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Life in Your Hands: art from solastalgia

A Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery touring exhibition project

Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery
30 March - 13 May 2012

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Artists

Douglas Archibald, Selena Archibald and Donna Fernando, Allan Chawner,
GhostNets Australia (Ilka White And Karen Hethey), Michelle Hamer, Barbara
Heath, Janet Laurence, Jeff Mincham, Melinda Young

Partner Venues

Horsham Regional Art Gallery, Signal Point Gallery, Object: Australian Centre for
Design, Craft ACT: Craft and Design Centre, Gladstone Regional Art Gallery and
Museum, Perc Tucker Regional Gallery

Publisher: Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery

Template designed by Stephen Goddard

Layout by Raelene Narraway

Printer Lakemac Print

Paper Tudor RP, 100% recycled paper certified carbon neutral

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This exhibition is supported by the Contemporary Touring Initiative through
Visions of Australia, an Australian Government program, and the Visual Arts
and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian Government and state and
territory governments.



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INTRODUCTION

This education resource kit is designed to assist teachers and students to explore, investigate and reflect on the key themes and artworks in the exhibition *Life in Your Hands: art from solastalgia*.

WAYS TO USE THIS RESOURCE KIT

This kit is intended to be used as a valuable resource in the classroom. The images and suggested activities are devised to be used in pre-visit preparation, as a guide when exploring the exhibition and as a reflection in post-visit activities. The case studies offer more in-depth investigations into the themes raised in the exhibition.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

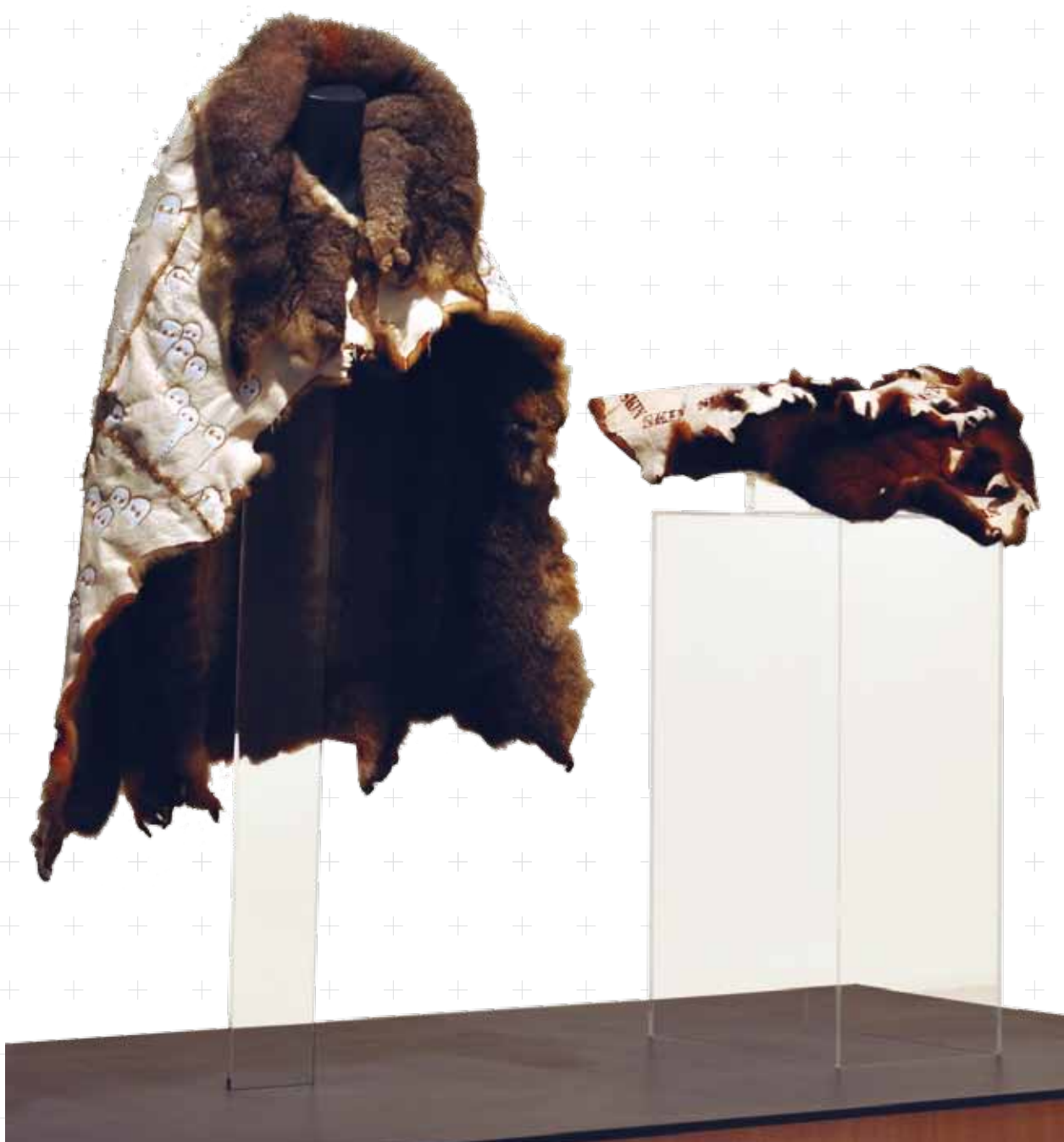
The activities in the kit are intended for both primary and secondary students. Teachers will need to adapt syllabus links to suit their state or territory. While there is an emphasis on the Visual Arts syllabus, teachers will find curriculum connections to the following:

- HSIE (Aboriginal Studies, Environments, Change and Continuity, Geography and History)
- Science and Technology
- Drama
- Music
- TAS (Agricultural Technology, Marine Science)

EXHIBITION OVERVIEW

Recent research indicates that environmental stress is adversely affecting the mental health of communities. The phenomenon recognised and identified as 'solastalgia', by Professor Glenn Albrecht, can arise from a variety of causes such as ecological change, economic change, technology, political decisions, and changes to the community. This exhibition not only looks at the causes and effects of solastalgia, but the potential for contemporary visual art, craft and design practice to contribute to debate and healing. The artists in the exhibition were asked to consult and work with communities suffering from solastalgia to create artworks specifically for the exhibition.

PART 1
CATALOGUE ESSAYS



Douglas Archibald
Voices (detail) 2011
photography Douglas Archibald and
Selena Archibald
© the artist

Selena Archibald and Donna Fernando
Bounnoun kinbirug – from her, away from her (details) 2012
photography Donna Fernando and Douglas Archibald
© the artists

The relationship between a community and its immediate environment is, at best, balanced and robust: communities demonstrate resilience, cope with adversity and, by necessity, must accommodate change. However, when change occurs for the worst, people can become disempowered and separated from the very place perceived as home. Physical and mental health may be affected: the result of an accumulation of adverse conditions. This phenomenon has been identified and named as solastalgia by Professor Glenn Albrecht. Effectively this is a condition of homesickness experienced without leaving home.

Solastalgia has a variety of causes: environmental change, loss of connection to the past, economic change and political decisions, all of which impact heavily on communities. Unlike major catastrophes where a cause can be identified and collectively addressed, with solastalgia the change is chronic and incremental. As a result it is either dismissed or simply not recognised. Groups of individuals become 'disturbed' by solastalgia but, as it is not sudden and traumatic, a response is not always seen as being necessary.

Life in Your Hands: art from solastalgia has looked to the work of artists as a means to better recognise solastalgia. The idea was not to describe it as a phenomenon, but to see if art, craft and design could be a vehicle for social change and assist in countering solastalgia in affected communities. The Russian filmmaker Andrey Tarkovsky wrote of the potential for artists to explore life and to create spiritual treasures in which we recognise our own predicament and where we can find solace. For Tarkovsky, an artist 'is capable of going beyond the limitations of coherent logic, and conveying the deep complexity and truth of the impalpable connections and hidden phenomena of life'.¹

The artists selected for the *Life in Your Hands* project understand the complex layering of connectedness between the land and the life it supports, and acknowledge the ability of art to convey this situation. Their works in this exhibition have been created as a result of identifying and working with communities that are perceived as experiencing solastalgia.

During the exhibition's development, artists and gallery venues from five states and territories were paired to work together: artists discussed with galleries the issues faced by their region, and were placed where the issues best aligned with the artist's own investigations. Each region experienced unique issues, but the commonality was the consultation process through which each community was given a voice. The gallery venues were asked to assist the artists to connect with groups that had identified issues creating conditions for solastalgia in their community, and to facilitate discussions with those groups.

