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CREATING UTOPIA

Imagining and Making Futures
Art, Architecture and Sustainability

Lorne Sculpture Biennale Inaugural Conference 2018

Editor | Lindy Joubert

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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

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THEME

The inaugural conference, 'Creating Utopia Imagining and Making Futures: Art, Architecture and Sustainability' was held at Qdos Gallery, Lorne in March as part of The Lorne Sculpture Biennale (LSB) for 2018, under the Biennale's curatorial theme of 'Landfall, Nature + Humanity + Art'.

The sixth Lorne Sculpture Biennale 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.

Accompanying LSB 2018 was the inaugural two-day conference, 'Creating Utopia, Imagining and Making Futures: Art, Architecture and Sustainability'. Keynote and invited speakers – conservationists, visual artists, architects and academics – reflected on issues of environmental degradation, processes of social and environmental transformation and regeneration, from a diverse and thought-provoking range of viewpoints.

"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. Issues relating to climate change; facing uncertain global futures and protecting our planet by taking control, being prepared, and offering solutions for long-term impacts were the topics. The conference heard the voices of experts who offered innovative and well researched future directions to the world's mounting problems.

Invited Speakers included Mona Doctor-Pingel, an architect, based in Auroville, India since 1995. Her keynote address, 'Journeying to Oneness through architecture in Auroville, South India', discussed 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.

Esther Charlesworth, Professor in the School of Architecture and Design at RMIT University, the Academic Director of the new RMIT Master of Disaster, Design and Development degree [MoDDD], and the founding Director of Architects without Frontiers (AWF). Since 2002, AWF has undertaken over 42 health, education and social infrastructure projects in 12 countries for vulnerable communities. Esther spoke about the role Architects can play in improving the social and economic capacity of vulnerable people through design.

Janet Laurence is a Sydney-based artist who exhibits nationally and internationally. Her practice examines our relationship to the natural world, and has been exhibited widely, including as an Australian representative for the COP21/FIAC, Artists 4 Paris Climate 2015 exhibition, and an artist in residence at the Australian Museum.

Professor John Fien, based in Architecture and Urban Design at RMIT, spoke about the techniques and strategies for countering human harm of the environment based on design thinking and education for sustainable development.

Professor Ray Green, Landscape Architecture at the University of Melbourne presented his research on 'The Changing character of Australian coastal settlements assessed through the eyes of local: A perceptual modelling approach', exploring how ordinary people living in smaller Australian coastal communities conceptualize the "character" of the places they live and the changes they have noticed. In many such communities the valued 'character' of people's towns and individual neighbourhoods is being lost, often as a result of replacement of older, vernacular forms of architecture with new buildings and changes to the natural landscape that do not fit into the local residents' established images of their towns and neighbourhoods.

This issue, volume 6, issue 1 of the 'UNESCO journal, multi-disciplinary research in the arts' www.unescojournal.com offers essays from a diverse range of authors and they are as follows:

Gabrielle Bates is a Sydney-based artist and writer exploring the intersections between place, politics and esoteric practice. Gabrielle has undertaken three residencies in Southeast Asia, and her art works have been selected for many competitive award exhibitions. A major survey of her paintings was held at Victoria University and she has produced 11 solo exhibitions.

Dr Greg Burgess, Melbourne-based Principal Designer at Gregory Burgess Architects, discussed architecture as a social, healing and ecological art. Burgess' international reputation has been established through a significant award-winning body of work, which features housing, community, cultural (including Indigenous), educational, health, religious, commercial, exhibition design and urban design projects.

Dr. Alecia Bellgrove is a Senior Lecturer in Marine Biology and Ecology with Deakin's School of Life and Environmental Sciences, and a marine ecologist with botanical and zoological training. Her research focuses on the role of habitat-forming seaweeds in ecological systems, their life history dynamics, and the impacts of anthropogenic disturbances such as sewage effluent and climate change. Her paper focussed on feeding the world with seaweed, without killing the planet. Although seaweed has many negative connotations, it plays a fairly major role in life here on earth - it is the primary producer of oxygen, it serves as the base for food webs and is a habitat provision. Seaweed she assured us can be the solution to many of our problems.

