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Chapter 10 Mary Kathleen: Site Four, Subjective Futures

10.1 Moving Sites

As the first three series of work evolved, the concepts deepened from concerns about those who came in contact with uranium during its metamorphosis from freshly dug ore to nuclear reactors and weapons, to concerns for the future and the global threats posed by uranium. I had been ignoring a facet of all the silences/essences research that could produce a spontaneous empathy in people who had no specific visual connection to the site. What were and might be the consequences of the mining of uranium that had occurred? Further contemplation in the silence of the natural landscape, amidst the plant ruins, and on top of the mullock heaps all pointed to the urgency of questioning the necessity for the removal of the uranium ore in the first place and the possible subsequent repercussions on the silences to be felt in the future.

10.2 Site Visit Impressions

Once it was determined that Site Four would be a response to possible future silences should humankind persist with the use of nuclear energy and weapons, the perceptions garnered at the other three sites and the train of thought evoked by those perceptions, such as concern for the miners who were exposed to uranium ore for long periods, and the possible uses of the refined ore, became the starting point. The goal was a greater understanding of the issues integral to the mining and use of uranium, a historical understanding of the ore (Appendix E), and ultimately the conceptual underpinning of the artwork to be made in response. Thus the site visits in 1998, 2000 and 2005 were as crucial to the development of the works made in response to Site Four as they were to

the other sites and should thus be viewed as a cumulative understanding of the silences endemic to the other three sites.

My initial and instinctive reaction on seeing the open cut mine and tailings dam at its base (as seen in Plate 10.2.1 and previously in Plate 7.3.4) was awe at the colours of the open-cut terraces and the unnatural brilliance of the turquoise coloured water which looked particularly toxic.



Plate 10.2.1 J. Mulcahy Tailings dam (Detail) Mary Kathleen 2005

This instinctive reaction proved factual with, in 2004, the then Minister for Mines and Energy, Tony McGrady expressing concern that people were known to swim in the Mary Kathleen tailings dam. (in Submission to House of Representatives Standing Committee on Industry and Resources, May 2005: unpaginated). His concern emanated from information in that document that the water and surrounds were contaminated with radioactive waste:

When the mine closed in 1982, MKU had produced around 9000 tons of U308 in its 26-year history and 31 million tons of rock (3500 times as much radioactive rubbish as uranium). It left a 'conical hole about 250 metres deep, four kilometres wide at the top and about 100 metres across at the bottom'

(Excerpt from Roger Moody's "Plunder!" (1991), a global look at Rio Tinto Zinc's activities worldwide) In rehabilitating the mine site, instead of using clay to cover the tailings site, the company has covered the tailings with rock mixed with soil taken from the MKU site itself: still radio active.

(Submission to House of Representatives Standing Committee on Industry and Resources, May 2005: unpaginated)

The other tons of waste are piled in mullock heaps (Plate 10.2.2) surrounding the mine site.

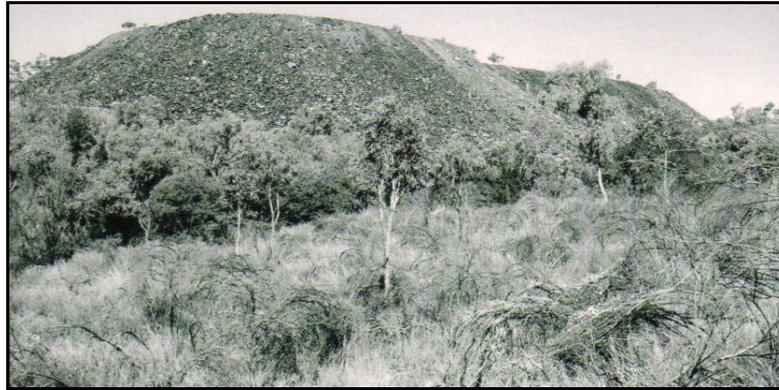


Plate 10.2.2 Mullock heaps at Mary Kathleen J. Mulcahy 2005

In the same (unpaginated) document reference is made to the 1997 Senate inquiry into uranium mining stating that "M K remediation work won an award from the Institution of Engineers Australia for environmental excellence in 1986." This equivocal award and the seeming ongoing reluctance and /or inability of successive governments to impose rigorous safety measures, is however hard to comprehend. It is issues such as this as well as the recent (2004) water contamination at the Ranger Uranium mine where workers drank and bathed in radioactive water only discovering the extent of the contamination from the media. Their employers had failed to inform them or the nearby Indigenous communities of the contamination, a failure which reinforces the perception of lack of governmental control over mine sites and the individual companies' lack of compliance with required safety measures.

10.3 Uranium: The Vision and The Fall Out

Of necessity the visual research for this site differed in significant ways from that undertaken for the other sites as, there was, in a sense, no tangible or visible site as such. Instead there was a lifetime of subliminal messages relating to the use of uranium and decades of observing a world coping with the shock of the destruction of Hiroshima by an atomic explosion similar to that depicted in Plate 10.3.1.



Plate 10.3.1 Atomic explosion

Images of the victims with the ongoing trauma associated with radiation and the destruction to the environment dominated. There were also images of a world so fearful of possible nuclear devastation caused by war between America and Russia that many people built fall-out shelters and stocked these shelters with every conceivable item their families might need for the years it would take for radiation levels to drop to a point where it would be safe to emerge from the shelter.

Sites in Australia and the Pacific region have been the focus of much nuclear testing by England, France and the United States of America. In a print-out of a debate/ discussion

about French nuclear testing in the Pacific which involved a panel of experts from Australian and New Zealand universities, a Greenpeace spokesman and a representative from the National Radiation Lab in New Zealand (produced by the science show Quantum and first screened by the ABC on August 23, 1995) it was revealed that, since 1945, the Nuclear Powers have exploded over 2000 nuclear devices with the French exploding 175 in their Pacific tests. While the French insisted their atmospheric tests were safe (Jones, 1995), the scientists on the Quantum panel nevertheless could not agree as to the extent to which the tests have affected or will, in the future, affect the region and its inhabitants. Although fall out was monitored, winds blew clouds of radioactivity in the direction of populated islands and ...if it rained, fallout rained down too (Jones, 1995). Although there are claims about a rise in birth defects and cancers the evidence is unfortunately anecdotal as ...there isn't a register of birth defects in French Polynesia. (Jones, 1995)

The names Maralinga, Emu Field, Monte Bello, Maldon Island and Christmas Island are synonymous with irresponsible episodes of politics and practice. Between the 1950s and 1960s the British used these Australian sites to conduct a series of atomic bomb blasts. The first was in 1953 at Emu Field in South Australia where the blast was 10 kilotons, two thirds the capacity of the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima which was around 15 kilotons, the equivalent of 15,000 tonnes of TNT.

The next series of tests was carried out at Maralinga in the north-west of South Australia between September 1956 and October 1957 with minor trials continuing until

1963. The following extract and map from the Ministry of Defence shows how widespread was the fall out.

During the mainland tests many army personnel were deliberately exposed to the blasts just to see what effect radiation had on troops. Security at the test sites was lax. The testing range boundaries were not properly monitored, allowing people to walk in and out. Any signs were in English, which the local Aboriginal population could not read. Fallout from the ground blasts led to massive contamination of the Australian interior. The fallout from Maralinga even reached Adelaide and Melbourne. Some places are still heavily radioactive due principally to the presence of 20 kg of plutonium, the most toxic element known to humans.²

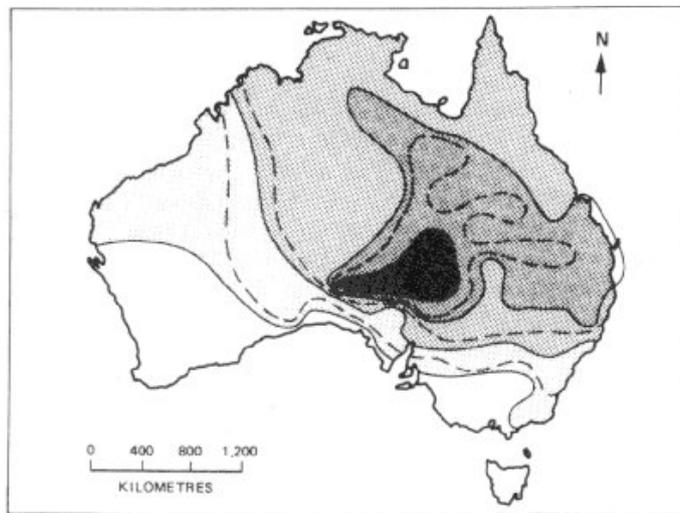


Figure 10.3.1 Map showing fall out from Maralinga (heaviest fallout the darkest)³

² Source: Australian Ministry of Defence, 20 March 1984

Aust Test Photos: Courtesy Department of Primary Industries and Energy (now [DISR](#)), 1995

³ Source: Australian Ministry of Defence, 20 March 1984

Aust Test Photos: Courtesy Department of Primary Industries and Energy (now [DISR](#)), 1995

As a child living in country Victoria at the time of these tests I can remember the clouds of black dust that darkened the sky, and how my mother complained because she had to redo the washing. Security around the perimeter of the site was lax and, as the local Indigenous population (the Pitjantjatjara people) were unable to read, the signage was ineffective and the people continued to wander in and out of the radio-active testing range.

In 2001 the British Ministry of Defence acknowledged that military personnel from Britain, Australia (15,000) and New Zealand were used as guinea pigs for the tests as were the Indigenous people in the area at the time. The recent (2006) 50th anniversary of the tests saw a number of cases still awaiting the outcome of compensation claims.

10.4 Towards a Conceptual framework: Contemplating the Consequences

What types of images/emotions does the mention of uranium immediately conjure up in people's minds? Is it the 1986 leak at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, the contaminated water in Kakadu? Is it the chromosome aberrations found in Gulf and Balkans Wars' veterans, the threat of terrorist activity and possible devastation caused by nuclear weapons? Or is it emotionally driven fear of the possibilities that the use of uranium engenders? Or does it engender anticipation at the increased number of uses such as nuclear power reactors, radioisotopes used for medical research and diagnosis, the irradiation of food to kill parasites and pests (and then to control the rate at which food ripens) our society finds for it?

Bombarded by scientific debate and essays (the latest of which are available through the World Nuclear Association website which is not always easily understood by persons outside the specialist field), it is no wonder there is confusion. As Australians sitting on more than a third of the world's known uranium deposits – access to which is eagerly sought by numerous governments, most notably those of the USA and China, it is imperative that our uranium deposits are responsibly handled.

How might it be best to represent the relentless tide of trauma that follows a nuclear disaster such as that which occurred at Chernobyl and will, almost certainly, be repeated elsewhere one day. We can be told about events, we can read about events, but neither the hearing nor the reading will impact on our emotions the way visually graphic images will do. Consider how the piles of skulls and bones excavated from execution sites in Cambodia, Africa, Serbia /Croatia, when piled up help to convey the enormity of man-made atrocities much more emphatically than any written words could do.

For example, the outcomes from the 1986 Chernobyl disaster are ongoing with a new generation now suffering horrific consequences with a range of neurological, physical, and psychological disorders such as those seen in the children *Sasha* and *Vova*, seen in Plates 10.4.1 and 10.4.2.



Plate10.4.1 Paul Fusco

Sasha 2000
(Magnum Agency)



Plate 10.4.2 Paul Fusco

Vova 2000
(Magnum Agency)

Both these children were affected by radiation poisoning. Four year old Sasha has almost no lymph system and just being alive produces toxins that are destroying her body. Fifteen year-old Vova suffers a form of cancer for which the doctors have no treatment and which has already necessitated the amputation of one mutated limb. Both children are in the Children's Cancer Hospital in Belarus, Minsk.

Hospitals of the region are filled with children so damaged that their parents are unable to care for them and this is going to continue for no one knows how many generations. The fall out and contamination from Chernobyl poisoned a quarter of the Russian

population (*Reference* Paul Fusco Chernobyl Radiation 1997) but little of this information makes its way into the popular media.