The artists have drawn from the experiences of people who work to counter solastalgia and who often face enormous challenges in their attempts to do so. From the turtle hospital to the seed bank collection, work is being done to identify the problems, establish methods to combat them, and ensure ways of surviving. The artworks in *Life in Your Hands* are informed by, and imbued with, the sense of urgency that individuals and communities face on a daily basis.

The issues that adversely affect the wellbeing of these communities are as varied as the communities themselves: regional and urban people concerned about the decrease in biodiversity and its effect on their environment, the effects of noise pollution, destruction of marine habitats, environmental change and decline in ecological health, the ongoing effects of race-based removal, and the impact of major disasters at a local level. The enormity of these problems and the perceived inability for individuals to counter them is a major contributor to solastalgia.

As the major part of Australia's population clings to the coastal periphery of the continent, one would expect an awareness of the fragility of the ecosystems of the marine environment to be foremost in the consciousness of its population. The collective GhostNets Australia actively

engages with and exposes concerns within, and extending from, coastal communities across the north of Australia. Its work is simultaneously an environmental cleansing and a creative construction through the redemptive process of making art.

In the Queensland city of Townsville, a group of scientists is working to protect and heal sick and injured marine creatures and to ensure their survival. As we celebrate the seven billionth person to be born on the planet, there are many species on the endangered list or facing extinction. Janet Laurence highlights the gap between what is happening in the wild to species as their habitats are damaged in our quest for resources, and the intensive care programs being put in place for their survival.

The long-term effects of drought on the environment concerned artists Jeff Mincham, Barbara Heath and Melinda Young. In the south-east of South Australia, communities dependent on the freshwater lake systems were irrevocably changed, with many people leaving and not returning. In Horsham the farms and gardens were flourishing once more but, faced with a worldwide economic imperative to favour monoculture farming practices, the future of biological diversity depends on saving seed from 'land race' crops. While the Canberra bushfire tragedy drew people together in its enormity, the aftermath – of dealing with the fire's ongoing devastation long after the event and the expectation to 'move on' – has created the conditions for solastalgia.

Sometimes these conditions are not based in environmental degradation, but political decisions that continue to have an enormous social impact. The ongoing challenges, and great sadness, that has come from the policy of forcibly removing children from Aboriginal families still resonates today. Douglas Archibald, Selena Archibald and Donna Fernando created possum skin cloaks, for a young man and an infant respectively, that recognise the struggle of recovering identity as part of coming-of-age, when the link to family, language and land has been removed.

Urban airport extensions are contentious sites of legal, environmental and global concerns, and Sydney Airport is no exception. Michelle Hamer produced works in consultation with No Airport Noise, a local community group which has maintained an ongoing discussion and dispute with airport authorities. Hamer's tapestries engage with the genuine fears of the community in relation to noise and pollution concerns surrounding the expansion of Sydney Airport.

Albrecht's solastalgia project was given a 'face' by Allan Chawner's photography of Hunter Valley mine sites within a rural community. There is nothing staged about Chawner's images; they show the raw effect of our need for resources to supply our twenty-first century demands for cars, buildings, food and technology. Without our needs, there would be no mines. It all comes at a cost. Sadly, that cost is often borne by the people who have always lived on and loved their land.

Life in Your Hands maintains an optimistic position in that the potentially redemptive nature of the act of making art can offer some understanding of the notion of solastalgia, provide a platform for discussion and offer a creative response. The search for resolution of issues is ongoing, and art can play a significant part in the restitution of a sense of well being in a community.

Robyn Daw
Exhibition Curator

1. Andrey Tarkovsky (trans. Kitty Hunter-Blair), *Sculpting in time*, University of Texas Press, 1987, p.21

CATALOGUE ESSAY:

SOLASTALGIA

I created the concept of solastalgia in 2003 to give expression to a feeling that people in the Upper Hunter were trying to convey to me. They were distressed about the huge expansion of the open-cut coal mines in the Upper Hunter of New South Wales and its impacts on their properties, lifestyles and health. Their distress, although manifest in different ways, was concentrated on their relationship to their home environment or their sense of place. As an environmental philosopher at the University of Newcastle at that time, I wanted to empathetically engage with these people. I was often their only point of contact for information on what could be done to have their say about the mining and its impacts on people and place. After carefully considering the situation I realised that there was no concept in the English language that adequately described their distressed state. The melancholia of nostalgia was close, but had the obvious disadvantage that these people were still at home so were not homesick in the nostalgic sense. To more precisely match their experience to a concept, I had to create a new one, solastalgia. With my friends and colleagues Linda Connor and Nick Higginbotham, I began to conduct research on the transformation of place and its impacts on people in the Upper Hunter.