Dr. Ching-Yeh Hsu, Professor at the Department of Visual Arts, University of Taipei spoke about the role of visual art in creating utopia. Deeply rooting your art in nature creates a greater rapport and appreciation for nature itself, she maintains, while the use of abandoned material and junk for the creation of art is also a powerful way to express ideas for mutualism with the environment.

Jane and Peter Dyer, urban beekeepers based in middle-ring suburban Melbourne. Their apiary, Backyard Honey Pty Ltd, was seeded a decade ago with the idea of creating a micro-business that would work towards shifting negative perceptions about bees and help shape a sustainable future. Their paper provided an advocacy opportunity to actively explore the intersection of bees with art, architecture and landscape in a sustainable future.

Their presentation, A BeeC's – changing our thinking to changing the world, was developed to highlight the following aspects: Why do we need bees? What do healthy bees need? They provided an overview of built environments that actively promote bees through art, landscape and architecture.

Adjunct Professor Anton Hassel from RMIT claims non-indigenous people living in Australia find themselves on an ancient land mass that is nearly, but not quite, familiar. It is a landscape with unique archetypal cadences, an ambient pulse that unsettles us, and against which our imported familiar architectures and garden-planting schemes act as a bulwark to its strangeness, keeping us émigrés to country.

Professor David Jones and his team, Mandy Nicholson, Glenn Romanis, Isobel Paton, Kate Gerritsen and Gareth Powell wrote 'Putting Wadawurrung meaning into the North Gardens Landscape of Ballarat'. The paper discusses creating the first Indigenous-inspired sculpture landscape in Australia. This paper, prepared by the Indigenous-rich consultant team in conjunction with the Wadawurrung (Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation) and City of Ballarat, reviews the aspirations of the project together with these narratives and relationships in etching a design and master plan on the canvas.

Paula Llull spoke of Nature as being at the core of artistic creation. The inclusion in art of ideas like ecosystems, natural environment or extinction requires a medium that minimises the distance between the artwork and the spectator. She spoke of the work of Janet Laurence as one of the most remarkable contributions to this current. In particular, her installation Deep Breathing. Resuscitation for the Reef illustrates the commitment of the artist in communicating with feeling the threats such as global warming and its resulting acidification of oceans on particular natural environments.

Phillip B. Roös, Anne S. Wilson, and David S. Jones presented their research on 'The Biophilic Effect: Hidden living patterns within the dance of light'.

They challenged the notion of 'Healthy cities' and 'well-being' as being the most topical and misused words in our global society. They see them being used in discourses about new strategies and policies to create urban environments often masking a failing 'healthy economy'. This discourse, they claim, is the result of our human-made environments as a consequence of our Western quest for 'development', having 'economic renewal' as part of our global urbanisation. This quest appears to be casting aside our primal knowledge of living structures and systems, our important spiritual and innate affiliations to the natural world that we are part of, and thereby loss of biophilia.

Dr. Shoso Shimbo is a garden designer from the esteemed Japan Horticultural Society, specialising in Japanese gardens. He is a director of the International Society of Ikebana. His work in this field, and that as an environmental artist seeks to harness the life force of nature. His sculptural works have featured in some of the nation's major contemporary art exhibitions, and a new work 'Sea Snakes: Trash Vortexes' was a feature of LSB 2018.

Marcus Tatton's sculpture practice is an example of using recycled, natural materials. He works as a sculptor for over of thirty years in Tasmania, Marcus acknowledges that the purpose of his sculpture making is seeking enlightenment. Marcus lives in line with the Asian proverb "to seek enlightenment is to chop wood".