Wishing to represent the *relentless tide of trauma* (as acknowledged earlier) that follows a nuclear disaster and also wanting the work to contain the essence of the future silence, it was necessary to confront the issue of whether we should continue to develop and rely more and more on nuclear energy, the making of which will inevitably at some point in time, go wrong as happened with the Chernobyl leak. I also wished the work to contain references to other man-made preventable tragedies such as the genocide in Cambodia, Burma, Africa and Serbia/Croatia. The artwork made in response to this site thus seeks to encourage its audience to contemplate more fully the possible consequences of uranium mining

10.5 Processes relevant to construction of artwork relating to this site

The materials used in the artwork entitled *Subjective Futures* consisted of photographs taken of the rows of skull-like ceramic heads (heads as subject chosen for reasons referred to in 8.4.4 and 10.4) which were then digitally manipulated, printed on Lazertran sheets and then transferred onto clear Perspex. This was then overlaid with two additional narrower Perspex sheets to which the ceramic heads had been fixed. These narrower sheets were joined, one on the top section of the work and the other on the bottom section of the main sheet with a distance of two centimetres between the additional and main sheet made possible by lengths of Perspex rod which had been cut to size and threaded through with stainless steel bolts.

The initial construction process involved the making of 900 skull-like heads ranging in size from four to five centimetres high. These were individually modelled from a variety of light coloured stoneware, raku and porcelain clay bodies in order to obtain slightly different colours and finishes (as seen in Plate 10.5.1) representative of the genetic differences of individuals within diverse ethnic groups that have already been or will be affected by nuclear radiation in the future. Once the initial photographs had been taken they were digitally manipulated through a number of stages, one of which can be seen in Plate 10.5.2 until the final image as seen in Plate 10.5.3 was obtained.

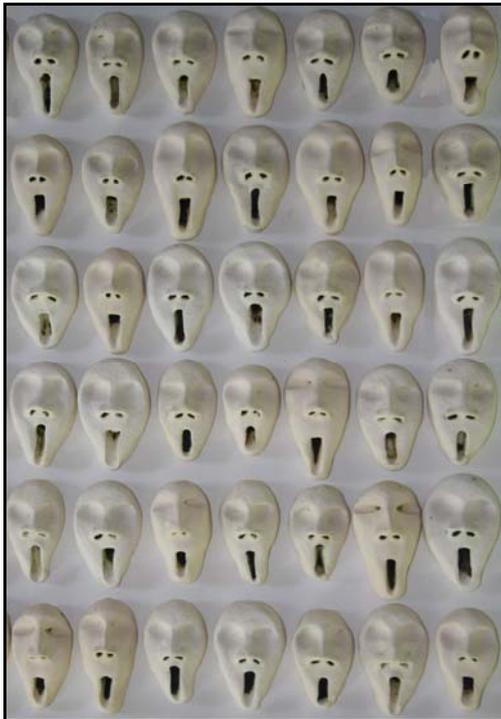


Plate 10.5.1 **Multi-coloured clays** 2006

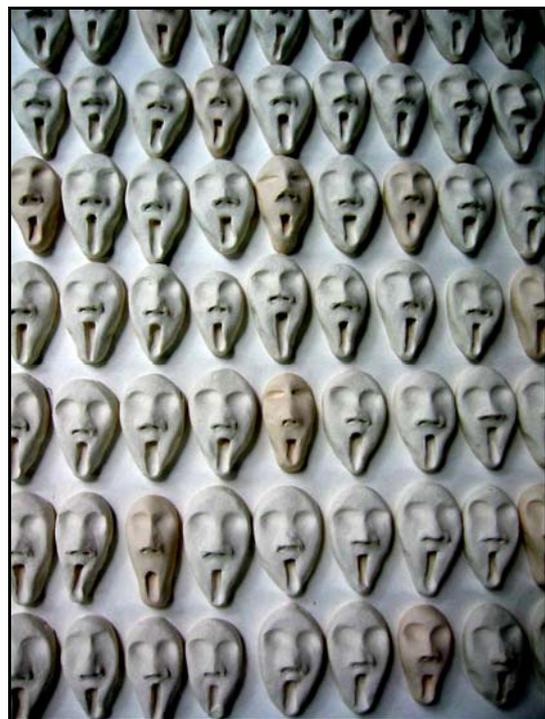


Plate 10.5.2 **Initial manipulation** 2006



Plate 10.5.3 J. Mulcahy

Final digital image 2006

As the work was to be installed on two walls in a specific part of the Gallery, the size of the work was constructed to maximise the impact in the designated space. This resulted in the total length of the image being 6.8 metres, one wall measuring four metres and the other 2.8 metres across.

As the final image selected needed to be duplicated over and over to cover the lengths of Perspex a variety of printing methods were investigated. These included

- using a commercial laser printer to print the duplicated image on a length of transparent vinyl which could then be transferred to the Perspex
- transferring the image to a silk screen and printing sections directly on to the Perspex
- using the newly developed Lazertran to make decals which could be transferred on to the Perspex

The first method using a commercial laser printer proved unsuccessful as it could only print in grey-scale which was too cold a tone to work aesthetically with the warmer colours of the ceramic heads. Using a silk screen also proved to be problematical as it

was difficult to register the successive runs necessary without smudging the previous print and there was the same problem with colour unless overlay colours were printed with additional screens. The work would just be too black and once again lack the warm tones needed. The newly developed Lazertran paper had a sister product that could be used with ink jet printers and, if printed using colour, maintained the subtle colour variations and warm tones necessary to work aesthetically with the ceramic heads (Plate 10.5.3). This made the choice of printing method relatively easy as a home printer, either ink-jet or laser, could be used. The down-side of this paper was its cost, and also that it was hard to align the sheets as, when wetted down to enable the image to be transferred, they are transparent with the edge of the image difficult to see. However, once applied and sealed with a transparent vinyl spray, they worked well with the ceramic heads as can be seen in Plate 10.5.4.

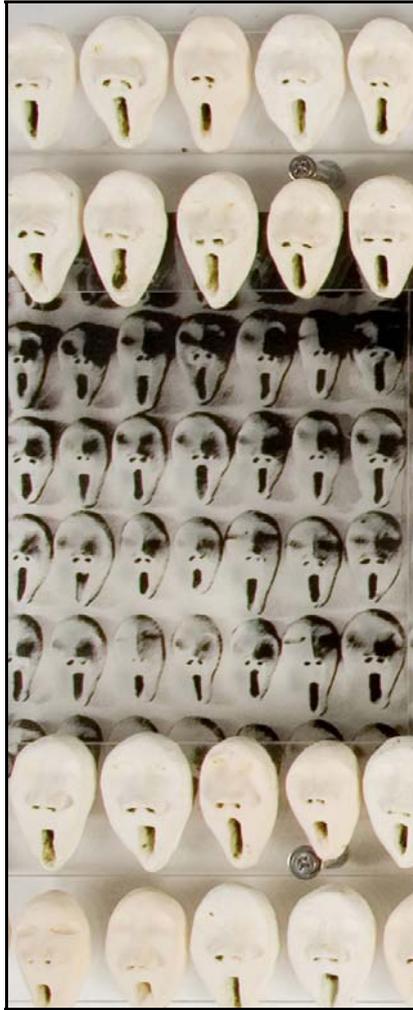


Plate 10.5.4 J. Mulcahy *Detail of Yesterday, Today and....Tomorrow?* 2006

Thus Site Four, *Subjective Futures*, completed the visual narrative of the other three sites in a way that was less a conclusion than a seeking, questioning narrative, offering the viewing audience choices in contemplating the future.

Chapter 11 Exhibition Sensing the Silence: Mary Kathleen

11.1 Pre 2006 Exhibition

As the research had been ongoing from the initial work completed in Banff early in 2001 to the final exhibition in 2006, certain earlier developed works from the *Ruins, Inheritance from Mary Kathleen* series had been included in a number of exhibitions to maintain professional currency, and also served as a gauge to find how colleagues, art critics and the viewing public perceived the work.

These exhibitions included *The Rye Crop* held at the Moura Clay Gallery, Sydney during 2003, and the *2004 Gold Coast International Ceramic Art Award* held at the Gold Coast City Art Gallery. The diptych that was exhibited in the Gold Coast Art Awards was subsequently purchased by the Gallery for their permanent exhibition. These works were consequently not included in the final exhibition. In the review of the work exhibited at the Gold Coast International Ceramic Art Award and published under the same title, in Craft Arts International, No 63, author and art critic Gordon Foulds wrote:

Queensland artist Jenny Mulcahy exhibited a striking diptych of two wall pieces, titled *Inheritance from Mary Kathleen, Series 11*, which illustrated the power of the arts to engage in topical social issues. Her entry represented the possible consequences for humanity associated with the now defunct Mary Kathleen uranium mine and the persistent lure of nuclear power as a viable option. Both she and Pru Morrison showed that the discipline of ceramics may be used in many ways, among these being the ability to make strong political and social comment. (Foulds, 2005)

These works have subsequently been included in the Gold Coast City Council Gallery exhibition *Crust*, which toured Regional Galleries in NSW and Southern Queensland during 2006 and 2007 and travelled north as far as Bundaberg during 2008. Thus, the

work and the issues it raises are exposed to different audiences in widely disparate communities and where it is hoped that it will generate further awareness and encourage discussion about issues surrounding the mining of uranium.

11.2 The Perc Tucker Regional Gallery

As with most major galleries, the Perc Tucker Regional Gallery has its exhibition program mapped out three or more years in advance. Having reached the conclusion that this was the most desirable space in the area, negotiations with the Gallery Director, Frances Thomson, began. Having exhibited at the Perc Tucker Regional Gallery previously, including a major exhibition in 1999 entitled *Beneath our Feet*, the artist's work and ability to meet deadlines was known to the Director. On submission of the proposal for the body of work that would constitute *Sensing the Silence: Mary Kathleen*, an initial time slot was allocated for October 2004, but was then re-scheduled for September 30th until 20th November 2005 because of the Gallery's need to accommodate travelling shows from the National Gallery. Given a family ill health situation, a further re-scheduling was requested and a new time of 21st Feb until 2nd April 2006 arranged. However a change in the Gallery's Exhibition Policy which saw extended turn around times and fewer exhibitions being mounted resulted in a further re-scheduling with the exhibition finally being allocated to the period 30th June to 27th of August 2006.

Although some of these changes to the deadline were extremely stressful, ultimately they proved to be fortunate as the amount and sheer scale of the work being constructed

in relation to the aims of the research meant that artwork was still being completed just hours prior to installation.

11.3 Transport issues

Prior to installing the work, it had first to be suitably crated and transported to the Gallery from the various studios where it had been constructed; these included two studios on the JCU Vincent campus and a private studio on Magnetic Island.

Due to the fragility of the media, wooden crates were custom built for each of the works that incorporated cast glass or *pâte de verre*. The crates constructed to house the bronzes included individually-cast polyurethane support moulds which encased the glass section and supported the bronze portion of the work. The ceramic arch works had been constructed with transportation issues in mind and, because the glass sections are heavier and harder than the surrounding ceramic body, the glass sections were removed and packed separately with the original ceramic sections (from which the glass had been cast) temporarily being put back in place to strengthen the whole structure for transport. These were then packed in polystyrene lined crates for transport.

The works constructed at the Island studio included the cast glass sections for the two arch works (previously transported to the mainland), all wall pieces incorporating *pâte de verre* that create the *Inheritance from Mary Kathleen* series and the ceramic head components of *Yesterday, Today andTomorrow?* The ceramic wall works were individually wrapped in foam and bubble wrap before being packed in crates, each layer

separated by polystyrene sheets. These were then transported by barge and truck to the Vincent campus where the decal images were printed on the lengths of perspex, and the heads carefully spaced and glued on. This series was then assembled to ensure that the structure was secure enough to be hung at the gallery; it was then disassembled and packed for transport to the gallery. Great care needed to be taken to ensure that the two metre lengths of perspex did not flex too much because, if they were to do so, the hundreds of heads glued on would be likely to flick off with the flexing movement of the perspex.