I defined solastalgia as an emplaced or existential melancholia experienced with the negative transformation (desolation) of a loved home environment. Solastalgia has its origins in the concepts of 'solace' and 'desolation'. Solace is derived from *solari* and *solacium*, with meanings connected to the alleviation of distress or to the provision of comfort or consolation in the face of distressing events. Desolation has its origins in *solus* and *desolare* with meanings connected to abandonment and loneliness. *Algia* means pain, suffering or sickness. It is a form of 'homesickness' like that experienced with traditionally defined nostalgia (*nostos* – to return home), except that the victim has not left their home or home environment. Solastalgia, simply, is 'the homesickness you have when you are still at home'.

The concept of solastalgia has had considerable international impact since its creation and has helped revive interest in the relationships between humans and place on all scales. The concept has steadily grown in its public use. An internet search on the term will produce many thousands of results in many languages and a brief scan of those results reveals that, apart from new applications in academic contexts, artists, composers and musicians, poets, playwrights and hundreds of ordinary people in blogs and websites have understood the need for the term and have applied it in meaningful ways.

It may seem ironic that a concept that unravels the relationship between negative change to home environments and human mental health can also inspire artistic and creative responses. However, the makers of craft and art are generally super sensitive to the state of 'their world' and they have strong gut feelings about what the world should be like, or, what it should not be like. What I have done is give expression to those gut feelings by creating a whole new psychoterratic (psyche-earth) language to describe what sensitive people already feel but cannot give expression to in language.

Creative writers and artists have always intuited 'solastalgia' in varying degrees. Edvard Munch's *The Scream* was painted in part in response to the eruption of Krakatoa in 1883. The blood red sky he depicted was a product of huge clouds of volcanic dust ejected into the global atmosphere, but Munch produced an archetypal, eco-apocalyptic response in the famous painting. In his journal of 1892, he wrote that he felt as if '... a great, infinite, scream [had passed] through nature'.

Contemporary environmental art portrays the loss of species and ecosystems as something more than loss of biodiversity ... it also depicts the loss of something vital within us ... the negation of the very possibility of deriving happiness from our relationship to the environment. Artists not only sense the alienation that is occurring to human-place relationships, they attempt to depict such relationships in their art. When presented with the conceptual

clarification of their inner feelings about Earth relations they are empowered by it. Once empowered by their knowledge of solastalgia, many contemporary artists have created individual works and whole exhibitions based on the concept.

In addition to the many artworks and exhibitions, others have been creatively inspired by solastalgia. To date, there has been a Broadway play, a collection of poetry and musical composition encompassing genres as diverse as progressive rock, ambient, electronic and punk all connected to the concept of solastalgia.

In 2008, with photographer Allan Chawner, another former colleague at the University of Newcastle, I flew in a helicopter over the mined areas of the Upper Hunter to record images of what people normally perceive at ground level. From that collaborative excursion, Chawner has produced a strong piece for *Life in Your Hands: art from solastalgia*.

Despite the creative responses so far, the challenge of recognising and responding to the experience of solastalgia is now more challenging than ever. Unfortunately, small scale, local damage is still happening to loved home environments as globalisation homogenises all before its bulldozers, with cookie-cutter buildings and the neon signifiers of McLandscape. Good people lament the loss of their endemic landscapes as a universally branded global culture obliterates the distinctive and the unique. Urban solastalgia is the distress caused by unwelcome changes to the physical appearance of local and city landscapes, including landscapes, sense scapes and streetscapes. Rural and regional solastalgia is produced under the impact of mining and agribusiness as they bring unwelcome damage and homogeneity to ecocultural and bioregional landscapes on a huge scale.

As bad as local and regional negative transformation is, it is the big picture, the whole Earth, which is now a home under assault. That feeling of global melancholia identified by Munch in *The Scream* is reasserting itself as the planet warms to a slow motion Krakatoa-like conclusion. As the climate gets hotter, more hostile and unpredictable ... we seek solace wherever it is offered.

