Eleven Australian artists immerse themselves in the ancient, remote landscape of Skullbone Plains on a wilderness residency hosted by the Tasmanian Land Conservancy in February 2013.

THE SKULLBONE EXPERIMENT

A Paradigm of Art and Nature
PRESENTED BY
Tasmanian Land Conservancy

SUPPORTED BY
Purves Environmental Fund
Purrumburry Trust

ARTISTS
Tim Burns
Joel Crosswell
Julie Gough
Philip Hunter
Janet Laurence
Vera Miller
Imants Tillers
Megan Walsh
Richard Wastell
Philip Wolhagen
John Wolseley

CURATED BY
Philip Wolhagen
Catherine Wolhagen
In 2011 the Tasmanian Land Conservancy (TLC) garnered philanthropic support of $23 million to purchase over 28,000 hectares in Tasmania, including Skullbone Plains. This was the largest private conservation deal in Australian history. It was an amazing win for the environment, as the areas acquired were of high biodiversity. My sister Sandy and I have both been passionate about Tasmania’s unique landscapes since our mother took us to Tasmania’s Lake Pedder as teenagers. We jumped at the opportunity to help TLC purchase Skullbone Plains.

Skullbone Plains is a nationally significant landscape. It was recently included in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area and has as its backdrop the iconic Mt Olympus. It covers 1,600 hectares and provides habitat for critically endangered species such as the Clarence galaxias fish and an endangered plant community named sphagnum moss. The endangered Tasmanian devil and wedge-tailed eagle, as well as the vulnerable spotted-tailed quoll also call it home.

Whilst as an environmentalist I am driven by a desire for humanity to live more in harmony with nature and to preserve these amazing places, I am also critically aware that for this to happen successfully, it must be as a result of the engagement of the majority of the community, not just a group of philanthropists with a love of nature.

I’ve always believed that one of the greatest connectors between people and nature is art. Art tells nature’s stories and Australia has an amazing depth of artists. My sister Sandy and I have long enjoyed contemporary art and in particular, the brilliant works of Philip Wolfgan and Janet Laurence.

The bridge between this thinking and the TLC was Jane Hutchinson, the CEO of the TLC. Together, the idea emerged to do something that would build a bridge between art and the work of the TLC by providing a space and time for established and emerging artists to use Skullbone Plains as a source of inspiration for their art.

In 2012, Jane Hutchinson, my partner Bronwyn and I headed off to Longford to have lunch with Philip Wolfgan and his wife Catherine to discuss the idea. As we sat around their kitchen table eating wonderful homemade soup, the creative juices ran into overdrive and we left their farm with a much more developed idea for the art retreat and subsequent public displays. Philip and Catherine personally committed to contacting the artists, inviting them to come up to Skullbone Plains, camp out and create! No small task.

During the retreat, the barrier between artists and nature dissolved as the artists explored the beauty of Skullbone Plains in their individual ways, facilitated by the tireless work of those from the TLC. From John Wolsey’s ‘Miena cider gum experiment’ to (writer ring-in) Richard Flanagan’s wit, a unique experience was had by all. It would be true to say that there was much laughter, conversation and creativity in the presence of good wine and food. What we now see before us was born there. It has been a most inspiring project to be involved with and I am confident that the result will see more Australians become connected via this amazing art to engage and support this most unique landscape of such global value...this being Tasmania.

FOREWORD

Robert Purves AM
The Tasmanian Land Conservancy's Skullbone Plains reserve, a part of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area and Cradle Mountain - Lake St Clair National Park
Leaving Hobart. Bitumen, traffic lights, houses, commerce. A human place. Up the Derwent Valley, then turning north, climbing, leaving the bitumen, marginal pasture fading into the eternal bush, ragged abandoned fence-lines. Through cattle grids and gates, the road rutted now, the ORV bucketing up through the bush. Onto Skullbone Plains. Not a human place. A natural place.

To the west is Lake Ina and, beyond the lake, the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park. A scape of romance, that, all jagged crag and bejewelled, myrtle-fringed lake, an alpine tract irrelevantly memorialising the gods and sublime places of European antiquity. What impresses is the contrast. There is nothing romantic about Skullbone Plains. This place is, if a word is to capture it, grim. Scribbly knobs of tormented forest frame long runways of sub-alpine moor and fen sloping gently upwards from northeast to southwest and potted with shallow, unpretentious tarns buffered by snaky bog. The place is as grim as its name. Nature, I am reminded, is not a synonym for beauty.

There are scientists here, and they know the natural systems that have shaped this upland plain. They tell me that, at the time of the last ice age, a mere blip away in the vast chronicle of life on earth, the surface on which I would have stood was very many metres above my vantage today. The land here, indeed, is a creation of those times. I stand on a low barrier wall. It is unremarkable to the eye, a moraine left by the retreating ice – but what a barrier it is. The endangered Clarence galaxias thrives here, this unobtrusive moraine barring access to the voracious – and feral – brown trout.

On low knobs of rock snowgum thrives, a herd species huddling for comfort and sustenance. In the frost hollows eucalypts fail, keep a wary distance. Except for the marvellous cider gum. Here it stands in splendid isolation, its trunk an improbable twist of startling ribbons of colour, its sugary sap a wine-red bleed that richly complicates the trunk’s parti-coloured, sinuous river. Across its range the cider gum is in decline, yet here it seems still to thrive. I camp on the fringe of a stand of young ciders – but this is a solitary entity, not a herd tree at all, and the young forest – most of it, perhaps all – is destined to fall victim to marsupial browsing.