The artworks were transported from the JCU Vincent campus to the Perc Tucker Regional Gallery in a two-tonne truck, two trips being necessary due to the size of the seven large wall pieces that comprised the *Ruins No 6* installation. As the individual sections of this work have a fragile textured glaze surface, weigh up to 72 kg each, with the majority being over 2 m long, they provided a significant transport challenge which was solved by laying them side by side on the truck floor, uncovered, so that the surface would not be damaged. Wooden batts were placed underneath the ceramic section adjacent to the steel backing plate to stop the works from tipping on their sides or rolling over. By packing them in tightly, they were able to be transported to the Gallery without any damage occurring.

11.4 Installation and presentation of work

An artist's statement outlining the conceptual vision and a description of works to be constructed for the exhibition had been provided to the Gallery early in the negotiation period, prior to the allocation of a space and time.

When the initial contract was signed with the Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, a floor plan was provided to the artist along with other general information outlining artist and gallery responsibilities regarding installing, demounting dates/times and a breakdown of costs (See Figure 11.4.1)

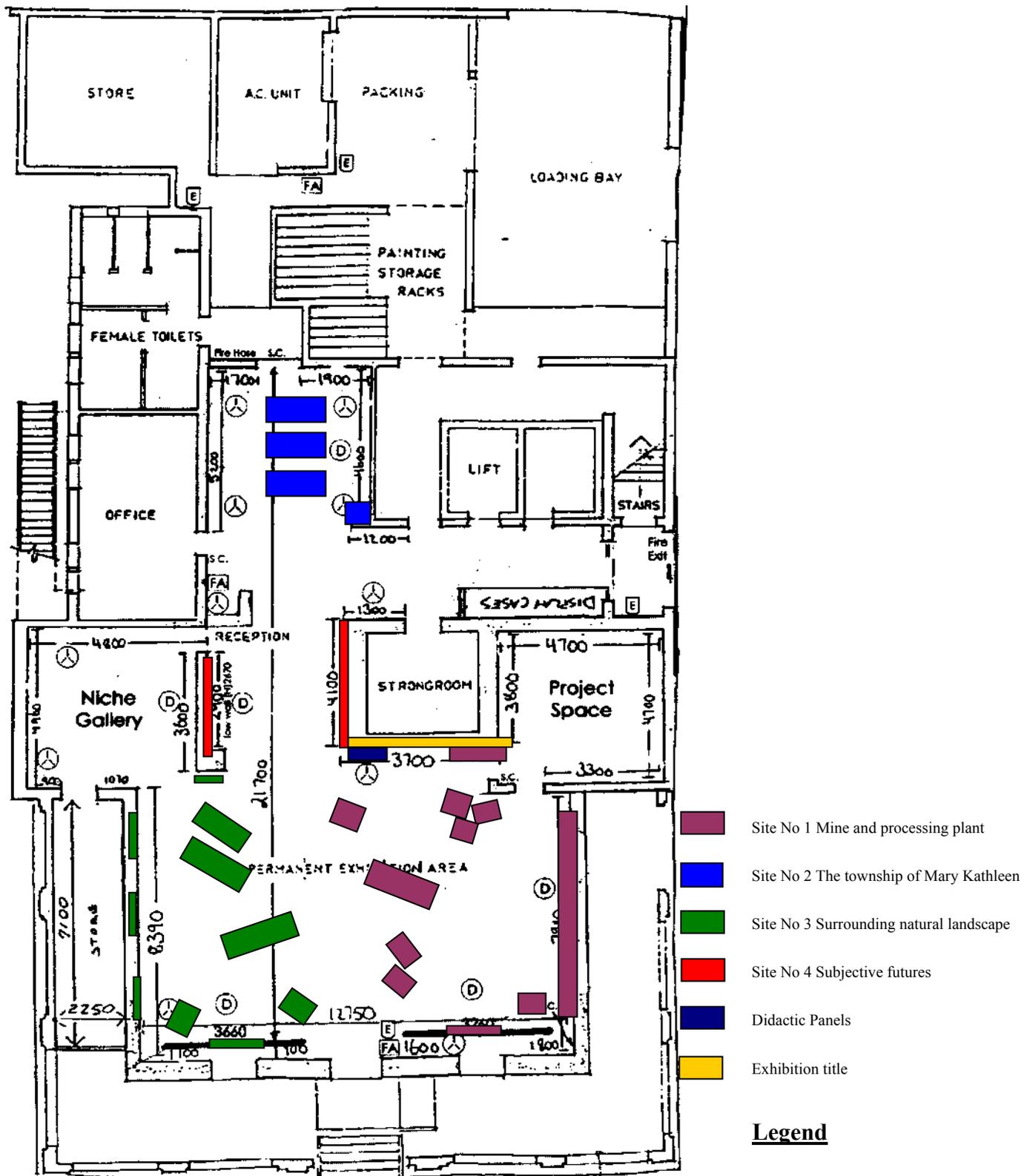


Figure 11.4.1 Ground floor plan Perc Tucker Regional Gallery

The floor plan (Figure 11.4.1), which included specific measurements, interestingly, became a crucial element in the design, both conceptual, and practical of some of the major works, specifically *Yesterday, Today and.....Tomorrow?*, *Transitions 1, 2 & 3* and the wall installation *Ruins No 7*, all of which were constructed to take advantage of particular sections of the gallery.

Once it became apparent that the sculptures would work best in a specific location and could even be almost custom built for those areas to create a stronger impact on the audience, consultation with the gallery staff was undertaken to ensure the artworks, although then still in the conceptual stage, would comply with gallery installation requirements, including the weight hanging capacity of the cords. Between 2002 and installation of the work in 2006, further verbal consultation took place with the Exhibitions Officer. The Gallery Director, Frances Thompson, visited the artist's studio in 2005 to view work in progress. An annotated gallery floor plan with areas marked where it was envisaged the artwork would be placed and how it was to be installed was presented to her at that time. She expressed her satisfaction with the completed work and description of the work in progress.

As the concept underpinning the work for the exhibition related to artistic responses to the four specific areas of silence related to the Mary Kathleen uranium mine and township, it was imperative that the works be arranged in such a way that the different and tangible aspects of the recognisable silences were discernible while also creating the sense of an overall unified body of work. Thus the floor plan became an important

component in realising the construction aspects of the work and also in unifying the concepts integral to each area of work.

The ground floor, with the main gallery space near the front entrance, and a narrower space leading into a far gallery area, was easily, in a conceptual sense, sectioned into the four distinct areas in which the different groupings of artworks were to be placed. The front area was easy to envisage as being visually and aesthetically divided into two sections with one half containing the silence and the work relating to the now defunct mine site, and the other to the silence of the natural surrounding landscape and the regrowth and strength felt there. For a reason that was without any specific basis but was nevertheless very real, it was felt by the artist that the works relating to the mine site would be best installed on the left hand side of the Gallery entrance and the natural landscape related works would most appropriately be installed on the right hand side of the main gallery area. This then allowed the narrower passage containing the work *Yesterday, Today and.....Tomorrow?*, which resonates with the silence of the future, to lead into the far gallery which, without much natural light, was well suited to the works *Transitions, 1, 2 and 3* that embodied the silence of the township as it is slowly subsumed by natural elements.

As the exhibition installation drew closer and the large wall installation *Ruins No 6* was being prepared for the final glaze firings, the gallery staff were consulted once again. Steel backing plates had been constructed with a double length of angle iron welded on to the plates to prevent any movement over the two metre plus sections of ceramic. The ceramic panels had been constructed with the means in place, via a rust patinated bolt

and washer, to secure the ceramic panel to the backing support. Final approval was required from the Gallery regarding the preferred type of support fixture/hanging device to use, because, if a fixture needed to be welded on, this would need to be done prior to the ceramic panels being joined given that the heat that would occur when welding in close proximity to the ceramic sections could cause cracking. A member of the gallery staff visited the university studio at Vincent to inspect the works and offer advice as to the best fixtures to use. On realising the size and weight of the work she was unable to offer advice other than to take some digital images of the sculptures for forwarding to the Townsville City Council Engineering Department to see what devices they were able to suggest as suitable for the installation.

The report from the Engineer's Department was not encouraging as it expressed concerns regarding the weight of so many panels hanging off the one wall which was Heritage listed and also composed of crumbly brick. The engineer consulted wished to know the exact weight of each individual piece and what the spacing would be between the individual panels designed to be bolted directly to the wall. Weighing the works proved a challenge but eventually a way was found using a solid set of bathroom scales and balancing the two metre plus panel lengths in the centre with assistants ready to grab the work if it became unbalanced and looked like falling. The weights were variable with the heaviest weighing 72 kg and the lightest 30 kg. The actual positioning of the individual panels also became an issue as the five vertical panels could be spaced to allow an even demand on the wall strength but it was felt the two horizontal sections, with one being placed above the other would exert too much stress on the old wall.

All of this discussion took place over a number of weeks and as time was fast disappearing, a number of holes were drilled in both the top and bottom of the steel supports so that, if necessary, further attachments could be made after the ceramic panels had been permanently fixed to the supports. Numerous alternative support systems were investigated and discussed as summarised in Table 11.4.1. These suggestions included building a plinth-like false floor which could run the length of the wall and take the full weight of the pieces and which could be painted the same colour as the wall so it would tend to merge with it. This idea had merit but would have been extremely difficult to construct in a single piece as the sculptures would, of necessity, need to be first securely fastened to the back of this false floor so it could not tip over; also, logistically, it was impractical as the five vertical panels would have to be supported simultaneously by a team of about fifteen people whilst the attaching process was underway, and the whole artwork and plinth would then need to be swivelled around, pushed against and fastened to the wall. This could have been more viable if a separate plinth was made for each section of the work and then the joints covered up with gap filler and painted over. While this idea was given serious consideration, it did not, however, adequately take into account the problem of the two horizontal sections because, while the top one could possibly be suspended from the hanging system, the lower one would look extremely awkward if it had either a large plinth or line securing it. This idea and versions of it were floated with the gallery staff and then the engineering department but were ultimately rejected as the council would not allow any bolts to be driven into that particular wall even if they were not load bearing.

Other approaches to the problem included going into the roof and hanging supporting wires through the ceiling. This, while a good suggestion proved impossible because of the positioning of the gallery's air-conditioning ducts. Other suggestions were the building of a steel scaffolding to support the work and designed to look like it was a part of it or building a completely false wall.

Table 11.4.1 Installation summary of Ruins No 6

Problem	Potential Solutions.	Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>A series of seven works, varying in weight from 72 kg – 30kg that need to be installed on heritage listed gallery wall. Engineers will allow no holes to be drilled and say the combined overall weight of the work is too heavy for the existing hanging system..</p>	<p>1. Building of a plinth like, false floor which could run the length of the wall and take the full weight of the pieces</p>	<p>The plinth could be painted the same colour as the wall so it would tend to merge with it. It would be load bearing</p>	<p>Extremely difficult to construct in the one piece, as the sculptures would of necessity need to be first securely fastened to the back of this false floor so it couldn't tip over, Logistically impractical as the five vertical panels would have to be supported simultaneously by a team of about fifteen people whilst the attaching process was underway, the whole artwork and plinth would then need to be swivelled around, pushed against and fastened to the wall It did not take into account the two horizontal pieces for which this system would be inappropriate as they needed to be suspended at varying distances from the floor as whilst the top one could possibly be suspended from the hanging system, the lower one would look extremely awkward if it had either a large plinth or line securing it.</p>
	<p>2. Constructing a series of individual plinths which, when placed in position against the wall could then be overlaid with a length of timber to conceal the joins, alternatively the gaps could filled with gap filler and then painted over</p>	<p>Individual sections would be load bearing. Fewer people would be needed to install the work It could be painted to merge with the wall</p>	<p>It would take a lot of time to construct the individual supports Concealing the joins would be time consuming and difficult to achieve It did not take into account the two horizontal pieces for which this system would be inappropriate as they needed to be suspended at varying distances from the floor as whilst the top one could possibly be suspended from the hanging system the lower one would look extremely awkward if it had either a large plinth or line securing it.</p>
	<p>3. Going into the roof and hanging supporting wires through the ceiling.</p>	<p>The weight of the individual works would be borne by the roof supports and the Galleries hanging system could be used to position the works against the wall whilst not taking any of the weight. No holes would need to be drilled in the wall</p>	<p>Proved impossible because of the positioning of the air-conditioning duct inside the wall</p>
	<p>4. Building a steel scaffolding to support the work and look like it was a part of it.</p>	<p>It would be free-standing</p>	<p>huge expense involved danger of using any support structure which would destroy the integrity of the artwork</p>
	<p>5. Building a completely false wall.</p>	<p>Bolts could be driven in at the top and base of each work</p>	<p>Very expensive Time consuming It would still somehow need to be connected to the existing wall</p>
	<p>6 For the two horizontal pieces: Fasten two lengths of angle iron, of similar size to those used on the sculpture to the wall battens. The angle iron on the back of the work would then sit on the wall angle [with pins through pre-drilled holes, to fasten]. You would also need wires from each end of your pieces to points further up the wall as added security.</p>	<p>A good solution both practical and economical</p>	<p>Nil</p>
	<p>7. For the vertical pieces, weld more steel, 360mm long, to the current backing plates. This would then sit on the floor and could also have a toggle into the wall.</p>	<p>Good solution</p>	<p>It is not possible to weld so close to the ceramic sections as this would cause cracking However this idea was adapted for use but instead of welds additional bolts were able to be put in place</p>

These latter suggestions were rejected due to the significant expense involved and also the danger of using any support structure which would destroy the integrity of the artwork.