Art and artists have a hugely important role in helping others understand what is going on in their surroundings. We all sense that something is wrong with the human-nature relationship but very few are able to 'see' what is happening. Art and craft help us see and react to what is often almost invisible and unspeakable. They bring it all to the surface and force us to interact with it. Artists can offer us a degree of solace with their creations, but they can also heighten our discomfort in the face of environmental disturbance.

When a new psychoterratic language describing our emotions and feelings about place is connected to such art, powerful transformative forces are unleashed. When we can see what is going wrong, when we feel in our guts what is going wrong and when we can give eloquent expression to what is wrong ... we can express the wrong in actions, including creative acts. Solastalgia is fixated on the melancholic, but it is also the foundation for action that will negate it. In that sense, as has always been the case in much of art, solastalgic art is potentially revolutionary.

Glenn Albrecht PhD
Professor of Sustainability
Murdoch University, Western Australia

PART 2

ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS



Jeff Minchim installation

revival: January 2010 2012
40 x 58 x 12cm

Coorong Landscapes (What have we learned - recovery: January 2012) 2012
39 x 58 x 12cm

The Southern Lagoon (Dried out: January 2009) 2012
3 panels, each 41 x 41 x 4cm
all hand-built ceramic, multi-glazed and multi-fired, mid-fire
©the artist

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR PRIMARY STUDENTS

SOLASTALGIA AND ENVIRONMENTS: CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

Before commencing any of the activities read the two essays at the beginning of the kit, then research and discuss the meanings of solastalgia and soliphilia with students. Refer to Parts 3 and 4 for information on Barbara Heath, Melinda Young and GhostNets Australia.

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITIES

RESEARCH: Begin by discussing the artwork of Barbara Heath and Melinda Young, and how it relates to the local environment from which it was made. Working in small groups, students observe and record in a table, a plant seed growing over a period of time. Ask students to make predictions of what they think the plant will need to survive and compare this list with their records. Invite a local Landcare or plant nursery representative to speak with the students during this time.

ART-MAKING: Students take photographs as the plants grows. Photocopy the photographs and let students draw into the copies with different media, for example, oil pastels, watercolour pencils and/or collage. Arrange and display these drawing in the classroom in order of growth.

POST-VISIT ACTIVITY

REFLECTION: Find out from a plant nursery or local Aboriginal Land Council what types of bush tucker plants grow in your local environment.

ART-MAKING: Students design and make a display map of a bush tucker garden for the school, including a key. They can then actually make the garden in the school grounds with the help of local Aboriginal community members and/or parents. Students can decorate their garden with signs, a scarecrow and other forms of art related to garden and plants. Discuss the artworks made by the GhostNets Australia group and Melinda Young for ideas of what objects can be made to decorate the garden.

REFLECTION: Talk about ways in which the students can help care for the garden. Have them develop an action plan to assist in the preservation of the garden site, for example, they can sell or donate produce to a local café. Also discuss with the students, how making and caring for the garden makes them feel about themselves and the school.



Barbara Heath, series of photographs (featuring Dr Bob Redden) taken by the artist during a research visit to Horsham and the Wimmera region, 18 - 22 July 2011. © the artist

SOLASTALGIA AND CULTURES: CHANGES TO THE COMMUNITY

Before commencing any of the activities read the two essays at the beginning of the kit, then research and discuss the meanings of solastalgia and soliphilia with students. Refer to Parts 3 and 4 for information on Douglas Archibald, Allan Chawner, Janet Laurence, GhostNets Australia, Jeff Mincham and Melinda Young.

PRE - VISIT ACTIVITIES

DISCUSS: Students brainstorm and make a list of all the things that make them who they are and feel part of their school community, for example, their friends, teachers, school uniform, school emblem, school motto, the school grounds, projects they have been part of around the school. Discuss ideas surrounding the artworks by Allan Chawner and Douglas Archibald to support this activity.

ART-MAKING: Working as a class group, students create a memory collage mural about the school. They can add qualities associated with the school such as textures, smells, etc. and include the items discussed above. They can either draw, find or source elements of the collage from magazines and photographs. Look at the work of Janet Laurence, GhostNets Australia and Melinda Young for ideas about what sort of object and images could be used.