On these plains threatened species are given nurture, among them the charismatic spotted-tailed quoll. Unseen animals abound, the moorlands a carpet of scat. The skies are the realm of majestic avian predators, the wedgie, the white goshawk, the masked owl, even, counter-intuitively, the sea eagle. Scientists come to Skullbone to do what scientists do – they find 45 new animal species and collect 2,000 animal and plant species for classification and description. I learn much from Bruce, my namesake, an ex-Gunn’s forester, a man to whom I warm, would like to spend time with, a man from whom, I know, I could learn very much more.

When I go to wild places I look down to the complicated small worlds at my feet. Here is evolution’s flamboyance. Here it is always showtime.
Look about you on Skullbone Plains and there's that stern panorama of my initial impression. Look down and you encounter a world of wonder. In the sphagnum beds exquisite shapes and colours impose, demand engagement. Look deep within the herb fields and find there a riot of beauty that eludes the horizontal and expansive gaze. Look through the ponds and the runnels of water that thread the moss beds and the herb fields, and there you will see forms of grotesque fascination. Look into water. Always water. This is a world of water. It slides through the long ramps of glacial plain, holding the elements of the land in dynamic relation, informing all, the element that shapes and dominates all that is here. Look down to the life at your feet and you will know this.

Something happens now. Something deflects the trending of my thought. There are scientists here, yes, but they are here to support another cohort, an assemblage of many of Australia's finest visual artists, several Tasmanians among them. What will they make of this forbidding, unromantic land? Will they find the beauty within it that I have found by looking down to the small and the secret? Will they, with their developed artistic sensibilities, even need to look that far? Must they seek beauty at all? We gather beneath an open canvas to eat and to talk, and not all our talk is of Skullbone Plains. Behind the eating area is a lurid scatter of tents. A helicopter is expected. This, it occurs to me, is a quintessentially cultural event, an event, moreover, designed to yield specifically cultural outcomes.

A helicopter is expected. This, it occurs to me, is a quintessentially cultural event, an event, moreover, designed to yield specifically cultural outcomes. There is a political point to our gathering. I look from the communal space down the long ramp of plain, and I begin to see it differently.

What I'm seeing is a road. An Aboriginal highway. It takes no great act of imagination to see a pelt-clad people working up the waterlogged plain towards us. One of them carries a firestick, applies it now, and a screen of smoke slips over the moor. I am witnessing an agricultural process, and it, too, is a shaping agent of the Skullbone Plains on which I walk today. It occurs to me that it is not far to the north, just a few ridges thence, that the remnant of the Big River people fell in with that master of humbug, George Augustus Robinson, choosing their own time and place to do so and thereby bringing the 'Black War' to an undemonstrative end. Artefactual traces of the people for whom Skullbone Plains was a seasonal home remain visible, I am told, to those who know where to look. The configuration of the very land could be described in these terms.

Now come trappers, snarers, and these people, too, lay a net of stories upon the land, and the print of their coming folds onto the fabric of the place. Cattle, too, and those who attend them. Old and weathered fenceposts, bearded with lichen. Tangles of rusted wire, entwined within tussock and shrub. Europeans, too, learn to know and love these formidable plains. Shelters are built. At the edge of a snowgum forest overlooking the shallow expanse of Kenneth Lagoon is a ruined hut. Tumbled stone fireplace. Rusted galvo. A four-gallon drum. Bedsprings. A battered, improvised frying pan. The story is told that one of the owners, in a blind rage, fired the hut to spite his partner, forgetting that it was his own beloved shanty, too. This may, of course, be an extremely un-urban urban myth. Then finally comes Gunns and the fraught dream of industrial logging. What can they have been thinking of? But that tenure passes, too – a mere ten percent logged and not much harm done.

All these waves of people. It is not, after all, a natural place.
In the communal camp the great Imants Tillers is reading Heidegger. He strikes a philosophic mood in me, too. In western thought culture and nature are dichotomous – irreconcilable antonyms. And in the trend of western thought it is nature that gets the worst of it.

There is no nature, runs the argument. All is culture. There is no part of the globe in which the impact of human activity is not present – and, thus, nature is dead.

I sight down the long ramp of plain. Here is a land formed by inexorable glacial forces, forces that human agency could neither deflect nor stand against. The configuration of snowgum forest and treeless plain is similarly determined by grand climatic forces that proceed with blithe disregard for the clever species. And yet… yet… the plains are alive with the presence of humans. With culture.

I return to Hobart, sit on my deck, look out and over the southern suburbs. A ragtag riot of yellow-tailed black cockatoos cavorts, raucous and joyful, through the old elms in the quarter-acre blocks below. Little flashes of energy darting though my backyard blackwood are silvereyes. The natural world is here, vibrant and vivid, in these inner suburbs. Can Hobart, then, be deemed a cultural place when it is so saturated with nature? If it is true that there is no such thing as nature because the imprint of human culture is ubiquitous, penetrating even to the deepest canyons of the oceans, then so must it be that there is no such thing as culture, because there is no part of the human realm into which the tenacious presence of natural factors cannot be found. ‘Nature’ and ‘culture’, I conclude, retain relevance as ideal-types, as fundamental principles at work in the world. They are processes, not fixed entities. Any defined space will be a mix of the two, and whether we deem it ‘cultural’ or ‘natural’ is a matter of the respective weight accorded the rival ‘principles’.