At this stage it was conceded that using that particular wall was just not a viable option and the whole exhibition layout had to be re-thought towards decisions which would allow a complete reorganisation of the artworks within the space available while maintaining the integrity of conceptual and aesthetic concerns.

Given the length of the installation, the only real option for an alternative space was the main wall to the right of the gallery from the front entrance, the wall completely opposite the initial choice. This wall to the right, although not heritage listed, was only plasterboard with battens behind, so once again the engineer had to be consulted. At this stage it was still unclear as to what the final installation solution would be as it had still to be identified.

The next day, 16th June, the following email arrived from sculpture technician Richard Gillespie:

I've been talking with Tony Cuthbertson, who I think has come up with some elegant solutions.

For the two horizontal pieces: Fasten two lengths of angle iron, similar size to those you have used, to the wall battens. The angle iron on the back of your work would then sit on the wall angle [with pins through pre-drilled holes, to fasten]. You would also need wires from each end of your pieces to points further up the wall as added security.

For the vertical pieces, weld more steel, 360mm long, to the current backing plates. This would then sit on the floor and could also have a toggle into the wall, in addition to the ones which will be required at the top. You could then disguise these with plinth like covering boxes - either one long plinth or individual plinths for each piece.... (email communication, R. Gillespie 2006)

This idea provided the solution for mounting the horizontal works and it was found that, if chocks were placed under the back at the base of the works, this prevented any chance of them rolling forward and thus the support wires could be discarded. It also provided an idea for what eventually became the solution to installing the vertical works. Welding was not an option because it would have damaged the ceramic sections so the solution involved welding support sections of metal to a length of hollow square rod to ballast it, where necessary, so that it fitted snugly between the back angle iron sections and then could be bolted into place sideways through both sections of angle iron. For further strength and stability, a hole was drilled through the three widths of metal nearer the base and a pin inserted to secure it as shown in Figures 11.4.2, 11.4.3 and 11.4.4. Prior to the sections being bolted together, a section of flat metal plate was welded to the base of the section to provide further stability at ground level and to minimise floor damage.

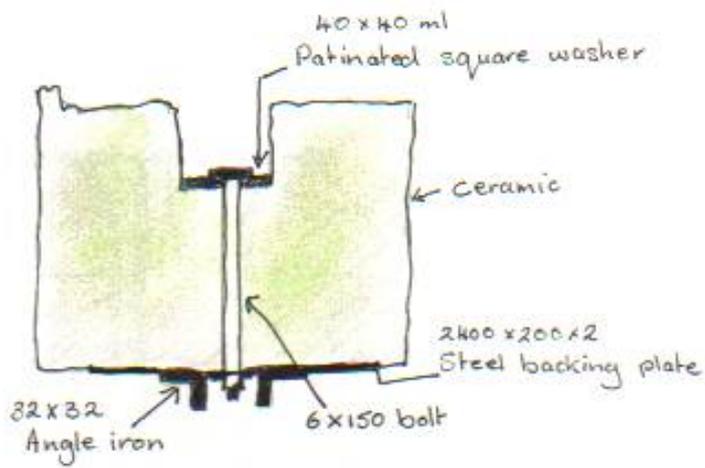


Figure 11.4.2 Cross section of ceramic showing bolt

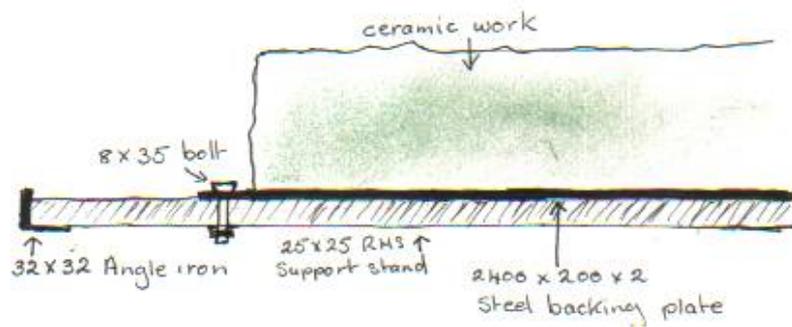


Figure 11.4.3 Side elevation

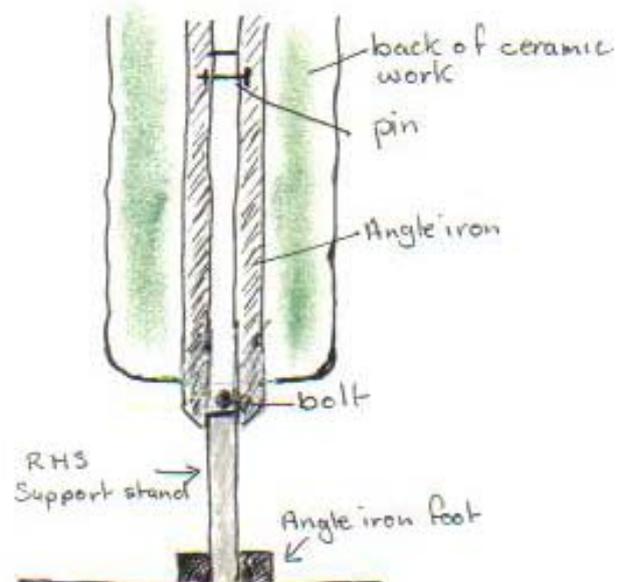


Figure 11.4.4 Support section for the Ruins No 6 installation

Once the works were installed the support stands were able to be painted to blend as much as possible with both floor carpet and wall as illustrated in Plate 11.4.1.



Plate 11.4.1 J. Mulcahy

Ruins No 6 (detail) 2006

Because of the weight and shape of the individual pieces, four people were required to lift each section into place and then secure toggle bolts through the top to draw the works to the wall at the top. A carpenter from the City Council was there to ensure that the work was installed safely and with minimal impact on the gallery wall. The other free standing works that made up the Ruins series were displayed on plinths on the right hand side of the gallery as indicated in Figure 11.4.1

11.5.1 Atmosphere through lighting

As each of the four groupings of works that comprised the exhibition related to a different silence felt within and or related to the mine site, different lighting scenarios were required to ensure that the individual works within each of the groupings were lit

in such a way as to facilitate the best possible interpretation of the specific silence that each set of works, embodied.

11.6 The Four Sites

11.6.1 Site One: Mine and processing plant

The artwork constructed in response to the silence identified at Site One (see the dark pink shading on Figure 11.4.1, Perc Tucker Gallery Floor Plan) the actual remains of the open cut mine and the ruins of the processing plant consisted of;

- *The Ruins* series, which comprised six large free standing works and a monumental wall installation of seven pieces.

These works were constructed either solely of ceramic or of a combination of ceramic, steel and found objects; all had as features, heavily textured, lichen like surfaces and small window or tunnel like apertures and passages as shown in Plate 11.6.1.

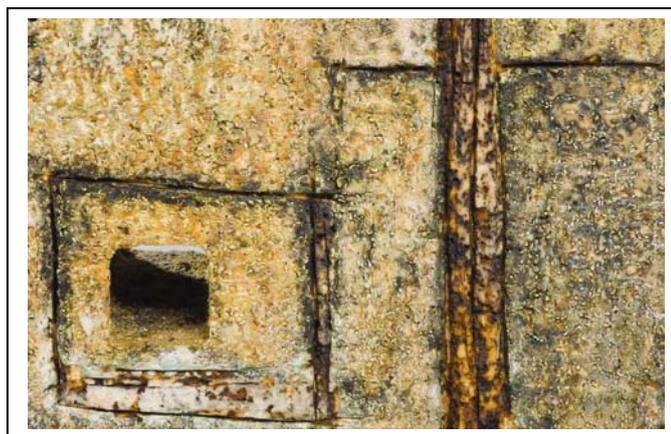


Plate 11.6.1 J. Mulcahy *Ruins No 1(Detail)* 2006

The placement and lighting of these works was of particular importance because what could be viewed through the gaps or openings became, in effect, crucial to the work for,

in thus singling out and framing that which could be viewed beyond what would normally be regarded as negative space, effectively it became integral to how the individual works related to and fed off each other. Indeed, glimpses of other structures (works) or empty spaces (see Plate 11.6.2) or apertures filled with the colours and textures from distant works all created a different feel and atmosphere.



Plate 11.6.2 J. Mulcahy

Ruins No 4 2006

The lighting from overhead spotlights suspended on rails was adjusted to enable the shadows cast by the individual works and the apertures contained within them to connect as an installation, highlight specific found inclusions, and also enhance the lichen-like glazed surfaces to further create a sense of ageing, weathered concrete in which the lichen-like glazed surface conveyed the feeling of being reclaimed by nature as can be seen in Plates 11.6.3 and 11.6.4.



Plate 11.6. 3 J.Mulcahy

Ruins No 1 2006



Plate 11.6.4 J. Mulcahy

Ruins No 6 2006

The works that were placed near the front entry doors needed extra care in placement as with the constant opening and closing of doors as people entered the Gallery, natural light tended to flood these works from outside the Gallery space thus altering the desired perceptual frame and presentation of the work. This problem was eventually overcome by placing the plinths on an angle so that the natural light hit the sides of the work rather than creating a different set of shadows through the apertures.

- The *Inheritance from Mary Kathleen Series 2* consisted of two triptychs (A&B) featuring *pâte de verre* and ceramic inclusions as seen in Plates 11.6.5 and 11.6.6.



Plate 11.6.5 J. Mulcahy

Inheritance from Mary Kathleen (series 2A) 2006



Plate 11.6.6 J. Mulcahy *Inheritance from Mary Kathleen (series 2B) 2006*

As these works were wall mounted there was not the same degree of angst associated with installing the *Ruins* series. The main concerns were to highlight the textured ceramic surface and the colours of the *pâte de verre* inlay without causing significant reflection, an effect which was achieved with subtle overhead lighting.

- *Green Arch*, Plate 11.6.7 is a plinth mounted large work constructed of ceramic and with a mid-section of cast crystal. A metaphor for the crossing of boundaries and the ability of humankind to alter, for better or worse, minerals extracted from the earth the lighting challenge was to enhance the clarity of the crystal to such an extent that it glowed while maintaining a softer light on the glazed ceramic portion of the work which, because of its rugged and heavily textured surface, served as a foil to deepen the crystal's intensity.



Plate 11.6.7 J. Mulcahy

Green Arch 2006

This was achieved by placing the plinths supporting the work in the natural light corridor that occurred as a result of the light coming in the glass front doors. This soft lighting was ideal for the ceramic component of the work and enabled a spotlight directly above, to be focused on the cast crystal section of the work which imbued the crystal with a glowing clarity thereby imparting the desired sense of awesome silence intuited at the mine site.