POST - VISIT ACTIVITIES

REFLECTION: Discuss the artwork by Allan Chawner and Jeff Mincham. Students discuss how their local environment has changed during the years they have been at school. Are there new roads, buildings or parks in the area? Discuss if the changes have been for the better or worse, how the students feel about the changes and what do they predict will happen over the ten years. Will they still recognise it?

ART-MAKING: Students make a collage/painting of what they think the local environment will look like in ten years. They can do this in small groups or individually by using found objects, images from magazines, their own photographs with paint or drawing materials.



L-R: Douglas Archibald using pyrography tools on possum skins. Preparatory work for *'Bounnoun kinbirug - from her, away from her'*. Photography by Douglas Archibald and Donna Fernando.

PRIMARY STUDENTS

EXPLORING THE EXHIBITION

This worksheet will assist primary students when visiting the exhibition *Life in Your Hands: art from solastalgia*.

1. Find the puppets and video created by the GhostNets Australia project on Moa Island.

a) What is a ghost net? _____

b) List two materials the artists have used to make the puppets. _____

c) The artists Karen Hethey and Ilka White worked with people of the St Pauls community, Moa Island, to create this art project. If you were part of the St Pauls community, which part of the project would you have liked to work on and why? (For example, make the puppets, control the puppets, sing or play music.)

d) Draw your favourite puppet in the space below.



e) In the boxes draw a cartoon called 'The dangers of ghost nets'.

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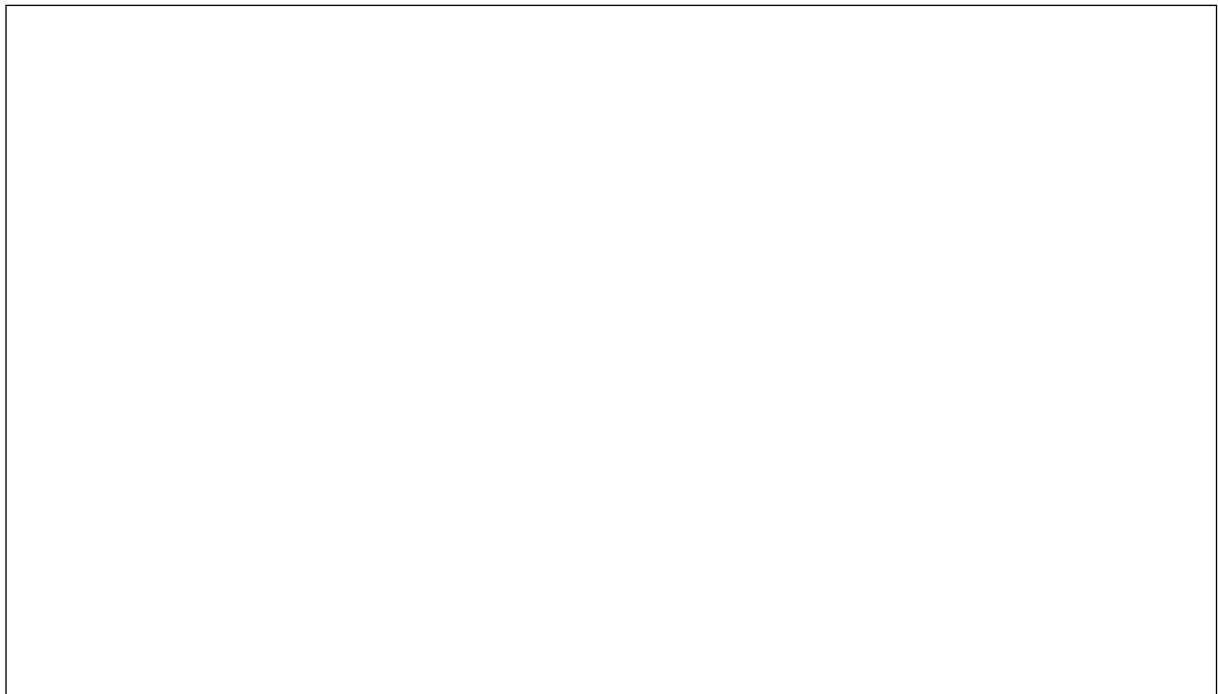
2. Find Allan Chawner's artwork *Life in your hands*.

a) Put a circle around the different types of landscapes you can see in the video.

BUSH RURAL AGRICULTURAL COASTAL DESERT

b) How do you feel when you look at the landscapes that have been cleared for mining?

c) In the box, draw a fantasy creature that you think would live in a mine environment. Label the features that the creature needs in order to survive (for example, ways to breathe dust, be able to move around the site, etc.)