All this portentous speculation from engagement with the charged landscape of a potent place, one not conventionally beautiful, yet extraordinary, emotionally overwhelming. I have no idea what the visual artists there with me have taken from their own encounters with Skullbone Plains. But I know that it will be memorable.
TIM BURNS

SKULLBONE PLAINS APPEARED INITIALLY TO ME A BARREN AND FEATURELESS LANDSCAPE, RESISTANT TO INTERPRETATION. I WALKED THE PLAINS MANY TIMES BEFORE ITS BEAUTY WAS REVEALED. SKULLBONE PLAINS IS AN ANCIENT HIGHWAY, WHERE GLACIAL MORAINES ARE STREWN, WHERE WILD FIRES HAVE BLAZED, FORESTS HAVE REGENERATED, SUBTERRANEAN STREAMS SEEP THROUGH BOGGY PEAT, AND THE INVISIBLE TRACE OF AN INDIGENOUS PRESENCE FLOATS THROUGH IT ALL.

Tim Burns
Tim Burns

Skullbone Plains, Lake Ina to Kenneth Lagoon, 2013
oil paint & wax on linen
152 x 168cm (each),
3 panels 152 x 504cm (overall)
JOEL CROSSWELL
Joel Crosswell

*A Fagan Dream*, 2013

gold pen & gold oil stick on black paper

42 x 30cm (each), 136 x 427.5cm (overall)
Psyche

Elusive

Dream
I spoke to a geologist about the rock
to the museum about the shoe
husband about the cartridge
the story affected my brain
historians about who lived
at the hut
to many people
to try to hear its truth
full of holes

Julie Gough
Julie Gough

Ode, 2014
Kenneth Lagoon reeds,
HDMI video, H264, 16:9, 9:00 min
Edited by Jemma Rea

Philip Hunter
Philip Hunter

Lithosphere, 2013
oil on linen
152.5 x 183cm
JANET LAURENCE
An organism’s umwelt is the unique world in which each species lives, the world as its body represents it, the world formed by the very form of the organism. It is a sensory world of space, time, objects and qualities that form perceptual signs for living creatures each within their own bubble-like island of the senses.

Janet Laurence
Janet Laurence

Breathing in the Umwelt, 2014
Installation; tulle, mirrors, plant specimens, digital inksjets, duraclear photos, laboratory glass, video projection
600 x 200 x 50cm
PRIOR TO TRAVELLING TO SKULLBONE PLAINS I PRODUCED A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT MINIATURE SIZED SCULPTURAL FORMS IN MY STUDIO. THESE OBJECTS TAKE THEIR CONCEPTUAL CUES FROM ‘FICTIONAL’ MUTATIONS: THEY ARE SHAPED TO LOOK LIKE IMAGINARY BOTANICAL HYBRIDS OR PSEUDO-FUNGAL FORMS.

AFTER EXCURSIONS THROUGH VARIOUS PARTS OF SKULLBONE PLAINS, I TRIED TO IDENTIFY A VARIETY OF LOCATIONS THAT WOULD BE SUITABLE FOR CLOSE-UP PHOTOGRAPHY. THE BEST THING TO DO IS TO SIT DOWN FREQUENTLY. SUDDENLY A MINIATURE WORLD OF PLANT AND INSECT LIFE COMES INTO FOCUS, MESMERIZING IN ITS BEAUTY AND ASTOUNDING IN ITS COMPLEXITY.

Vera Möller
Vera Möller

blacktipped goldinger, 2013
greem bristletop, 2013
photographic prints
68 x 102cm (each)

vermillion spotted looper, 2013
grey-eyed lacelet, 2013
redcap verdants, 2013
hairy tripod, 2013
photographic prints
68 x 102cm (each)
Skullbone Plains is a sub-alpine heathland with encroaching eucalypt forest – a non-descript landscape where every view is almost the same: a perfect place to become lost and not be found again. While I was there I took photos of white lichen on black rocks (looking for traces of skull bones) and read excerpts from Richard Polt’s book on Martin Heidegger: ‘The Emergency of Being’. Back in my studio the work was painted in just a couple of days in a state of total isolation, heightened anxiety and self-doubt.

Imants Tillers
Imants Tillers

The Emergency of Being, 2014
acrylic & gouache on 64 canvas boards
244 x 244cm

Skullbone Plains, 2013
acrylic & gouache on 24 canvas boards
152 x 142cm
MEGAN WALCH

THE FLORA AND FAUNA IN THE REMOTE WILDERNESS OF SKULLBONE PLAINS HAVE ADAPTED TO THE HARSH FORCES OF SUN, WIND AND RAIN. THIS MAKES ME THINK OF OUR OWN RESILIENCE AND ADAPTATION IN CONDITIONS OF FLUX. ALTHOUGH SPARSE IN PLACES, THE LANDSCAPE IS ANYTHING BUT MUNDANE: EVERYWHERE I LOOKED THE MICRO COSM SEEMED TO MIRROR THE MACRO COSM. THESE PAINTINGS REPRESENT A LINK BETWEEN THE MOTIF OF GUM TREE BRANCHES SKIRTING LAKE INA AND THE NEURONS AND HEMISPHERES OF THE BRAIN.