- *Open Cut 2* (Plate 11.6.8) is a plinth mounted, large ceramic work.

As the final work emanating from Site No 1 was directly related to an image of the now defunct open - cut uranium mine featured on the Didactic Panels, it was desirable that the sculpture be situated in such a way that the art-work relating to the open-cut mine and the photographic image be viewed in relationship to each other.



Plate 11.6. 8 J. Mulcahy

Open Cut 2 2006

Once on the plinth, the main challenges inherent in this work were to achieve depth and light it in such a way as to avoid too many shadows occurring as the viewer looked down into the epicentre of the work. Basically it is a large hemispherical shape and the plinth needed to be in such a position as to enable the viewer simultaneously to perceive the artwork and the image on the panel behind.

The desired lighting effects were achieved by the use of direct overhead lighting which was focused on the centre of the work with angled spotlights to highlight the colours and textures of the work and enable the viewer to connect the sculpture to the image behind.

11.6.2 Site Two: The township of Mary Kathleen

The artwork constructed in response to the silence identified at Site Two, (and identified by the dark blue on Figure 11.4.1, Perc Tucker Gallery Floor Plan) the deserted and relocated township of Mary Kathleen, consisted of

- *Heads* Perspex boxes filled with small ceramic heads displayed on a plinth (Plate 11.6.9).
- *Transitions 1, 2 & 3* – a series of three large scale ceramic slabs installed on thirty centimetre high plinths (Plates 11.6.10 & 11.6.11).



Plate 11.6.9 J. Mulcahy

Heads 2006



Plate 11.6.10 J. Mulcahy

Transition 1 2006

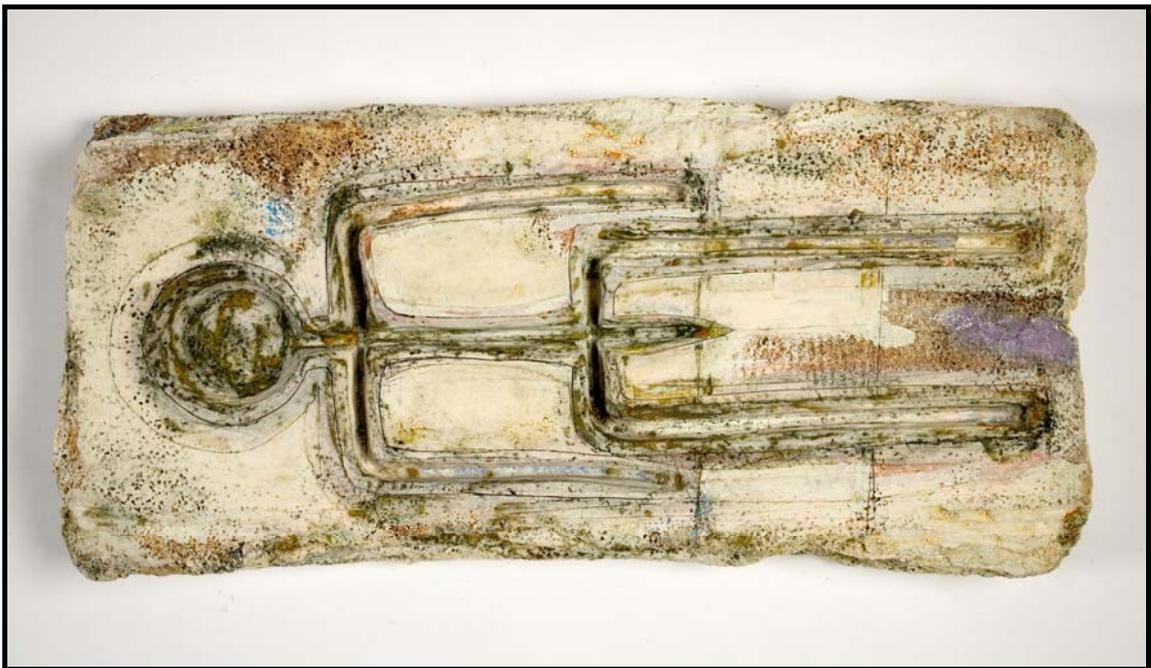


Plate 11.6.11 J. Mulcahy

Transition 2 2006

Both series of works were concerned with feelings of transition, disintegration, and the eventual subsuming of all living things back into the earth; the silence of a landscape that had once been home to a busy community and had now been left to regenerate. The section of the gallery most suited to the display of the works relating to the silence

of the deserted township was the area at the far end as this was the darkest area with little natural light. This lack of natural light enabled the works to be delicately lit with angled overhead spotlights focusing on the images drawn and carved into the works. This subtle and easily controlled lighting contributed greatly to underpinning the nuances of silence that surrounded this grouping of works.

11.6.3 Site Three: Surrounding natural landscape

The artwork constructed in response to the silence identified at Site Three, (and signified by the dark green on Figure 11.4.1, Perc Tucker Gallery Floor Plan) the surrounding natural landscape of the mine and town site consisted of the following works

- *Blue Arch 2*, a plinth mounted large work constructed of ceramic and with a mid-section of cast crystal (Plate 11. 6. 12)



Plate 11.6.12 J. Mulcahy

Blue Arch 2006

As with the *Green Arch* constructed for Site No 1, *Blue Arch* relates directly to the stone bridge one crosses to access the town site of Mary Kathleen. Here, as in *Blue Arch*, the purity of the cast crystal acts as a metaphor for the earth's innate energy and as a symbol of purity and healing with the heavily textured and striated ceramic surface coloured to replicate the mosses and lichens growing over the building remains as they are slowly reverting to the natural landscape. The atmosphere that filled the silence of this site is one of energy with the power of the earth to reclaim that which has been used generating a powerful and recognisable feeling.

The pure translucency of the crystal segment of this work celebrates the power of the earth's capacity for renewal. Hence it was imperative that the lighting be such that this sense of power was recognisable by the viewer. Thus the considerations that were paramount in lighting the *Green Arch* from *Site 1* were equally applicable to *Blue Arch* and resulted in the same approach being used with such success that the crystal absolutely glowed with energy as it both absorbed and reflected the light.

- *The Key* (Plate 11.6.13) *Departure and Inheritance from Mary Kathleen (Series '1 & 3)* (Plates 11.6.14 & 11.6.15) consisted of one triptych and three single works featuring *pâte de verre* and ceramic inclusions.



Plate 11.6.13 J. Mulcahy

The Key 2006

All of these works were wall mounted and, as with the works made of similar media for *Site No1*, the main concerns were to highlight the textured ceramic surface and the colours of the *pâte de verre* inlay without causing undue reflection. This was achieved successfully with subtle angled overhead lighting.



Plate11.6.14. J. Mulcahy

Inheritance from Mary Kathleen (Series 3) 2006



Plate 11.6.15. J. Mulcahy

Inheritance from Mary Kathleen (Series 1) 2006

- The *Altar* series as seen in Plates 11.6.16 & 11.6.17, which consisted of four works constructed of the same materials as aforementioned works, was free standing and mounted on plinths. Similar considerations to those applicable to the wall works were necessary with this series; however, the outcomes were more easily achieved as the works could easily be slightly angled to avoid reflections, a solution which had not been possible with the wall mounted works.



Plate 11.6.16 J. Mulcahy *Female Altar* 2006



Plate 11.6.17 J. Mulcahy *Male Altar* 2006

- *Message sticks*, is a series of five cast and assembled bronzes, of which with three feature cast glass components. Examples of the works with glass inserts and those of pure bronze are to be seen in Plates 11.6.18 and 11.6.19. Mounted on plinths, these works were a challenge to light. The main obstacle was that the works were long and narrow with a textured, incised, patinated and burnished surface on the bronze sections and complex shapes on the cast glass sections.



Plate 11.6.18 J. Mulcahy

Message Stick Bronze with cast glass insert 2006



Plate 11.6.19 J. Mulcahy *Message Sticks* Bronze with cast glass insert and plain bronzes 2006

To light the duller coloured bronze so that the metal gleamed appropriately whilst revealing the intricacies of the incised and sprigged drawings and simultaneously directed the light on the cast glass components in such a way that the glass glowed and reflected was difficult given the lighting available. Another problem was the white colour of the plinths, which, as the glass section was only a few centimetres off the plinths meant that the white surface could be seen through the thinner sections of glass, thus diffusing somewhat the energy they should have been radiating. The end result worked reasonably well from certain angles but not as well from others.

11.6.4 Site Four: Subjective Futures

The artwork constructed in response to the silence identified at Site Four, (and identified by the bright red on Figure 11.4.1, Perc Tucker Gallery floor plan) *Subjective Futures*, is concerned with the imagined silence of our collective future, should we persist with the mining and use of uranium. The work, *Yesterday, Today and..... Tomorrow?* consists of a series of four panels together measuring 6.8 metres in length. Constructed of perspex, ceramic and digital images, the works were hung in two sections, one

section joining each of the two metre panels and the other joining the shorter 1.4 metre panels (Plate 11.6.20) so that they hung as one as can be seen in Plate 11.6.21.

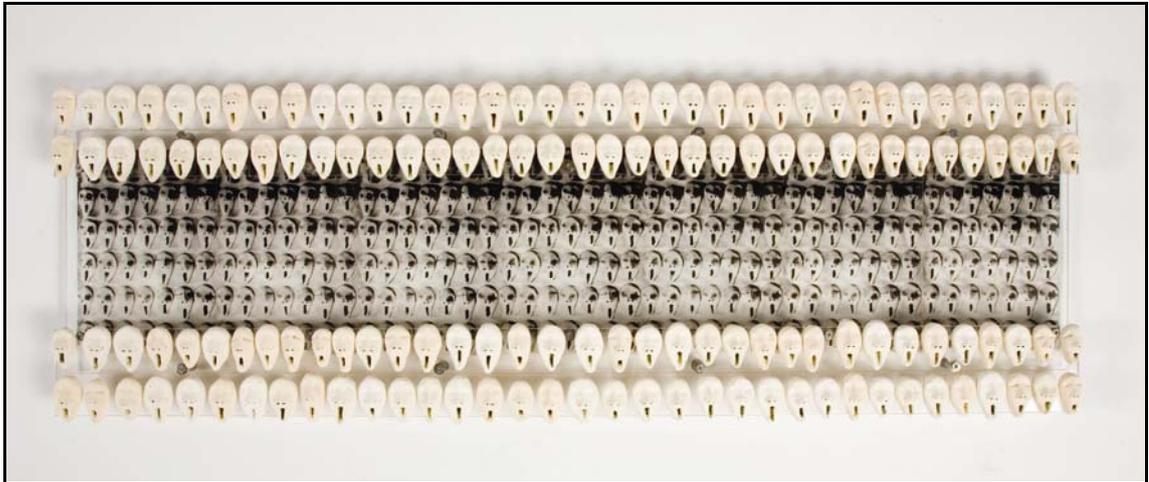


Plate 11.6.20 J. Mulcahy

Yesterday, Today and....Tomorrow? (smaller panel) 2006



Plate 11.6.21 J. Mulcahy

Yesterday, Today and.... Tomorrow? (one wall of installation) 2006

These were installed on either side of the narrower middle section of the Gallery which leads towards the rear darker space where the works relating to the now vanished township of Mary Kathleen were located.

As with the works containing glass, and also the longer bronze work, the length of the panels as they were presented and the fact that extended lengths of perspex were involved immediately created concerns with reflection and the continuity of light over such a distance. However the solution was relatively easy because of the work's underlying concept in that it was intended to be stark and confronting and hence the lighting needed also to be fairly stark to reinforce the angst that the work was designed to create. Direct overhead lighting along the length of the work was used with just a modicum of adjustment required to avoid shadows forming under the ceramic heads.

11.7 Inclusion of sound

The inclusion of sound was initially conceived of as a collection of natural sounds recorded at the selected sites, similar in conception to John Gage's silent classic *4'33"* of which Gage remarked "has no sounds of his own making in it" and which "...expresses the acceptance of whatever happens in that emptiness..." (Kostelanetz, 2003:197) or alternatively, using sounds that resonated with a spiritual connection to the land such as the compositions of the Shakuhachi expert Riley Lee who incorporates indigenous instruments such as the didgeridoo into his performances.