Dr. Rose Woodcock, from Deakin University, presented her research and investigations into a practice-led project 'Merri Creek to the MCG', featuring broken glass sourced from along the Merri Creek in Melbourne's north. The status and function of the glass is ambiguous but rich in possibilities, with the glass fragments connecting her practice with issues of soil sustainability. Rose drew upon aspects of Parmenides' poem on the nature of 'what is' to explore the workings of language, in particular how poetic language can open up otherwise tightly construed discourses.

In conclusion, the conference was a wonderful success in a beautiful setting amidst the gum trees and birds surrounding the atmospheric Qdos Gallery. All the papers were inspirational and left an indelible mark on the audience. 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 Guymmer, 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 University intern student managed all computer glitches, problems and presentation hurdles.

Sincere thanks goes to Evelyn Firstenberg who generously and professionally edited all the conference papers. 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, environmen-

Lindy Joubert
Editor-in-chief

Seeking Resonant Frequency in the Australian Landscape

Dr Anton Hasell
RMIT University

ABSTRACT

We non-indigenous people who live in Australia find ourselves on an ancient land mass that is nearly, but not quite, familiar. It is a landscape with unique archetypal cadences, an ambient pulse that unsettles us, and against which our imported familiar architectures and garden-planting schemes act as a bulwark to its strangeness, keeping us émigrés to country.

“Landfall” (or “land-ho”) are the calls of those aboard a craft at sea on sighting land, a call loudly reported in a voice quivering in both hope and fear. To beach the craft upon a shore radiant with unknown treasure and opportunity requires navigation of crashing waves on rocky coastlines, promising a dangerous and threatening sequence of events.

Once on shore, however, land gives up its resources and its destiny to its colonisers. Whether it be a small island, a continent or the planet, colonising scenarios have played out in full. Sustainable futures for the seven (and rising) billion people feasting upon our planet looks evermore doubtful.

We non-indigenous people who live in Australia find ourselves on an ancient land mass that is nearly, but not quite, familiar. It is a landscape with unique archetypal cadences, an ambient pulse that unsettles us, and against which our imported familiar architectures and garden-planting schemes act as a bulwark to its strangeness, keeping us émigrés to country.

My studio practice, since 1994, has been to find ways, through images, objects and sound, of diminishing the misapprehension we feel about the landscape in which we live. I left Melbourne’s urban living for a regional Victorian country life in 1989. The darker, harder to grasp, rhythms and patterns of the Australian countryside (if we choose to notice our misfit), has inspired my self-given task as an artist to tune into the resonant frequencies of the landscape I have come to know, in order to help me, and us, tune into our country.

This program of enquiry has developed in three parts. The first part’s task was to devise a metaphorical method to let all of us see the country with fresh eyes, as if for the first time. The second part was to follow the example of Ludwig Leichhardt, and to encourage our leaving the coastal hinterland and travel to the interior. The third, and I think final part, asks the question; how can we live sustainably in our country beyond exploitation, that is, how are we to live in tune with the visual, sonic and visceral patterns of experience of our country?

In 1994, I made sculptures and bells, prints and drawings imagining fishing trawlers leaving Port Lincoln with citizens on board bound for the Great Southern Ocean. I made a group of life-sized diving suits to be used to lower people into the freezing and darkening sea to a depth at which they could only just feel their bones, and so embrace the reality of their mortality, that they might arrive in the moment, to become present. When pulled up into the light and ‘born again’ upon the trawler deck, and taken back to Port Lincoln, surely people would feel the eucalypt tree’s strange indifference to their presence and, for the first time, ‘see’ that this is a country not scaled to human domestication but operating at orders of magnitude incompatible with suburban dreaming.

We might then tune into the 'resonant frequency' of the country and be able to resist the urges to shape the landscape patterned to ideas fashioned overseas.