Megan Walch
Megan Walch

Convolvus and Contortion:
The Wind-harrowed Hakea of Skullbone Plains, 2013
enamel & oil on composite panel
130 x 130cm (each), 130 x 430cm (overall)
I was intrigued by the name of Skullbone Plains. Skull shaped lichen upon rocks or animal bones amongst the tussock grasses? Or human bones maybe, interred within a hollow tree as was the old practice of aboriginal people in the area. Whatever lay behind the name, the question set my mind and my hands to work - dreaming out into the beautiful and intricate spaces of the plains.

Richard Wastell
Richard Wastell

Bone and flower fields,
Skullbones Plains, 2014
oil & pumice on linen
121 x 138cm

Lagoon and lichen covered
rocks, 2014
oil & pumice on linen
50 x 45cm

Green cushion, 2014
oil & pumice on linen
91 x 61cm
PHILIP WOLFHAGEN

FOLLOWING MY INITIAL ATTEMPT AT PAINTING EN PLEIN AIR (A MORNING OF INTENSE CONCENTRATION ON THE SUBTLE COMPLEXITY OF GREEN), I RESOLVED TO WANDER SKULLBONE PLAINS GLEANING IMPRESSIONS, COLLECTING IDEAS WITH THE CAMERA. THE SUNNY DRY CONDITIONS RENDERED THE VEGETATION A MONOTONOUS GRAY GREEN AND I FOUND THE NEED TO RE-IMAGINE THE ENVIRONMENT IN WET WEATHER. I ALLOWED MYSELF SOME FLIGHTS OF FANCY TRANSPOSING THE BRIGHT GREEN MOUNDS OF CUSHION MOSS INTO VIOLET GRAY BOULDERS – IMPOSING MY OWN AESTHETIC ORDER ONTO THE LANDSCAPE.

Philip Wolfhagen
Philip Wolhagen

_Skullbone Inventions_, 2013

oil & beeswax on plywood

30 x 31.5cm (each), 20 panels
JOHN WOLSELEY

AS A CREEK MOVES DOWN TO THE SHORES OF LAKE INA IN THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS OF TASMANIA IT REACHES AN ANCIENT SPHAGNUM MOSS SWAMP. THE CREEK AND THE SWAMP ARE THE HOME OF THE CLARENCE GALAXIAS; A RARE FISH OF A SPECIES OUSTED IN THE REST OF TASMANIA BY THE INTRODUCTION OF EUROPEAN TROUT. KEY PLANTS IN THIS HABITAT THAT I HAVE DEPICTED INCLUDE WATER MILFOIL, A BLADDERWORT, TASSEL SEDGE, SWAMP ARROWGRASS AND TALL SPIKE RUSH. I HAVE DRAWN THE MATS OF SPHAGNUM MOSS AS THEY REST IN THE CRYSTAL CLEAR WATER AND THE TEEMING LIFE OF PLANT, INSECT AND FISH.

John Wolseley
John Walseley

_Natural History of a Sphagnum bog -
Lake Inil, Tsunamta, 2013_ (detail)

watercolour & graphite on 8 adjoining sheets
of Waterford paper

152 x 400cm
BIOGRAPHIES

A long table evening meal at Skullbone Plains
Tim Burns is a nationally acclaimed artist who is best known for his unique responses to the natural world that surrounds his studio. Through his evocative use of colour and texture, he creates interpretations of the landscape by juxtaposing representational and abstracted motifs, resulting in a re-invention of the landscape. He received his Diploma of Art from the Alexander Mackie College in 1981. He moved to Melbourne in 1984 to undertake his Postgraduate Diploma at the Victorian College of the Arts (1986) and in 1988 he moved to Tasmania to complete his Master of Fine Arts at the University of Tasmania.

He has had several solo exhibitions in Sydney, Melbourne and Hobart and has been included in many group exhibitions including Brushing the Dark: Recent Art and Tasmania, CAST touring exhibition (1996); Adelaide Biennale of Australia (1990); the Moet & Chandon Touring Exhibition (1994, 1995, 1996); Love Letter to China at the Ivan Dougherty Gallery and China tour (2003); Four Tasmanian Painters, Holmes a Court Gallery, Perth (2009); finalist in the Wynne Prize at the AGNSW in 2000 and 2004. In 2007 the Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery staged a survey exhibition of his work, Water Music: Paintings by Tim Burns as part of the 10 Days on the Island festival.

He has received several awards including the City of Hobart Art Prize (1994); Island Art Prize, 10 Days on the Island festival (2003) and the Fleurieu Biennale Art Prize (2008). In 2006 he was awarded the Rosamund McCulloch Studio to undertake a residency at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris. His work is held in many public collections including the National Gallery of Australia, National Gallery of Victoria, Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery, Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery, Macquarie Bank Collection and Arrbank.

Joel Crosswell's sculptures, installations and drawings are metaphors for the artist’s past memories, feelings and personal stories. His automatic drawings using simple line often touch on themes investigating ideas about life and death. He studied at the University of Tasmania and obtained his Bachelor of Fine Arts in 2008. Since graduating he has been an active member of Constance ARI (formally known as Inflight Gallery) and has exhibited solo exhibitions at other artist run galleries including Sawtooth ARI in Launceston, Hell Gallery in Melbourne and MOP in Sydney.