A number of site visits, however, resulted in the realisation that replaying for another listener the sounds that filled a particular place in time were not necessarily likely to be

successfully transferable because they consisted primarily of sounds that could have been recorded anywhere. Nuances of weather, visual mapping which brought into the sub-conscious a plethora of historical, social and environmental issues associated with the specific landscape under scrutiny and most importantly, the felt energy of the specific place that all contributed to the overall feeling of the site were simply not able to be transferred by a simple recording of sound on site.

Further consideration was given to the use of existing music compositions such as those of Riley Lee but this approach was also rejected as the incorporation of the didgeridoo into many of Lee's compositions, initially thought to be highly desirable because of its spiritual connotations and the Aboriginal connectedness to the land, was rejected eventually as a result of this association. The whole focus needed to be on the silence felt by the researcher and, although existing compositions could conjure up some of the emotions felt by the researcher at the specific locations within the landscape, none could manage it to the extent desired. None, when viewed as an accompaniment to the artwork, served as a reinforcement of the silence portrayed within and by the work. Further to this, the use of indigenous instruments was felt to be inappropriate as this sound belongs to their aboriginality and is not one that should be appropriated by one of largely Celtic background. It was also undesirable for the reasons as outlined in Chapter 7 which were to do with the traditional owners, the Kalkadoon people excising the area in and around the Mary Kathleen site and any sacred sites contained within that area from their tribal lands.

The possibility of commissioning a sound composition in response to images and descriptions of the selected sites was discussed with Dr Stephen Campbell of James

Cook University's School of Creative Arts. Dr Campbell's positive response resulted in further discussions which were extended to include music lecturer Dr David Salisbury. David consequently discussed the project with his students which was subsequently included as an optional assessable item and could therefore be included in the student's final folio. As a consequence several students undertook the task of composing works in response to the images and descriptions they had been given. However, as the exhibition deadline approached, only one student, Nick Webb, had completed compositions. Nick had completed two works, one in response to images of Site One, the mine and processing plant and the other to Site Two, the township of Mary Kathleen. Of the two works, the dirge-like piece composed in response to the township site and titled Mary Kathleen was judged the most suitable as it added a funereal ambience well suited to both aesthetic and conceptual connotations of the township related works, *Transitions, 1, 2 and 3*.

The composition was altered slightly to enhance the sound effects when played in a continuous loop. Once looped, the tape was placed inside a plinth where the tape player was concealed and played continuously once switched on. As this section of the exhibition was located down the far end of the Gallery, marked in dark blue on the Gallery Floor Plan, (Figure 11.4.1), the sound could not be heard in the areas of the Gallery which housed works that resonated with a different silence.

On opening night the composition was played live by two musicians, one with cello and the other with a key board.

11.8 Invitation and catalogue

The final works exhibited in *Sensing the Silence: Mary Kathleen* were a culmination of in excess of five years of extensive research into new ways of combining different media, developing techniques and construction methods not previously used, and visually identifying and then realising the sophisticated concept of visual interpretations of the silence of a specific place in the landscape. As such there was a need to record, in an easily accessible way, as much as possible about the techniques and concepts behind the works to enable people who were unable to view the work *in situ* to gain an understanding of the concept that was the driver of the whole research project and view, albeit on paper, a selection of the final artworks. A quality catalogue offered the most effective means of achieving this aim because it could easily be made available to interested individuals, gallery directors, educators, potential sponsors, as well as being used as a promotional tool for professional development opportunities.

Initial discussions with the Perc Tucker Gallery Director, Frances Thompson, were a little disappointing as Frances wanted the catalogue to be only four pages in total as this is the catalogue size the Gallery budget allocates for major exhibitions. However after ongoing negotiations which saw the exhibition dates lengthen to double the normal time frame, at a prime time of the year and the artist's willingness to contribute the normal artist's fee towards catalogue printing costs coupled with in-house design and layout by staff member Sarah Hill, the catalogue size was increased to 12 pages on good quality paper. This size allowed for a foreword, written by the Director, Frances Thomson; a relevant literary quote chosen by the artist; a catalogue essay, written by arts writer and critic Gordon Foulds; 17 images; and the artist's curriculum vitae. It would have been

preferable if an artist's statement could also have been included; however at the time the choice was between using the essay which had already been commissioned or reducing the number of images and cutting out the literary quote. On consideration it was decided to exclude an additional statement by the artist in favour of the essay and quote which were, after all, about the work. The artist's statement was instead displayed on didactic panels (see Appendix F) where it could be read by all who wished rather than only by people who purchased a catalogue.

Gordon Foulds was approached to write the catalogue essay as he had previously written about the artist's work in an article for Craft Arts International, where he reviewed the award-winning works from the Gold Coast International Ceramics Awards in which the artist's work was acquired for the permanent collection. In the Craft International review of the Awards Exhibition, Gordon reflected on the political implications of the Artist's work. After gaining approval from Frances Thomson and supervisor Professor Diana Davis, Gordon was approached to write the catalogue essay which would later be extended and submitted for commercial publication in either Craft Arts International or Ceramics Art and Perception. At this stage the Gallery assumed responsibility for paying the writer's fee and also the right to edit the essay prior to it going to print.

Gordon was pleased to accept the commission because he was familiar with some of the artist's previous work. As he is based on the Gold Coast and was therefore unable to view the work in person, images detailing the progression of the works were sent to him over a period of several months thus allowing him to gain a good understanding of the

practical processes involved. Written commentaries were sent along with the images and these were then followed up with phone interviews.

As the deadline for the first draft approached, digital photographs were taken by the artist of all the works, finished and unfinished, it was hoped to include in the final catalogue. These images, while not the final ones, enabled Sarah Hill, the in-house graphic designer to start work on the catalogue layout. This part of the process all went relatively smoothly as Sarah's sense of design was very similar to the artist's and both wanted the catalogue to have an appearance of elegant simplicity in the font and general layout with the emphasis on good clear images.

As the catalogue layout started to come together, specific images were chosen to present a good overview of the works that would eventually constitute the exhibition. These were then re-taken by professional photographer Robin Gauld thus allowing Sarah to replace the images taken by the artist. The costs of the photography were not included in the catalogue budget and were borne by the artist.

The first and second drafts of Gordon's article appeared in time for the deadline with few alterations other than the titles of works needing to be adjusted. Once a complete catalogue draft was ready it was sent to the artist, Professor Davis, and the Gallery Director for comment and editing. Once the final gallery editing was complete, the penultimate draft was sent to Mary Gallagher for further proof-reading prior to the catalogue being sent to the printers. Five hundred copies were consequently printed.

As considerable effort had gone into the catalogue (see Appendix G) to allow it to be used as a promotional tool as well as a record of the exhibition, it was felt that less emphasis needed to be placed on the invitation. Thus this was kept at the most economical size for printing and posting while maintaining both design, and print quality. Using a section of an image from the catalogue and similar fonts ensured unity was maintained between catalogue and invitation (see Appendix H). Invitations were subsequently posted to people who had been connected with the installation or making of the works, the examiners, the media, people on the Perc Tucker Gallery's mailing list, colleagues and friends. In addition invitations were distributed to locations and art venues throughout Townsville where it was anticipated that there would be an interest in the exhibition.

11.9 Documentation processes

Once the exhibition was installed, further images of the work *in situ* were taken by the artist, the photographer Robin Gauld and Stephen Naylor of the School of Creative Arts, James Cook University to give an overview of the layout of the artwork and how it worked within the gallery space (Plates 11.9.23 -11.9.28). A selection of these digital images was included, (Appendix G 2) along with the especially composed music composition in a power-point presentation on a compact disc to act as a record of the exhibition of work and also to be used as a promotional tool. Further documentation of the work *in situ* and of the actual opening night of the exhibition were taken by a member of the Gallery staff and presented to the artist at the close of the exhibition.



Plate 11.9.23 J. Mulcahy

Exhibition overview 1 2006



Plate 11.9.24 J. Mulcahy

Altars 2006



Plate 11.9.25 J.Mulcahy

Transitions installation 2006



Plate 11.9.26 J.Mulcahy *Ruins Installation* (section of) 2006



Plate11.9.27 J. Mulcahy

Overview 2 2006



Plate 11.9.28 J. Mulcahy

Overview 3 2006

11.10 Media and public response

Prior to the Exhibition Opening on Friday the 30th June, the Perc Tucker Regional Gallery distributed media releases to the Townsville Bulletin, Townsville's City Life, Art Monthly Australia, Umbrella Contemporary Arts Studio, the local ABC and Radio National's Deep End arts program.

The response to the press release was propitious with the Townsville Bulletin including the release in the 'What's On' section prior to and for the duration of the exhibition and also publishing a review of the work with the title *Mine Town Spirit Unearthed* by Mandy Wildeheart on Friday July 7th. City Life published the press release and images on the *Inheritance from Mary Kathleen* series in its July edition. Arts Monthly published an image of *Yesterday, Today and.....Tomorrow?* and details of the exhibition in its August edition. The Townsville City Council included a press release and an image of the *Inheritance* series in the June/July newsletter produced by their Public Relations Department. The Perc Tucker Regional Gallery included press releases and images in all the relevant Gallery publications including attachments to emails sent by the gallery and recorded information about the exhibition on the phone hold line. Magnetic Times editor George Hirst wrote and published an online critique and images of the exhibition which can be viewed on the magnetictimes.com web site.

Live radio interviews with the artist were aired by the local ABC on the 7th July and by the Mt Isa ABC on August 16th. The ABC Deep End arts program, recorded on the 7th July was aired on the 8th and again on the 13th August. The local radio interview was heard by a number of local people who, as a result, visited the exhibition and attended

the artist's talk which was given on the 23rd July. An earlier talk and walk through of the exhibition was given for visual art students on the 18th July.

As the impetus behind the work was primarily the visual portrayal of silences felt by the artist at specific locations rather than the construction of aesthetically pleasing artwork, it was imperative that feedback from people viewing the exhibition be gathered before success or failure of this facet of the exhibition and research project could be determined. To this end, on opening night the artist made the request for comments on this particular aspect of the works exhibited asking that if, possible people revisit the exhibition at a different time when they had had time for reflection and then either contact the artist with their opinions or alternatively write relevant comments in the visitor's comments book supplied by the gallery. People responded generously to this request (See Chapter 12 for discussion and responses).

Reviews of the exhibition were written by Stephen Naylor and Gordon Foulds with both being submitted to Ceramics: Art and Perception, a major international ceramics journal for possible publication. The article written by Stephen Naylor and entitled *Sensing the Silence* was accepted for publication in issue No 67.

Chapter 12 Directions, Reflections and Implications

12.1 Internal Reflections: Taking Stock

While Chapter 11 has documented the installation of the artworks in the gallery space, the importance of lighting, and the placement of works so that they achieve the effect sought, this chapter explores the research process *in toto*. Hence it considers how the artworks and the resultant exhibition fulfilled the aims of the research (See 1.5), and places the research results in the context of contemporary arts practice. It also reflects on how, in practice and concept, these aims were fulfilled and the directions from/implications of the research for future practice.

12.1.1 Realisation of the Aims

The aim of the research was to produce a body of work that embodied the essences of silence endemic to specific landscapes in such a way that viewers of the works were able to identify with, and feel a similar empathy with those silences to that experienced by the artist. This was where the great challenge lay for, while recognising that people interpret art works differently according to the range of criteria and associations they bring with them when viewing a work, I did not want the viewers to just *interpret it willy nilly*. While I was happy for the viewers to get what they could from the works, what I most wanted, as the artist, was to enable viewers to experience the same energy I had felt at the site as only then would the works achieve the desired purpose. When conceiving and constructing the works, the challenge of imbuing the works with specific energies was always at the forefront of my mind.

The construction of the artworks, involving as it did many new techniques either learnt or developed, was an arduous process which took five years of concentrated effort to achieve. However, given the response to the exhibition (See 12.3 and 12.4), the long process was successful and has demonstrated that, yes, it is possible to translate visually qualities of silence intrinsic to specific landscapes in such a way that they can then be *read* by viewers of the works.

