



UNESCO Observatory  
Multi-Disciplinary eJournal in  
the Arts

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# ***CREATING UTOPIA***

Imagining and Making Futures  
Art, Architecture and Sustainability

Lorne Sculpture Biennale Inaugural Conference 2018

Editor | Lindy Joubert

# UNESCO Observatory

## Multi-Disciplinary eJournal in the Arts

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Lindy Joubert

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Naomi Berman

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### ABOUT THE E-JOURNAL

The UNESCO Observatory refereed e-journal that promotes multidisciplinary research in the Arts and Education and arose out of a recognised need for knowledge sharing in the field. The publication of diverse arts and cultural experiences within a multi-disciplinary context informs the development of future initiatives in this expanding field. There are many instances where the arts work successfully in collaboration with formerly non-traditional partners such as the sciences and health care, and this peer-reviewed journal aims to publish examples of excellence. Valuable contributions from international researchers are providing evidence of the impact of the arts on individuals, groups and organisations across all sectors of society. The UNESCO Observatory refereed e-journal is a clearing house of research which can be used to support advocacy processes; to improve practice; influence policy making, and benefit the integration of the arts in formal and non-formal educational systems across communities, regions and countries.

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### COVER IMAGE

Leon Walker  
Photography at  
The Lorne Sculpture  
Biennale 2018

## EDITOR'S LETTER

The sixth Lorne Sculpture Biennale, March 2018, was a vibrant festival celebrating the best of Australian and international sculpture. The stunning Lorne foreshore became a picturesque pedestal for a curated landscape of sculptures, presented alongside an exciting program of events devoted to pressing global issues of nature and endangerment, under the distinguished curation and visionary direction of Lara Nicholls, curator at the NGA Canberra. The inaugural conference, *Creating Utopia Imagining and Making Futures: Art, Architecture and Sustainability* was held at Qdos Gallery, Lorne, as part of the Biennale's curatorial theme of 'Landfall, Nature + Humanity + Art'. Keynote and invited speakers – conservationists, visual artists, architects and academics – reflected on issues and processes of social and environmental degradation, transformation and regeneration. The presentations came from a diverse and thought-provoking range of viewpoints offering innovative, and well researched future directions to the world's mounting problems.

*Creating Utopia* examined the green revolution – greater than the industrial revolution and happening faster than the digital revolution. The speakers were introduced by the inimitable Design Professor, Chris Ryan, whose elegant and thoughtful comments to each presenter added a distinctive contribution. Mona Doctor-Pingel, an architect from Auroville, India delivered her keynote address, 'Journeying to Oneness through architecture in Auroville, South India', discussing the natural and built landscapes found in the unique, social utopia that is Auroville, with an emphasis on experimental building techniques using local materials and craft principles, inspired by biology. I would like to thank all the presenters for their valuable contributions and this issue, volume 6, issue 1 of the 'UNESCO journal, multi-disciplinary research in the arts' [www.unescojournal.com](http://www.unescojournal.com) is testament to their important research and life's work.

The conference was considered by all who attended to be a wonderful success. Inspired by the beautiful setting amidst the gum trees and singing birds surrounding the Qdos Gallery. Sincere thanks to all who attended, the excellent list of speakers, the team - Graeme Wilkie OAM for his overall, tireless support; Lara Nicholls the LSB curator for her helpful ideas and professionalism; Gillian Oliver for the superb food; Laurel Guymer, the behind the scenes angel of 'La Perouse' at Lorne who managed the bookings and accommodation and our diligent rapporteur, Jeremy Laing. The excellent Deakin intern student managed all computer glitches, problems and presentation hurdles. A very sincere thankyou to Evelyn Firstenberg who generously and professionally edited all the conference papers and most importantly, a very special thankyou to Seraphina Nicholls who has tirelessly and superbly designed and managed the collation and publication of this special issue. These people and others, the LSB committee and particularly Deakin University who gave generously for the LSB Education Program, enabled the 'Creating Utopia' conference to make a significant contribution to issues relating to climate change, environmental and global futures and the role of the arts and sustainable planning.

### Lindy Joubert

Immediate-Past President Lorne Sculpture Biennale  
[www.lornesculpture.com](http://www.lornesculpture.com)  
Founding Director, UNESCO Observatory Multi-Disciplinary Research in the Arts  
Editor-in-Chief UNESCO Observatory ejournal - <http://www.unescojournal.com>  
Vice President, World Craft Council Asia Pacific Region, South Pacific  
Senior Fellow, Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning  
The University of Melbourne  
Email: [lindyaj@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:lindyaj@unimelb.edu.au)  
Mobile: +61 (0)425 788 581

# Foreword

*A mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam*

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“Time is that wherein there is opportunity, and opportunity is that wherein there is no great time. Healing is a matter of time, but it is sometimes also a matter of opportunity.”

- Hippocrates

In the autumn of 2018 forty-three artists from Australia and the wider world made the journey to the coastal township of Lorne along the jagged and wild coast of the traditional lands of the Gadubanud people to participate in ‘Landfall’ – the sixth iteration of the Lorne Sculpture Biennale. The theme endeavoured to provide artists with the space to interrogate the contradictions inherent in the equation between human progress, art and the environment. What I had asked as a curator of this remarkable group of artists was to open a dialogue about the earth and our position within it through the language of sculpture. They arrived with diverse offerings and insights. Finding their patches of earth, sand, currents of river water, or in some cases rock beds and tree boughs, they began to install, suspend, float, upload and make their sculptures.