In 2012 he was selected to participate in Shotgun, run by CAST in partnership with Detached Cultural in Hobart. This culminated in an exhibition with fellow selected artist Lucienne Rickard with an accompanying publication. He has exhibited locally and interstate in solo and group exhibitions including Clean Living, CAST Gallery, Hobart (2012); Realm, Michael Reid at Elizabeth Bay, Sydney (2012); The Little Show of Existence, Bett Gallery Hobart (2011); Unnatural, Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart (2011); Lust for Life, CAST Gallery, Hobart (2009).

He was selected as a finalist in the City of Hobart Art Prize in 2011 and received the coveted MONA Prize for his work Godson.
Julie Gough is maternally descended from the Trawlwoolway people of north-eastern Tasmania. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (Pre-history and Anthropology) in 1986 from the University of Western Australia, later completing a Bachelor of Visual Arts at Curtin University in 1993. Julie was awarded a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) from the University of Tasmania in 1994; in 1998 she completed a Master of Arts (Visual Arts) at Goldsmith’s College, University of London and was awarded a PhD from the University of Tasmania in 2001.


She has won national fellowships and national and international scholarships and residencies including the Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarship 1997, State Library of Victoria Creative Fellowship 2007, Australia Council for the Arts Visual Arts and Craft Fellowship for 2007 - 2008. Julie Gough also writes and speaks about art and identity and in 2007 *We walked on a carpet of stars*, a film on Gough’s art practice was launched by Creative Cowboy films in Melbourne.

Her work is held in many private and public collections including the National Gallery of Australia, National Gallery of Victoria, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Art Gallery of South Australia, Art Gallery of West Australia, Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery, National Museum of Australia and the Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery.

Philip Hunter is a modernist landscape painter, best known for his paintings of the Wimmera in which he captures the sweeping plains of the wheat-growing area. He uses a restricted palette of earth colours to suggest the rhythms and textures of this landscape. He returns frequently to the region that continues to be a key source of inspiration. Philip Hunter studied at Prahran College in 1979, later completing his Masters at the Victorian College of the Arts in 1995 and his Doctorate from Deakin University in 1999.

Hunter’s first exhibition was at Axiom in 1982 and in the same year, he was included in a major survey show, *Young Melbourne Painters* at the Monash University Gallery. Due to his work in this exhibition, Hunter received the Ansett Art Award and he was selected for the *Australian Perspecta* early the following year.

Hunter has participated in a long list of solo and group exhibitions including *The Australians* at C.D.S. Gallery in New York City (1984); *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, Gertrude Street Gallery, Fitzroy (1986); *The Plains: Wimmera and the Imaging of Australian Landscape*, Philip Hunter and Sir Sidney Nolan, The Ian Potter Museum of Art, University of Melbourne (2001); *Imaging the Apple* which travelled to Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania (2005); *Between the Lines (Philip Hunter Drawings)*, Latrobe University Gallery (2010) and *Reading the Space: Contemporary Australian Drawing #3*, New York Studio School (2013).

Throughout his career, Philip Hunter has been presented with multiple awards and commissions, including a Visual Arts Board Grant from the Australia Council in 1984 and from the Print Council of Australia in 1992.

His work is held in several public collections including the National Gallery of Australia, National Gallery of Victoria, Baillieu Myer Collection, Museum of Modern Art at Heide, Victorian College of the Arts, Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery, RACV Collection Melbourne, Macquarie Bank Sydney and the Shell Australia Collection.
JANET LAURENCE
Born Sydney, New South Wales, 1947
Lives and works in Sydney, New South Wales

Janet Laurence’s work occupies the meeting place of art, science, imagination, memory and loss. Profoundly aware of the interconnection of all life forms and ecologies, Laurence often produces work in response to specific sites or environments using a diverse range of materials. Alchemical transformation, history and perception are underlying themes in her work.

Well known for her public commissions and architectural collaborations, Janet Laurence has completed significant national and international projects, such as the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Australian War Memorial, Canberra (1993); The Edge of the Trees (with Fiona Foley), Museum of Sydney (1994); 49 Veils (with Jisuk Han), windows for the Central Synagogue, Sydney (1999); In the Shadow, Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, Homebush Bay (1998-2000); Stilled Lives, Melbourne Museum (2000); the Australian War Memorial, Hyde Park, London; The Breath We Share, The Sidney Myer Commemorative Sculpture, Victoria (2003); Waterveil, CH2 Building for Melbourne City Council (2006); and Tarkine (For a World in Need of Wilderness), Macquarie Bank London (2011).

Laurence’s work has been included in significant group exhibitions including Australian Perspecta (1985, 1991, 1997); 9th Biennale of Sydney (1992); Echigo-Tsurnari Art Triennial, Japan (2003); The Adelaide Biennale (2008); Clemenger Contemporary Art Award, NGV, Melbourne (2009); In The Balance: Art for a Changing World, MCA Sydney (2010); 17th Biennale of Sydney (2010); After Eden, Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, Sydney (2012); Negotiating This World, NGV, Melbourne (2012); The Ferment, Fine Art Society Contemporary, London UK (2013).

Her work is held in several public collections including the National Gallery of Australia, Art Gallery of New South Wales, National Gallery of Victoria, Queensland Art Gallery, Art Gallery of South Australia, Macquarie Bank Collection, Kunstwerk Sammlung Klein in Germany and the World Bank Collection in Washington US.

