one’s life as a work of art’ (Tucker 2004, 22).

Inherent in political power and visible in documentation of colonial power is the desire to preserve at all costs the empire, or status quo where commercial pressures deny prioritising preservation of environment. Ephemeral art can assist people to think about the different ways cultures, especially traditional Asian cultures, align their art and environment closely, whereas contemporary western art often isolates art from concerns of the natural environment. Similarly, though fighting may be abhorrent for a number of reasons, my reasons to be anti-war lie in the acceleration of violent change costing the environment. Even though people are also destroyed, the message I am
delivering is about environmental catastrophe and how this might be addressed as a key to the future.

Some art industry concerns are about trying to preserve tombs, architecture, graffiti, leaving the artists’ marks through painting, print or sculpture that claim a space in history or provide a perspective back to the past. Artists interested in archived art often have concerns about how they might leave a trace or signature to record their art activity: my thesis recognises that the artist interested in non-archival art does not have to prove existence of their art by leaving any heavy environmental footprint.

Objects, Disintegrating: Anti-commodity

The commodification of many aspects of our ecology led to my questions about how art and ephemera might subvert a commodity driven industry concerned with trends and fashions. Time is of the essence. Perceptions of slow time in a peaceful place seduce us so that we feel no urgency to respond to issues about unnecessary waste and have the capacity to induce complacency. Rushed time and the unease it creates also have a definite impact. In the context of art that defies the security of archived aesthetic pleasure over time, ephemeral artwork or loss of archive is capable of denying that security through an intention to subvert the acceptable aesthetic of the past, and provide new ways of looking at ideas through new art processes.

Immateriality - Documented moment: Internet and Decentralisation

Vulnerability is an aspect of the work I discuss and links anti-commodity and immateriality. Authors including Machan (2006), Carter and Geczy (2006), Lillemose (2006), Sadr Haghighian (2006) and Krysa (2006) have contributed to the idea of immateriality for digital as a network to places we visit as transitional space or place. Some specifically critique contemporary art practice and how this might interact with digital art. New Media Arts practice and theory
could be consumed by *inmateriality* to the point of not communicating in a tangible form.

The potential for dilemma between tangible and intangible implies a need for balance between the two and this is investigated in the analysis. The complexity of global issues confronting humanity’s self inflicted environmental problems in the first decade of the twenty-first century supply the motivation to search for outcomes in the second part of this thesis.