‘Landfall’ is a play of language and like many words it contains a subtext. As a maritime term it simply means the point where the ocean meets land, but it also means something about time and space, as in when sailors explain that they will reach ‘landfall’ at a certain time calculated on speed and currents. At Lorne, landfall is a force of nature – a remarkable point where the Bass Strait meets one of Australia’s most ancient and impenetrable forests, the Otway Ranges. Subliminally, there is a sense of loss and collapse embedded in the term as though we may be responsible for a ‘fall’ from grace based on imperfect judgment – taking our eye off the game. As environmental scientist and activist David Suzuki reminds us, ‘the environment is so fundamental to our continued existence that it must transcend politics and become a central value of all members of society.’ The artists who came to Lorne in 2018 were simply asked to make work that draws our attention to the only one true asset that needs protecting – nature.

During the middle weekend of ‘Landfall’ the dialogue we had started along the sculpture trail increased with the opening of the inaugural biennale conference Creating Utopia: Imagining and Making Futures through Art, Architecture and Sustainability. The brainchild of our President, the inimitable Lindy Joubert, it was like no other conference I had ever experienced.

Designed to explore more deeply the cause, effect and solutions surrounding climate and progress, Lindy assembled a unique group of people with specific skills and expertise from beekeepers to scientists specialising in seaweed, environmental activist artists and architects and urban planners who coalesced modern technology and first nations philosophy in their practice.

A last-minute change of venue led to an unexpected but transformative experience for the delegates. Founder of the Biennale, Graeme Wilkie and his partner Gillian Oliver offered us his bush gallery, Qdos Arts. Instead of presenting in a high-tech conference room we drove through the dappled light of the Otway Ranges and settled into two days of enlightenment in the middle of an ancient forest. While we may not have had perfect audio visual or the ability to black out a room, we had bird songs and soft breezes wafting through the space and the constant backdrop of treetops and the smell of Eucalyptus leaves and bush mulch as a constant reminder of what we most wanted to preserve for humanity. Gillian made us lunch everyday with produce from their extensive kitchen gardens and a pattern for how life could be away from the big cities began to emerge.

One shared thread was evident throughout all the papers – our world is bruised and battered from its overuse by human beings. The earth is weeping and we must find solutions to transform the way human beings engage with the planet. These papers are in fact pathways to those necessary solutions. Greg Burgess reminded us of Carl Sagan's great levelling reflection *The Pale Blue Dot* in which he clarified our position in the universe as 'a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam'. He urged us to mirror the earth in the way we create our built environment like plant life. 'Think of the way a plant shows innate intelligence and wisdom as it adapts to, and metamorphoses in its microclimate, or the manner in which water streams when unimpeded, or eddies around an obstacle, always finding its way, changing its patterns.' Artist Marcus Tatton who makes work from the detritus of logging coups in the Tasmanian rainforest presented a paper entitled *Seeking Enlightenment*. He commented of his experience that 'in sculpture there is a revaluing, an openness that human chatter, and indeed human knowledge, is not a whole measure of this planet. With a revaluing of knowledge as lame and even inappropriate, there can be space amongst humans that is undefined, undecipherable, and there can be the openness that there do exist many more developed systems of communication, mysterious and layered, within our daily midst'.

Marine biologist and Ecologist Dr Alecia Bellgrove who has done remarkable work researching seaweeds as sustainable human nutrition told us 'the world is under pressure and we humans are the major problem. Atmospheric carbon dioxide levels continue to soar and with that our climate is changing in unprecedented ways. Our freshwater resources are dwindling but our population continues to rise putting more and more demand on our earth to supply us with the food we need to survive. We have to look to alternative, sustainable ways to feed our global population without killing the very planet on which we depend'.

Backyard apiarists, Jane and Peter Dyer reminded us of the shocking fact that ‘we are running out of bees’ and yet they ‘play an integral role in our lives and in one of our most fundamental ecological processes—the pollination of plants. Indeed, a sustainable future requires pollinators’. They reminded us that in this world of very complex problems, there are achievable solutions to global problems. ‘It’s easy: embrace weeds and wild lawns; let herbs go to seed; plant lavender and tea-tree hedges rather than box hedges.’

Dr. Ching-yeh Hsu, from the University of Taipei urged us to look at avant-garde Indigenous artists for solutions, as she advised us such artist in Taiwan ‘believe that they must break tradition and at the same time regenerate tradition. Through this regeneration, these indigenous artists nourish their tribes, thereby building a sociocultural vision for a better future’. Sydney artist, Gabrielle Bates offered some radical ideas ‘to open the pathways to enchantment in our locale despite how bulldozed or gentrified it maybe’. She cites contemporary author Thomas Moore, who suggests in his book *The Re-Enchantment of Everyday Life* that, ‘we could go a long way towards bringing charm into modern life by revering local spirits and protecting their homes.’

*Creating Utopia: Imagining and Making Futures with Art, Architecture and Sustainability* was a reflection, a meditation and indeed a call to action. Publishing these fascinating papers offers a road map beyond imagination that lays the way for a better future. As Arundhati Roy, author of *The God of Small Things*, has said, ‘another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.’ This publication seems all the more relevant now that we are living at the heart of a history changing moment presented by the Covid 19 pandemic. Ironically, it has taken a respiratory disease to show us the opportunity for rejuvenation and resuscitation for a stressed planet when we just stop doing and when we disavow progress and retreat to a simple way of life and look to the local. As Hippocrates famously told us, ‘Time is that wherein there is opportunity, and opportunity is that wherein there is no great time. Healing is a matter of time, but it is sometimes also a matter of opportunity.’ Can we find the courage to take that opportunity?

**Lara Nicholls**

Curator

Lorne Sculpture Biennale 2018