VERA MÖLLER
Born Bremen, Germany, 1955. Arrived in Australia, 1986
Lives and works in Melbourne, Victoria

Vera Möller studied biology and microbiology at the Universities of Würzburg and Munich from 1976 to 1983. Her sculptural objects combine her curiosity about the natural world and her knowledge of the structure of plants, fungi and invertebrates on a scientific level. Her plant-like forms have evolved into hybrid shapes. After arriving in Australia she studied at the Victorian College of the Arts receiving a Master of Fine Arts in 1994 and her Doctorate in 2007 from Monash University, Melbourne.

Möller has held many solo exhibitions in Melbourne and Brisbane as well as in Tokyo, Berlin and Paris. Her work has been included in many significant group exhibitions including Reforest, Stour Valley Arts, Elwick House, Ashford, Kent, UK (2013); The Ecologies Project, Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne (2008); Snap Freeze, TarraWarra Museum of Art (2007); Imagine… the creativity shaping our culture, Museum of Modern Art Heide (2006); The Spirit of Football, National Gallery of Victoria (2004); Hybrid Objects, Australian Embassy, Tokyo (2002) and natural selection, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney; Australian Perspecta, (1997).

She was awarded a Keith and Elizabeth Murdoch Travelling Fellowship to Japan, Germany and the USA in 1997 and an Australia Council Paris Studio Residency in 2002. She was a finalist for the Helen Lempriere National Sculpture Award at Werribee Park in 2003. In 2013 she was awarded a residency at the Heron Island Research Station (University of Queensland) on invitation by the GBR Foundation.

Her work is held in several public collections including the National Gallery of Victoria, Australian National Museum, Monash University Collection, Macquarie Bank Sydney, BHP Billiton Melbourne, La Trobe University Museum, Victorian College of the Arts and Artbank.
IMANTS TILLERS

Born Sydney, New South Wales, 1950
Lives and works in Cooma, New South Wales

Imants Tillers is one of Australia’s most internationally acclaimed contemporary artists. The son of Latvian parents, he has explored issues of migration, fragmentation and diaspora in his work. In 1981 Tillers developed a unique way of working on small canvas boards that come together in a grid formation on the wall. Most recently, his paintings have been concerned with place, locality and evocations of the landscape.

Imants Tillers was a student at The University of Sydney when he participated with Christo and Jeanne-Claude in the Wrapped Coast project at Little Bay, Sydney. He graduated in 1973 with a Bachelor of Science in Architecture (Hons), and was awarded the University Medal. He has exhibited widely since the late 1960s, and has represented Australia at important international exhibitions, such as the Sao Paulo Bienal (1975), Documenta 7 (1982), and the Venice Biennale 1986.

Major solo survey exhibitions of Tillers’ work have been presented at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London (1988); the National Art Gallery, Wellington, NZ (1989); the National Art Museum, Riga, Latvia (1993); the Pori Art Museum, Finland (1995); the Museum of Contemporary Art in Monterrey, Mexico (1999-2000); and in 2006 a major retrospective of his work, Imants Tillers: one world many visions, was held at the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.


MEGAN WALCH

Born Hobart, Tasmania, 1967
Lives and works in Hobart, Tasmania

Megan Walch is an artist who exploits the plastic conditions of paint. She has developed a unique visual language of abstraction, inventing forms that have a liquid quality and likeness. She is a PhD candidate and a graduate of the University of Tasmania College of the Arts (1989) and has a Masters from the San Francisco Art Institute, USA. She is a Samstag Scholar (1994) and an alumnus of the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture and the Space Program, USA. Her practice has developed through spending extended periods of time living and working overseas.

Her work has been exhibited in the United States and Australia, including Wilderness, at the Art Gallery of New South Wales (2010); Kindle and Swag - The Samstag Effect, University of South Australia Art Museum (2004); Artists to Artists, Ace Gallery, New York (2002) and Primavera, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney (2000).

Walch has lived and worked in a number of European and Asian countries and has undertaken residencies in New York, Taiwan and Thailand. In 2014 Walch will be undertaking research in an Australia Council Studio in Tokyo, Japan.

Walch was a finalist in the 2012 and 2013 City of Hobart Art Prize, winning the People’s Choice Award in 2012 and has twice been a finalist in the Arthur Guy Memorial Award for Painting. Her work is held in several public collections including Gold Coast City Art Gallery, Adelaide University, Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery, University of South Australia, Artbank, Australian National University, Monterey Museum and Art Gallery, Novell Corporation (Utah, USA), General Electric Co. (NY, USA) and Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery.
Richard Wastell has a special ability to visualise his emotional responses to the Tasmanian landscape through his paintings. The beauty of the Tasmanian wilderness is captured using a technique of incorporating marble dust to the paint, coupled with his intimate observations of patterns and details in nature. Richard Wastell graduated from the Tasmanian School of Art, Hobart in 1996 and is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Tasmania.

He has held solo exhibitions in Hobart, Sydney and Melbourne since 1998. He was paired in 2001 with author Richard Flanagan for the Poets and Painters exhibition. Flanagan has gone on to write about Wastell’s work for catalogues. In 2005, Wastell’s solo exhibition, Not far from here was the outcome of a commission by the Devonport Regional Gallery for emerging artists and came at a pivotal point in his career.