12.1.2 The Installation

As the artworks had been constructed with an awareness of both the limitations and positive aspects of the gallery space, it was to be expected that installation would proceed smoothly. This, with the exception of the major wall works that comprised *Ruins No 6* (See 11.4), it did so with several serendipitous occurrences that went some little way to compensate for the problems encountered with *Ruins No 6*.

One of these related to how the work *Open Cut* was perceived by many viewers. The work, made in response to the open cut uranium mine, used the deep reds and yellows of the glaze surface (as seen in Plate 11.5.8) to imbue the work with an implied sensation of toxicity and danger allied with beauty, drawing in and then the repelling the viewer as many erroneously assume that the glaze colour was obtained from uranium. This was fortuitous, as originally it had been planned to have uranium ore samples on display to allow people to view it in its natural state. Given that this was not permitted under the Townsville City Council's Occupational Health and Safety rules, it was ironical that so many people believed that the actual work contained uranium.

Another serendipitous incident revolved around the hundreds of small skull like ceramic heads that formed part of the work made in response to Site Two, the old town site (Plate 8.2.1). Initially made to be placed (as though pebbles), around the *Ruins* series made in response to Site One, they proved to be stronger aesthetically and conceptually when placed in a pile together, but separate from the larger works. Being skull like, they related well to decay and decomposition and proved most effective when placed in close proximity to *Transitions 1, 2 and 3* (Plates 11.5.10 & 11.5.11), works that embodied the silence of the township as it is slowly subsumed by natural elements. Given that this change of placement occurred only a few hours before the exhibition was due to open, there was no suitable plinth on which to place the heads in a random pile, thus they were placed in perspex containers on top of the plinth which served as a repository for the audio equipment. Their inclusion reinforced the atmosphere of the breaking down of organic forms and the subsuming of matter to the extent that the gallery director dubbed the space *The Mortuary*.

12.2 Some limitations

In retrospect some aspects of the exhibition presentation could have been enhanced.

12.2.1 Silence amplified

An important component of works made in response to Site Two, the town site, was the inclusion of sound. As outlined in 11.6, the composition created by Nick Webb in response to Site Two was recorded in a loop which was intended to be played continuously as an integral component of the installation. While the dirge-like piece added greatly to the almost funereal atmosphere already inherent in the works

unfortunately there were times when this did not always function smoothly due to hiccups with the equipment, or staff forgetting to switch it on in the morning, or not having it turned up loudly enough. In retrospect, more research should have been undertaken into how the recording was to be played and amplified, and more random checks made to ensure that the sound quality was consistent for all viewers.

12.2.2 The Challenge of the Lighting

The series of bronzes and glass works that comprised the *Message sticks* series proved a challenge to light because of lighting constraints (See 11.6). The long and narrow works were mounted on plinths in a well lit area of the gallery; however, the complexity of their surfaces which included textured, incised, patinated and burnished areas on the bronze sections and rather complex textured shapes on the cast glass sections made it exceedingly difficult to highlight all aspects of the works simultaneously.

The end result worked well from certain angles but not as well from others. It would have been preferable if, for the entire grouping of work that related to Site Three, the overall lighting could have been turned down lower to achieve a softer overall effect with closer diffused spotlights then used to highlight specific sections of the work. This was not, however, possible due to lighting constraints, Workplace Health and Safety compliance specifications and the lighting requirements of other adjacent works.

Nonetheless, given these constraints, the lighting succeeded in supporting the varying atmospheres and energies associated with the identified sites. The most successful area

was the far gallery space where the limited natural light made it easier to obtain the subtle lighting required for the works displayed there.

12.3 *Ex Post Facto* Reflections

An interesting aspect of this research project was that, while I found no other artist exploring this particular avenue of research, there were a number of artists, such as Joan Brassil, manipulating and using space to create or emphasise conceptual elements within their work. While good art always elicits strong responses from its audience, and many artworks contain, express and evoke particular emotions and/or atmospheres etc, the responses from the audience tend to be more a by-product of the work than the primary purpose of its construction. As documented in 3.2, Brassil, in her work *Where yesterday may be tomorrow*, managed, by careful placement of her narrative works, to direct the audience's attention in such a way that perception of what was normally seen as a white cube of gallery space was altered, and seemed greatly increased in volume so that viewing perceptions were directed in different directions thereby giving her greater control over how her works were perceived.

This recognition of space as a place where things can be made to happen was explored in Chapter 7.4.2 where it was also acknowledged that many in the contemporary viewing audience recognise that there is frequently more to a work than what is initially and immediately visually apparent. It was not until after the artwork was completed and the exhibition over that I read O'Doherty's essay '*The Eye and the Spectator*', (O'Doherty (1986) and his observations on space and its impact on both viewer and artwork. It was therefore interesting to me as the artist, that what had been felt and acted

upon intuitively, and what was a core underpinning of the research project had, according to O'Doherty, historical reference points in both Modernism and Post-Modernism. This suggests that we are all products of our time, whether we know it or not.

During 2007 I was fortunate to be able to visit three major sculpture exhibitions showcasing what, theoretically is the best of international contemporary art; the *Documenta 12* in Kassel, the *Sculpture Show* in Muenster, and the 52nd *Venice Biennale*. I experienced some unforgettable works in media I'm not usually attuned to, such as the Russian three-screen film *Last Riot 2005- 2007*, by the artist group AES+F (comprised of Tatiana Arzamasova, Lev Evzovich, Evgeny Svyatsky and Vladimir Fridkes). The work consists of a virtual world where real wars look like games but there is no real death, a utopian/dystopian vision of the future mixed with an obsession with Nordic mythology and Valkyries dressed in designer fashion. However, while being appreciative of the artists' works, I experienced nothing that inspired me to diversify from my current practice. Instead it has helped me to contextualise where my work sits in relation to work produced by artists in response to a variety of political and social situations and to reach the realisation/belief that my own work has a conceptual and aesthetic base as relevant as any works seen in Europe.

12.4 The Exhibition: External Perspectives

A major focus of this exhibition was the visual interpretation of silence, so it was imperative that the audience's response to the work and to the different silences with which the work was imbued be sought and documented. This was achieved by an

Exhibition Visitors' Comments Book which requested that visitors to the exhibition record their ...*feelings/senses evoked while viewing specific works...* Emailed and verbal comments were requested and received and this documentation, along with critiques and reviews that were written in response to the exhibition, provide a valid and encompassing reaction to the work and the extent to which it achieved its purpose.

Throughout the duration of the exhibition which ran from 30th June - 27th August 2006 it was visited by approximately 10,000 people. The resultant feed back from the public, via written comments, critiques and in person during and after the artist's talks which were given to school groups as well as the general public, demonstrated that the audience had responded, as the artist intended, to the silence endemic to each site.

Many viewers of the works expressed similar feelings of empathy as those initially felt by the artist. Exemplar responses from the visitor's book included:

- abandonment
- isolation
- nature and stillness is conveyed
- beautiful!
- the power conveyed in this exhibition is overwhelming-beyond words
- this work connects with deep, suppressed primitive feelings
- the effect is so powerful we *are in awe*
- somewhat thought provoking

Didactic panels outlining a brief history of the Mary Kathleen Mine and of uranium proved of great interest with many people commenting that they had been unaware of both the history of uranium since its discovery, and of the existence of Mary Kathleen.

12.4.1 Overall impressions

The following extracts are comments on the work which were included in the catalogue essay written by Gordon Foulds (2006) and in published critical reviews by Dr Stephen Naylor (2006) and Mandy Wildeheart (2006). Initial overall impressions experienced by the reviewers as they entered the gallery space to view the exhibition are documented below. The responses, coming as they do from the people there to critique the work, are a valuable source of feedback on the success or otherwise of the installation overall, plus crucial in understanding how successful individual works are as purveyors of the different essences of silences they are imbued with.

Walking into the gallery, it is hard to ignore the atmosphere that emanates from Jenny Mulcahy's exhibition in the main ground floor space. (Wildeheart, 2006, 33)

Central to her theme is the essence of silence endemic to the Mary Kathleen mine site, township and immediate surrounds, and these works definitely give the sense that nothing of importance remains except for the inherent spirit of the earth. (Wildeheart, 2006, 33)

Haunting and enigmatic are words that resonate when we view the work. (Naylor, 2006, 36)

These overall impressions expressed by the two authors are good indicators that the works that comprise the four sites are integrated in such a way that an overall impression is immediately apparent on entering the gallery space. The following sub-sections explore the authors' responses to the work and their ability to further discern the nuances of silence unique to each site, and indeed, to each individual work to which specific energies are endemic. In the sub-sections the author's responses are limited to examples relating to each site. The complete critiques from each author and the Catalogue Essay can be found in Appendices G (catalogue) I and J.

12.4.2 Site One

Some of the first works to be made were those that responded to the silences found in and around the mine site (See 7.2 & 7.3). Made of ceramic and *pâte de verre*, the works which comprised the *Inheritance from Mary Kathleen* series (Plates 11.6.5&11.6.6), referenced the impact the mining of uranium may have on the miners who worked at close quarters with the ore through its various stages of refinement (See 7.4.6). The silence emanating from these works was recognised by reviewer Foulds (2006) who observed that

...We also see figures entombed in what may be stone coffins. They symbolise a strong male figure and a female figure who carries in her womb a child who is heir to deformities and genetic mutations which have long been attributed to the horrendous effects of uranium. Entombed in total silence, their predicament resounds with the aftermath of Chernobyl and Three Mile Island. And hand in hand with this silence is the implication that vast energies have been at work in the creation, the function and finally the destruction of these sites.

(Foulds, 2006: 6)

Fould's (2006) understanding validates both process and media used in construction of the art work as well suited to conveying the concept and the silence fundamental to the work. Likewise Foulds (2006), while discussing the work *Open Cut* (Plate 11.6.8), notes that '...one can hear the sounds of violent activity suddenly turning into the sounds of reverberating silence' (Foulds, 2006.6)

With the two *Arch* works which are constructed of ceramic and glass (Plates 11.6.7 & 11.6.13) the glass component was chosen for the way it replicates naturally formed crystal and, in doing so, acts as a metaphor for the earth's innate energy. The glass/crystal is symbolic of the regenerative, healing and spiritual powers that many associate with naturally formed crystal (See 11.6.7 *Green Arch* and 11.6.13 *Blue Arch*). The *Arch* works, the green relating to the mine site, Site One, and the blue to Site Two,

the surrounding natural landscape, worked exceedingly well in the gallery installation responding, as expected, to the play of light reflected in and on its surface. As Wildeheart (2006) and Naylor (2006) wrote,

...the glass in *Green Arch* seems to glow from an internal source of light. (Wildeheart, 2006, 33)

...one of the most enigmatic forms she has utilised is the arch. *Green Arch I* and *Blue Arch* are large forms 28 x 67 x 33 cm with a surge of energy punctuated by a cast glass wedge.... ...*Green Arch I* seems to both emit and absorb light giving the work a haunting but troubling presence.(Naylor, 2006, 37)

From such responses educed by the *Arch* works it seems that they were successful in portraying the silence sought which was that of the primal energy and regenerative powers of the earth.

12.4.3 Site Two

As indicated previously the four works (*Transitions 1, 2 & 3* and *Heads*, Plates 11.6.9, 11.6.10 & 11.6.11), and accompanying dirge which comprise the installation responding to the town site contained and emanated the sought silence so well it was dubbed *The Mortuary* by the Gallery Director (See 12.1.2). Wildeheart (2006, 33) commented that

As seen in earlier works, Jenny uses raw, tactile glazes on her earthy looking ceramics to produce pieces that look like long lost artefacts. This approach suits the subject matter quite appropriately as it gives a sense of beauty amid decay and is reminiscent of remnants of a lost civilization. (Wildeheart, 2006, 33)

...*Transitions 1, 2 and 3* are some of the more impressive works due mainly to the size of the three pieces and their sombre burial stone appearance. (Wildeheart, 2006, 33)

12.4.4 Site Three

The works made in response to Site Three, the surrounding natural landscape, were constructed of a variety of media including ceramic, cast bronze, cast glass, *pâte de verre* and found objects (Plates 11.6.13 to 11.6.20). The atmosphere that fills the silence of this site and which encompasses all other sites is one of primal, regenerative energy.