Figure 1
Armageddon Bell

Small bell-sculptures made for this project became more highly developed through the application of sophisticated digital engineering in a commission for Vision Australia of an interactive bell-sculpture in 1995, and again between 1998 and 2002, using computer software to design never heard before bells for the Federation Bells Carillon projects commissioned for Australia's centenary of Federation. The Harmonic Bell design was invented for these projects as they required bell sounds in perfect harmonic pitch, a sound sought by European bell founders but now invented in Australia. This bell's pure tone is a unique ambient resonance of the Mia Mia landscape where it was invented and first heard, joining the thunder of the bullroar and the raucous squawk of the cockatoo as part of the sonic fundamental frequencies in the Australian soundscape



Figure 2
Federation Bells Installation

The second part of this project was to draw people from the coast inland. Leichhardt could see the truth of the Australian topological skin. It was a perfect truth for him. The major rivers on the west of the dividing range flowed inland. Even the hairs on his own skin could feel the downhill pull of an inland sea. His trek to Port Said crossed numerous rivers flowing up from the centre to the gulf.

The simple and overwhelming truth was that there was an inland sea, that he would be irresistibly drawn to it, and after a frolic in its waters he would travel on to the colony of Perth. In 1848, he set out and we await his return. Meanwhile, like a child to his childishness, I determined to make more suitable navigational instruments for his further use. “Brother, throw away the compass, the set square, those dividers and sextant that barely gets people about in Europe, and mislead us here”, I would have said. Each instrument I invented for him is kept in proper adjustment through its connection to the landscape. The ‘Lunar Navigational Instrument’ tracks the shifting glint of the moon across a bronze orb in a small water container, and by marking that journey throughout the night, the instrument leaves a curve scraped in the sand. Some rudimentary calculus of the curvature directs the pathway forward. There is a ‘Solar Navigational Instrument’ and ‘Over-the-horizon Sonic Navigation Instrument’ which sounds a small harmonic bell and collects its echo through an elaborate ear piece. Close to the continental centre, there is the ‘Inland Sea Shell Navigational Instrument’, which is a cast bronze shell with ear piece on a bearing turntable, allowing one to turn it and listen for the loudest archetypal crash of waves, and an arrow to point out where this is coming from.

The ‘Water Finding Navigational Instrument’ is cleverness itself, if the psychology of birds is ever clever. Three magnifying glasses are aligned to make an adjustable telescope, and two cast bronze budgies are perched upon it in splendid colour. At dusk, the flock is attracted to and visit our decoys, (especially to the blue budgie), only to, eventually, bore of the stiff company and wheel away towards the nearest waterhole. By following the line of sight with the telescope, one then merely follows by foot to water. So, all the tools (there are more but it is too tiring to tell) that are needed, and maps too!

Figure 3
Leichhardt’s budgie
water-finder instrument



But not European drawn maps or pictorial depiction unable to work in a flat and featureless plain, repeated across Australia. Instead, beautiful maps beaten out against the anvil earth in copper sheet, taken along for the purpose. Here every scrape and mark of the earth itself is transferred to each map, including the marks of previous and ongoing occupation, and in this way the subtle topology of a plain is captured as no eye can discern. Only the touch of a finger can read the braille of Australia. This our child Leichhardt knew, and I have tried to share his knowledge.

My current research is making a study of naturally occurring patterns: of the shifting distribution of birds on bodies of water, the scatter ratios that rocks and trees observe, and the dispersal of sea shells scoring the beat of waves. These, as well as the rhythmical swirls of water flows coursing through creeks, are patterns that I suspect can be read as a kind of 'sheet music' to the landscape. We can penetrate the surface and appearance of things to really 'site read', or otherwise sense, feel and hear the orchestral truth of our Australian experience, that we belong to it, not it to us, and that we serve its song-line needs rather than have it serve those tuneless needs of our own.



Figure 4
Leichhardt's map of
Hopkins Falls

The palpable and visceral nature of the Australian experience must necessarily diminish the visual dominance of cultural experience too common in global creative expression. Here, the senses are interwoven in powerful and secret ways, and sound vibration over vast and shallow space shivers above and below the audible range, as felt pulsation, as electrical fizzing, as much tasted, touched, seen and smelt as heard. Intuition alive to these complex sensory experiences can bring us in tune with country.