Selected group exhibitions include Zero horizon, CAST Gallery, Hobart (1999); Painting Tasmania Landscape, Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart (2003); Future Perfect, Bett Gallery, Hobart (2003); Bodybag, Carnegie Gallery, Hobart (2004); An Island South, Asia Link touring exhibition (2007); Four Tasmanian Painters – Burns, Keeling, Wastell & Wolfhagen, Holmes à Court Gallery, Perth (2009); Green, Plimsoll Gallery Hobart (2010); Havelock One Citizen Collectors, Newcastle Art Gallery, NSW (2011).

His work is held in several public collections including Parliament House, Canberra, Macquarie Bank Sydney, Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery, RACV Melbourne, Devonport Regional Gallery, Burnie Regional Gallery, Holmes à Court Collection Perth and Artbank.

Philip Wolfhagen is recognised as one of Australia’s leading contemporary landscape painters. His paintings are inspired by the atmospheric landscape of northern Tasmania and the emotive qualities of light and weather. Philip Wolfhagen studied at the Tasmanian School of Art, Hobart from 1983 to 1984 and from 1986 to 1987 before moving to Sydney, where he studied at the Sydney College of the Arts, the University of Sydney in 1990. He returned to live and work in Tasmania in 1996. Since then he has held over 35 solo exhibitions in Sydney, Melbourne, Tasmania, Canberra, Brisbane, Perth and Washington DC. In 2013 a survey exhibition covering 25 years of Wolfhagen’s work, Illuminations was staged by Newcastle Art Gallery and Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery, which then went on to tour nationally. A major publication accompanied the exhibition.

In 2013 he was included in the major survey exhibition Australia held at the Royal Academy of Arts in London, the first exhibition of Australian art to be staged at the RA since 1963. Selected group exhibitions include Australian Perspecta, at the S.H. Ervin Gallery, Sydney (1997); Uncommon World: Aspects of Contemporary Australian Art, National Gallery of Australia, (2000); Depth of Field, Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne (2003); Constable and Australia, National Gallery of Australia (2006); Wonderful World, The Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art, Adelaide (2007); Time and Place, TarraWarra Museum of Art, Victoria (2008); Curious Colony, Newcastle Art Gallery (2010) and New Romantics, Gippsland Art Gallery (2011).

Wolfhagen was awarded the Wynne Prize, Art Gallery of NSW in 2007. His work is held in several public collections including the National Gallery of Australia, National Gallery of Victoria, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Newcastle Art Gallery, Art Gallery of South Australia, Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery, Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery, TarraWarra Museum of Art and Artbank.
Painter, printmaker and installation artist John Wolseley records in detail the flora, fauna and aspects of the land, in particular the Australian outback. His watercolour works are characterised by incorporated, handwritten text and map-like drawings, demonstrating his close observations of nature.

John Wolseley studied at St Martins School of Art between 1957 and 1958, the Byam Shaw School of Art, London, in printmaking from 1958 to 1963 and later in Paris between 1961 and 1963. He lived and worked throughout Europe before relocating to Australia in 1976, where he travelled extensively through the outback. He has been artist in residence at studios at Deakin University, Geelong; the Joye Art Foundation; the Art Gallery of Western Australia and Gorge Cottage Launceston.

Wolseley has held solo exhibitions in Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra and survey exhibitions of his work have been held at the Art Gallery of Western Australia, the University of Melbourne and the Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery, Tasmania. His work has been included in more than 50 group exhibitions including at the National Gallery of Australia, the National Gallery of Victoria, the Art Gallery of New South Wales, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney and the Australian Centre of Contemporary Art, Melbourne. Most recently he was a participating artist in the 18th Biennale of Sydney, curated by Catherine de Zegher and Gerald McMaster in 2012.

Wolseley has been awarded the Art Gallery of New South Wales Trustees watercolour prize in 1982, 1985, 1988, 1995 and 2004; and the Alice Prize in 1982, 1985, 1988, 1996, 2004. He received a bicentennial commission from the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 1988, and an Australia Council Grant in 1998 and an Honorary PhD in Science from Macquarie University in 2005. His work is held in the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; most state galleries and several regional and tertiary collections including international collections in the United Kingdom and the former Yugoslavia. A monograph of his work was published in 1998, and a collection of artworks accompanied by poetry ‘Lines for birds’ was published in 2011.

Catherine Wolfhagen has over 25 years experience working in the Arts, both in public and commercial galleries as well as working on a range of curated exhibitions and cultural heritage projects. She is currently a Board member of the Artist Run Initiative, Sawtooth Gallery in Launceston and was a Board member of the Tasmanian Arts Advisory Board.

Catherine studied at the Tasmanian School of Art, Hobart from 1984, graduating in 1988, and then completed a Graduate Diploma in Museum Studies in 1991 from Deakin University, Melbourne. She worked as an arts administrator for a commercial gallery, Sherman Galleries, Sydney for three years before returning to Tasmania. Since 1996 she has worked as a freelance curator on such projects as distance, six Tasmanian artists, Sherman Galleries (1999); Ephemeral Sculpture Project, Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery, Launceston (2001); The dish ran away with the spoon, Academy Gallery, University of Tasmania, Launceston (2003); Art/History, Woolmers Estate, Longford for 10 Days on the Island festival (2003); New Deities: Art & the Cult of Celebrity, Devonport Regional Gallery, Plimsoll Gallery Hobart and toured interstate (2007-08); Primed, Academy Gallery, Launceston (2010); Things we Denote to Keep, Sawtooth ARI (2011); Establishment: Clean Living, Sawtooth ARI at CAST Gallery, Hobart (2012); Time Frame: exploring the moving image, Poimena Gallery, Launceston (2013).