3. Look carefully at Janet Laurence's artwork.

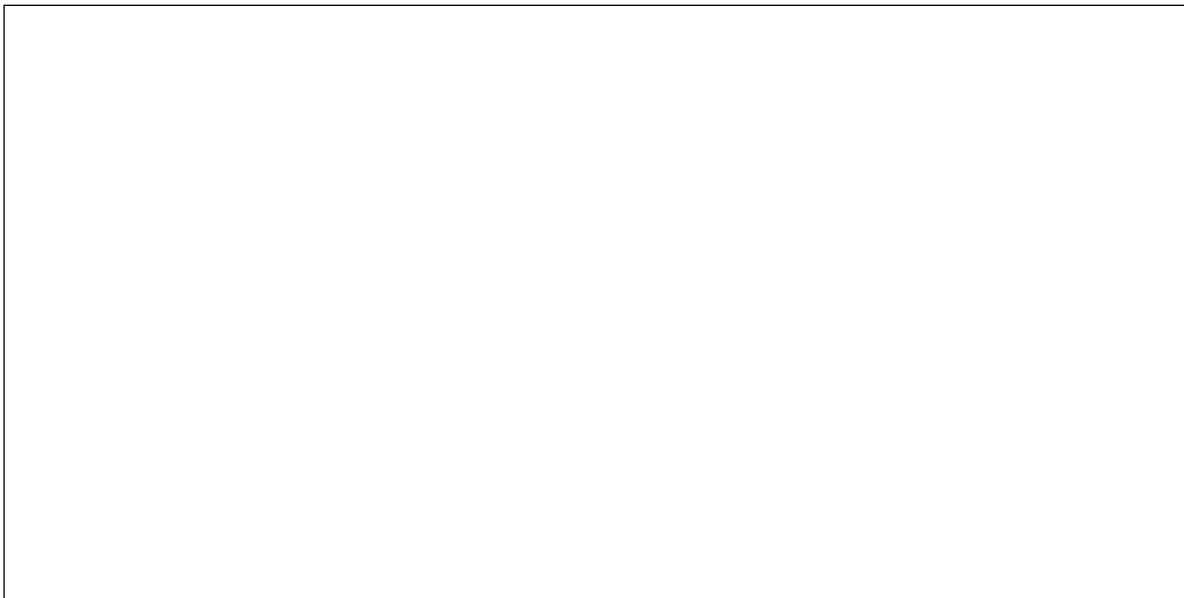
Janet Laurence loves animals and she often creates artworks about them, and in particular their survival. In this artwork she shows the relationship between the marine turtle, an endangered species living in the Great Barrier Reef, and the people (including researchers and scientists) living near the reef who are dedicating themselves to caring for and protecting these turtles.

a) What is the name of the artwork? _____

b) Name an organisation that you have heard of that cares for animals.

Briefly explain how they do this. _____

- c) Draw a poster or a design for a home page for the organisation that explains why the animals need volunteers to help.