If we are true in our tuning in to country, we have something useful to share with a world looking for sustainable co-habitation on their part of the planet. We can share our special listening experience with them.

Listening is fundamental to our discovery of self, and place of being. We all must find ways to live in tune, and in rhythm, with our landscapes. My exploration of the sonic experience of the Australian landscape is resulting in sculptural, multi-sensory forms worth listening to. In this way, I hope to share the subtle percussive sounds and invented listening experiences with my fellow citizens, and with people across the world.

I have just completed the invention, casting and tuning of a 'difference-tone' musical set of 10 bell-sculptures for the Long Now's 10,000 Year Clock project. The Long Now Foundation (www.longnow.org) proposes visionary long term thinking for sustainable life on our planet, and is undertaking the truly amazing clock project. The maintenance-free clock is being constructed inside a mountain in Texas, and it encourages people everywhere to keep 'in-time' with the planet's needs and to tune into its clock bells (perhaps the clock's bells will help people tune into the planet's ambient hum) for the sustainable future we seek.

CAD processes combined with rapid prototyping technologies are central to my practice as an artist, which is why I have recently completed a Synapse Residency at CSIRO's Lab 22 exploring direct metal 3D printing. A number of alternative direct metal printing technologies have been used to print the Long Now 'Difference-Tone' bell design in titanium and in stainless steel/bronze fused materials. These are the first bells 3D printing in direct metal. The partial frequencies of this new bell design are carefully arrayed to have the bell generate a pitch that is an octave below the lowest actual frequency in the bell. The invention of this psychoacoustical effect is only possible in our digital age.



Figure 5
3D printed
'Difference-Tone' bells

Accessible, interactive and participatory public art installations, like the Federation Bells Carillon at Birrarung Marr Park Melbourne, become sites of shared multi-sensory experience for people. This is a kind of art experience, beyond spectatorship and entertainment, that invites everyone to listen to the creation of sound fields made by the actions of people around them.

It is a listening experience for the positive energy of others. It invites people to partake in creative play, to share their considered sensibilities. People anywhere in the world can download the phone app of the Federation Bell Carillon, or use its web page, to compose music for this set of unique musical bells. Imagine, people joyfully engaged in accessible, participatory and responsive creative playing together.

This is public space that is made accessible and participatory through public art architecture designed to enhance feelings of inclusion and community wellbeing. It is a vision for public art connecting people with one another and with the country they share with each other, listening for resonance, and being sensitive and alive to the interwoven fields of vibration animating life all about them. People are composing with the fabulous and bewitching sounds of the Australian landscape that emanate from these unique bronze forms.



Figure 6
3 Twisting bell forms

Open, free, egalitarian, playful and ingenious creativity and invention, isn't that what we Australians stand for in our cultural life, and shouldn't this be our gift to a world in desperate need? That everyone gets to 'have a go' is not just a mantra for seeing if an idea works through participation, it is integral to the idea of 'a fair go', that powerful concept underwriting our community's ingenuity (and the remaining hope for a prosperous future). Being sensitive to subliminal resonant frequencies and rhythms of our ancient landscape; tuning into country; this is the work of discovering who, and where, we are.

"Landfall" might be the call of someone's pirate-maniacal imaginings of untold wealth appearing on the horizon, like those simple (it turns out, too simple) economic models of vast cattle farms, mineral mining and other schemes of exploitation that draw people to the heart of outback Australia. But it can also be a call to tune into landfall's siren song, to find oneself drawn to the irresistible sonic patterns that resonate and ricochet, reverberate and echo in, around, across and under the complex topological forms and vast open spaces of living country.

It is my greater hope that this kind of investigation, of tuning into our country and of building joyful sites of shared creative play for people of all ages, might help inform us as to the kind of society needed to find a sustainable harmony with the planet we are so very crowded upon.