Of the bronze and glass *Message Stick* series Foulds (2006) observed:

Symbolism is very powerful in these pieces. The imagery depicts both male and female figures and suggests that following the process of fertilization, the woman will give birth to a perfect child. There is no intended suggestion of possible deformity or genetic mutation in these works which are all about natural creation...The female figure which occurs throughout the bronze series may be seen as the great Earth Mother sending a message and a warning that we are responsible for our own actions. (Foulds, 2006, 6)

12.4.5 Site Four

Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow...? (Plates 11.6.20 & 11.6.21), was the title of the work made in response to Site Four, *Subjective Futures*, the envisaged silence of the future. This was the last of the works made for this research and the change from the earlier more monumental works to this far more conceptual piece is apparent. In many ways the difference between the works mirrors the society in which we live. For example, when the initial *Arch* forms were first commenced in 2001, the computer software program Photoshop was available but mainly used by artists working in graphic design. By 2005/6 when I began work on the final design and proportions for the seven metre plus *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow...?* it was second nature for me to begin to manipulate photographs of the ceramic heads I had made in Photoshop as, by then, it had become almost an essential tool for visual artists across all disciplines. Whilst moving the images from the transfer paper onto the Perspex was somewhat

problematic, the fact that this was possible at all was due to the (then) newly released transfer paper Lazertran.

Thus the work was made, installed and was successful in eliciting the desired response from its audience as demonstrated by Naylor (2006):

The title and theme of *Sensing the Silence* is expanded through two wall hung installations incorporating hundreds of small faces. The open mouths cry in a chorus of silence. These mute works expand on the recognition of the unheard voices, which we sense but cannot hear. The waves of gaunt faces establish a wave of silence... (Naylor, 2006, 38)

12.4.6 Overarching Observations

Sitting writing this (almost two years ago to the day I began installing the work in the Gallery), I received a phone call (21.06.08) from a woman visiting from Melbourne. An artist herself, she had, by chance visited the Perc Tucker Gallery in 2006 when the exhibition was on. Speaking to her on the phone I listened as she recounted how when she walked in to the gallery for the first time she had been stunned by the work and the atmosphere it created and how she had not been able to get it out of her mind. She was phoning to see if my studio was open as she wished to visit and see my latest work. Another person I met recently told me she had visited the exhibition five times and that each time it was a really *spiritual experience*. Ultimately it is the unsolicited responses from casual visitors to the Gallery like these that are most important in demonstrating the success and impact the work has had on its audience for these are the very people to whom the work is directed. As Foulds (2006) wrote of me as the artist,

In visiting the site of Mary Kathleen, she has experienced its silence, and at the same time, its energies, and in this exhibition, she makes meaning of these energies and silences for us all to experience and share. . (Foulds, 2006, 8)

Naylor's review of *Sensing the Silence* (Naylor, 2006) appropriately summarises the work, the impact it has on its audience, and the success of the media used in construction of the works in coalescing the aims of the project with new technical and material/media developments developed during the course of the research (See Chapter 6).

The finished works are poignant in their simplicity; they take the medium far beyond the natural limits, pushing the audience beyond form and technique into the realm of the poetic. (Naylor, 2006, 38)

What is revealed in this exhibition is a poignant statement about Australian space, how we see, feel, hear and experience the real phenomena of the land and its history (Naylor, 2006, 35)

The '*raison d' être*' behind this research project was to find ways of creating stronger links between the artwork and its audience. By doing so, the work thereby has more power to create an impact, leave a lasting impression and encourage the viewer to contemplate that which is being viewed.

Conceptually and in their completed forms the artworks made fill a unique place in the previously unexplored visual documentation of silence. Their success lies not in aesthetically pleasing forms but rather in the responses they elicited from their audience. The accompanying written documentation in the form of this thesis places the work in the context of contemporary arts practice especially with regard to interpretation of place and the exploration of silence as a conceptual framework for accessing a sense of place.

12.5 Directions from the Research

The current study has also yielded a number of technical and conceptual developments which have potential for future research and practice.

12.5.1 Technical Developments

Given the many new techniques and skills developed and achieved during the construction of the artworks and the resultant increased knowledge base, there are a multitude of avenues for further practical research. These include the

- fusing of fired paper clay between glass sheets
- using the paper porcelain sheets to create large transparent works
- experimenting further with photographic silk screening and the layering of images between three-dimensional components
- constructing works, photographing them and then digitally manipulating the images before silk screening the altered images onto the original artwork to add further dimensions, conceptual and physical to the work
- Further developing of digital manipulation of images such as those of the heads in *Yesterday, Today and... Tomorrow?*
- Further exploration into the incorporation of *pâte de verre* into ceramic works to create images rather than surround them as in the *Inheritance* series
- using the ceramic perlite body to create solid forms, which when completely dried can be carved back into as though a soft rock
- kiln cast glass explored further in relation to incorporating glass sections into other media.

12.5.2 Artistic Developments

I have recently completed a large wall installation for an exhibition which was held at the Umbrella Contemporary Arts Studio, Townsville, during September/October 2008. Entitled *Re-mantled*, the three woman show was a development from the exhibition *Mantled* held by the same three artists, plus one other, nearly a decade ago. The new work entitled *Remantled 1999-2008*, consists of 120 ceramic miniatures with each work relating to a month in the last decade (Plates 12.5.1 & 12.5.2). The works allowed me to further explore on a manageable scale many of the avenues of practical exploration that I had to *put aside until later* while working on the major works for *Sensing the Silence*.



Plate 12.5.1 J. Mulcahy

Remantled 1999-2003 2008



Plate 12.5.2 J. Mulcahy

Remantled 1999-2003 2008

The works document either conceptually, using colour and texture, or more realistically using a variety of sculptural techniques, incidents (local, international and personal) that have impacted on my life or conscience over the past decade. For example the work *Overalls* (Plate 12.5.3), references the many months I spent in overalls and steel capped boots while constructing the works for the *Sensing the Silence: Mary Kathleen* exhibition, whilst the *Green Tea from China Town* (Plate 12.5.4), references a trip made to Sydney shortly after the exhibition opened. Plate 12.5.5 *Lay Down on a Bed of Roses* relates to a period of intense happiness which was followed soon after by deep depression and the consequent diagnosis of bi-polar illness, hence Plate 12.4.6 *Woke Up Lying on a Bed of Nails*.



Plate 12.5.3 J. Mulcahy *Overalls* 2008



Plate 12.5.4 J. Mulcahy *Green Tea from China Town* 2008



Plate 12.5.5 J. Mulcahy *Lay Down on a Bed of Roses* 2008



Plate 12.5.6 J. Mulcahy *Woke Up Lying on a Bed of Nails* 2008

Environmental issues and impacts such as bushfires and the need to protect our native wildlife were also issues addressed examples of which can be seen in Plates 12.5.7, *Smoke on the Horizon* and Plate 12.5.8, *Bat at Dusk*.



Plate 12.5.7 J. Mulcahy *Smoke on the Horizon* 2008



Plate 12.5.8 J. Mulcahy *Bat at Dusk* 2008



Plate 12.5.9 J. Mulcahy *North-west* 2008



Plate 12.5.10 J. Mulcahy *This Bare Land* 2008

Other works focused on the ongoing drought in parts of Australia as seen in Plates 12.5.9 *North-west* and 12.5.10, *Bare Land*. The tsunami that hit Indonesia in 2004, the Tampa and children-overboard incident, the incarceration of David Hicks, the destruction of the twin towers on 9/11, the consequent War on Terror declared by the Bush, Blair and Howard alliance, and the hunt for Saddam Hussein were referenced in other works.



Plate 12.5.11 J. Mulcahy *Alone on a Hill* 2008



Plate 12.5.12 J. Mulcahy *Walkin', walkin', talkin', talkin'* 2008

The Howard government's treatment of refugees inspired the work *Invasion* while the isolation of many of Australia's Indigenous people from mainstream communities and the problems inherent in that isolation were depicted in a number of works examples of which are *Alone on a Hill*, Plate 12.5.11 and in *Walkin', walkin', talkin', talkin'* (Plate 12.5.12). Black deaths in custody, political prisoners including those held and tortured by American soldiers at Abu Ghraib during 2006 were the subjects of other works such as those seen in Plates 12.5.13 *Man Scream*, 12.5.14 *War Crimes* and Plate 12.5.15 *Abu Ghraib*.



Plate 12.5.13 J. Mulcahy *Man Scream* 2008



Plate 12.5.14 J. Mulcahy *War Crimes* 2008



Plate 12.5.16 J. Mulcahy *Abu Ghraib* 2008

The works made for this exhibition provided the opportunity to develop further a variety of processes of making, which I had touched upon during my main body of research but had not felt able to justify their full exploration at that time. Examples include the work made in response to the tsunami in which applications of resin were used over the top of the ceramic forms giving a fluid impression similar to that of actual water over the top of buildings and furniture, and the series of works made in response to the Canberra bushfires which involved digitally altered silk-screen images applied to ceramic sections which were then saggar fired multiple times until the colours required were achieved. In a number of works silk-screened images were used as a base design with multiple layers of images then being built up using ceramic transfers, decals and underglaze colours. These layers of printed images and text were then overlaid with three dimensional figures, forms, or found objects as seen in most of the plates in this section. The invitation and catalogue from this exhibition can be found in Appendices I and J.

12.5.3 Conceptual Developments

The awareness that it is possible to imbue works with a sense of the silence contained in a specific location in time and place, and the use of sound to add further nuances to the installation of work provide an avenue for further conceptual works. I have plans for a future body of work expanding on the methods used in the Ruins and Open Cut works and concentrating on imbuing the works with a sense of isolation, and of solitary paths.

12.6 The Inscape of Silence: Perceptions of Place

In commenting on Gerard Manley Hopkins's use of the term *inscape*, Everett (1988) comments that "he means the unified complex of characteristics that give each thing its uniqueness and that differentiate it from other things". Hopkins's parallel term *instress* by which he meant our ability to recognise the inscape in other beings of the world, and which Everett (1998) refers to as "the force of the being which holds the inscape together or the impulse from the inscape which carries it whole into the mind of the beholder".

Both concepts originated from the doctrines of medieval philosopher and theologian Duns Scotus whose "univocity of being" referred to distinguishing between different aspects of the same thing, and haecceity, that which is in everything in existence which makes it individual, its *thisness*.

These terms are peculiarly appropriate to the idiosyncratic silence of particular place which the current research has identified and celebrated visually. Indeed, unlike the character Larry in Dillard's (1984) Teaching a Stone to Talk, who followed an elaborate series of daily rituals in order to try and elicit a verbal response from a stone, this research has used the intuited primal energies or essences of place, the *inscape*, to communicate non-verbally.

By creating artwork that has, integral to it, a sense of the intuited metaphysical force that lies within everything in existence, animate or inanimate, rather than just our perception of it at a moment in time, it has proved possible to convey a strong sense of

the energies unique to a specific place within the landscape. That this has been so is evidenced by audience responses (See 12.4) and provides an avenue for further conceptual and technical research as to how the inscape of silence from a variety of sites can be used to convey place. Although perceptions of place are inevitably subjective, I believe that by being cognisant of the *thisness* of every particular *thing* that contributes to place, a greater empathy can be divined, understood, and in turn, this essence can be communicated through artwork to act as a conduit between place and the viewer of the work.

At a certain point you say to the woods, to the sea, to the mountains, the world, Now I am ready. Now I will stop and be wholly attentive. You empty yourself and wait, listening. After a time you hear it: there is nothing there. There is nothing but those things only, those created objects, discrete, growing or holding, or swaying, being rained on or raining, held, flooding or ebbing, standing or spread. You feel the world's word as a tension, a hum, a single chorused note everywhere the same. This is it, the hum of silence. (Dillard 1984:90)