Catherine is currently the Program Officer for Public Art at Arts Tasmania.
The Tasmanian Land Conservancy is a not for profit, non-government, registered environmental organisation. We raise funds from the public to protect irreplaceable sites and ecosystems by buying and managing private land in Tasmania. Our vision is for Tasmania to be a global leader in nature conservation and sustainability.

The TLC was established in 2001 with $50 in the bank by three founding members. We are now active across more than 65,650 hectares of private land in Tasmania annually, including some of the state’s most important natural places. Through our permanent reserves, revolving fund reserves and reserves on other private land, we aim to provide long term security for Tasmania’s unique plants and animals, over 600 species of which are in danger of extinction.

Our work is underpinned by science and adopts a pragmatic, innovative and entrepreneurial approach to conservation. By partnering with others, we develop new models of conservation and business to ensure long term financial security for the TLC as well as the sustainability of nature conservation in Tasmania.

We have been able to protect incredibly significant places thanks to the guidance of our dedicated board and the support of many generous people, communities, businesses and governments, who care about preserving Tasmania’s unique environment. We are enormously grateful for that support and could not achieve our nature conservation goals without it.

Robert is a businessman and an environmentalist. He is currently the President of WWF-Australia and is a former board member of WWF International. Robert is also a founding member of The Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists, a Director of Earth Hour Global, a Patron of the Lizard Island Research Station and a Governor of Australian Youth Climate Coalition.

Robert has a long career in public companies, including being Chairman of a public listed company, DCA Group Limited.

In 2004 Robert established the Purves Environmental Fund, which funds numerous environmental initiatives.

In 2008 Robert was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for service to conservation and the environment, and awarded an Honorary Fellow from the University of Sydney.

DR SANDRA PURVES

Purryburry Trust

Sandy is a keen bushwalker who is passionate about the Tasmanian landscape. After a career in medicine she is now a full time fine arts student.
LIST OF WORKS

Tim Burns
Skullbone Plains, Lake Ina to Kenneth Lagoon, 2013
oil paint & wax on linen
152 x 168cm (each),
3 panels 152 x 504cm (overall)
Courtesy: Bett Gallery, Hobart
James Makin Gallery, Melbourne

Joel Crosswell
A Pagan Dream, 2013
gold pen & gold oil stick on black paper
42 x 30cm (each), 136 x 427.5cm (overall)
Courtesy: Bett Gallery, Hobart

Julie Gough
Ode, 2014
Kenneth Lagoon reeds,
HDMI video, H264, 16:9, 9:00 min
Edited by Jemma Rea
Courtesy: Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne
Bett Gallery, Hobart
Turner Galleries, Perth

Philip Hunter
Lithosphere, 2013
oil on linen
152.5 x 183cm
Courtesy: Philip Bacon Galleries, Brisbane
Olsen Irwin Gallery, Sydney
Sophie Gannon Gallery, Melbourne

Janet Laurence
Breathing in the Umwelt, 2014
Installation; tulle, mirrors, plant specimens, digital inksjets, duraclear photos, laboratory glass, video projection
600 x 200 x 30cm
Courtesy: Ace One Gallery, Melbourne
Hugo Mitchell Gallery, Adelaide

Vera Möller
blacktipped goldinger, 2013
vermilion spotted looper, 2013
green bristletop, 2013
photographic prints
68 x 102cm (each)
grey-eyed lacelet, 2013
redcap verdants, 2013
bairy tripod, 2013
photographic prints
68 x 102cm (each)

Imants Tillers
The Emergency of Being, 2014
acrylic & gouache on 64 canvas boards
244 x 244cm
Skullbone Plains, 2013
acrylic & gouache on 24 canvas boards
152 x 142cm

Megan Walch
Contemul and Contortion:
The Wind-barrowed Hakea of Skullbone Plains, 2013
enamel & oil on composite panel
130 x 130cm (each), 130 x 430cm (overall)

Richard Wastell
Bone and flower fields,
Skullbone Plains, 2014
oil & pumice on linen
121 x 138cm
Lagoon and lichen covered rocks, 2014
oil & pumice on linen
50 x 45cm
Green cushion, 2014
oil & pumice on linen
91 x 61cm

Philip Wolfhagen
Skullbone Inventions, 2013
oil & beeswax on plywood
30 x 31.5cm (each), 20 panels

John Wolseley
Natural History of a Sphagnum bog -
Lake Ina, Tasmania, 2013
watercolour & graphite on 8 adjoining sheets of Waterford paper
152 x 400cm
CONTRIBUTORS

PRESENTED BY
Tasmanian Land Conservancy

SUPPORTED BY
Purves Environmental Fund
The Purdyburry Trust

ARTISTS
Tim Burns
Joel Crosswell
Julie Gough
Philip Hunter
Janet Laurence
Vera Möller
Imants Tillers
Megan Walsh
Richard Wastell
Phillip Wolhagen
John Wolseley

CURATED BY
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Catherine Wolhagen

Project Manager:
Clarissa Arndt

Photography:
Matthew Newton: All images except image on page 9 and portraits of Vera Möller and Philip Hunter.
Andy Townsend: image on page 9

Catalogue Design:
Alex Miles

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