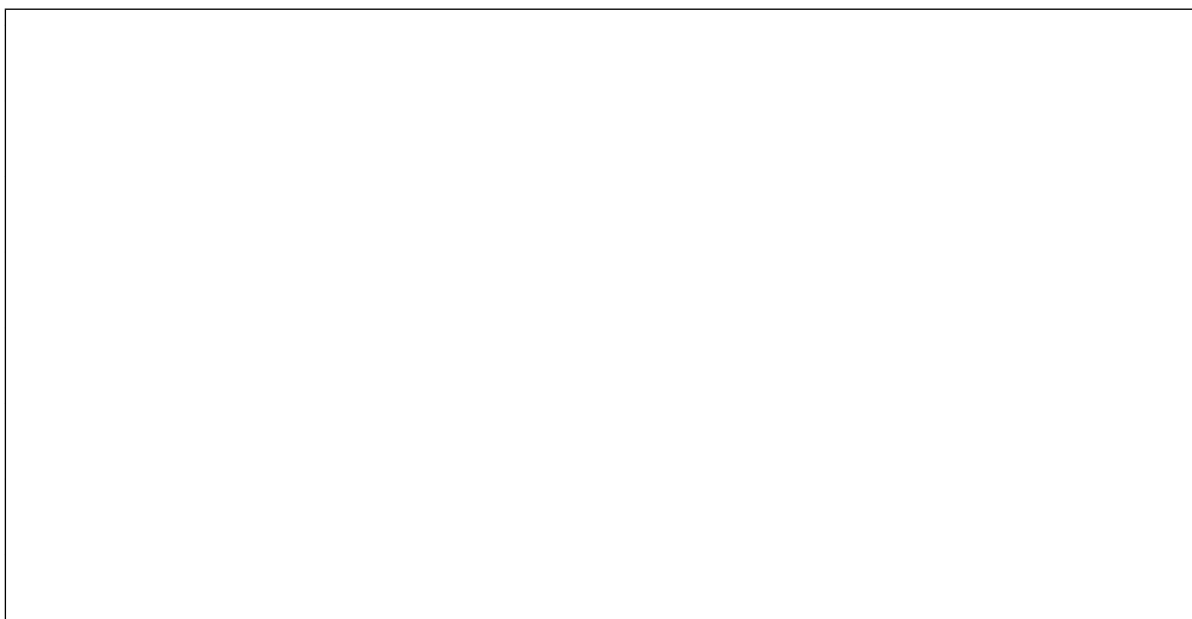


4. Find the possum skin cloak by Selena Archibald and Donna Fernando.

- a) Who do you think this cloak was made for? How can you tell?

- b) Does your family have an object (maybe even an item of clothing) that has been passed down from one generation to the next? Name it and describe it.

- d) Draw an object that has been in your family for a long time. Think about what it looks like, what it is used for, and how the object makes you feel.



SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR SECONDARY STUDENTS

SOLASTALGIA AND CHANGED ENVIRONMENTS

Before commencing any of the activities read the two essays at the beginning of the kit, then research and discuss the meanings of solastalgia and soliphilia with students. Refer to Parts 3 and 4 for information on Selena Archibald, Donna Fernando, GhostNets Australia and Melinda Young.

PRE - VISIT ACTIVITIES

RESEARCH: As a background to this activity, discuss the artworks by GhostNets Australia. As a group, students observe a local natural or built environment that they like to use – a park, the beach, the school or shops. They identify the items left behind by people who use the environment and make predictions about what will happen to these materials, such as how long will they stay there, which ones will stay the longest, etc. Compare the different materials of these items (plastic, paper, food scraps, metal cans). The class can keep a systematic record over a period of time; for example, a day, a week or a month. In discussion, explain how these materials affected the environment and how they would feel if the environment was affected permanently.

ART-MAKING: What objects does the school throw out regularly and what objects do the students throw out that could be recycled? Students make a collection of some of these items. Using the artwork of Melinda Young, GhostNets Australia and Selena Archibald and Donna Fernando, students each design and make a container from recycled objects. The container must have a specific purpose that could be either practical, such as for holding water, food or a baby, or for more abstract, such as holding thoughts, dreams and fears about the environment. The size, shape and form of the container should be appropriate to the function, for example is it a basket, pot, bag or coolamon? Students are to consider the decoration of the container, test it to see if it works record their findings.

POST - VISIT ACTIVITIES

REFLECTION: Invite a guest speaker from the local Aboriginal community and/or Land Council, to discuss the significance of environmental conservation in traditional Aboriginal societies. Students create artworks based on the theme 'Caring for Country'.

Alternatively, ask a representative from the local Landcare or coastal care organisation to discuss the work they do as a starting point for students to create artworks based on 'Caring for our Community'.

EXPLORING THE EXHIBITION

This worksheet will assist secondary students when visiting the exhibition *Life in Your Hands: art from solastalgia*.

1. Look carefully at Janet Laurence's installation art piece titled *STRANDED*.

Janet Laurence loves animals and she often creates artworks about them. In this artwork she shows the relationship between the marine turtle, an endangered species living in the Great Barrier Reef and the people (including researchers and scientists) living near the reef who are dedicating themselves to caring for and protecting these turtles.

a) Write three words to describe your first impression of this work. _____

b) Explain how the materials Laurence has used and how she has assembled them makes the viewer (you) feel sympathy for the marine turtle.

c) Name an organisation that you have heard of that cares for animals. Briefly explain how they do this. _____

d) Why do you think it is important to care for animals? _____

2. Find Douglas Archibald's possum skin cloak, *Voices*.

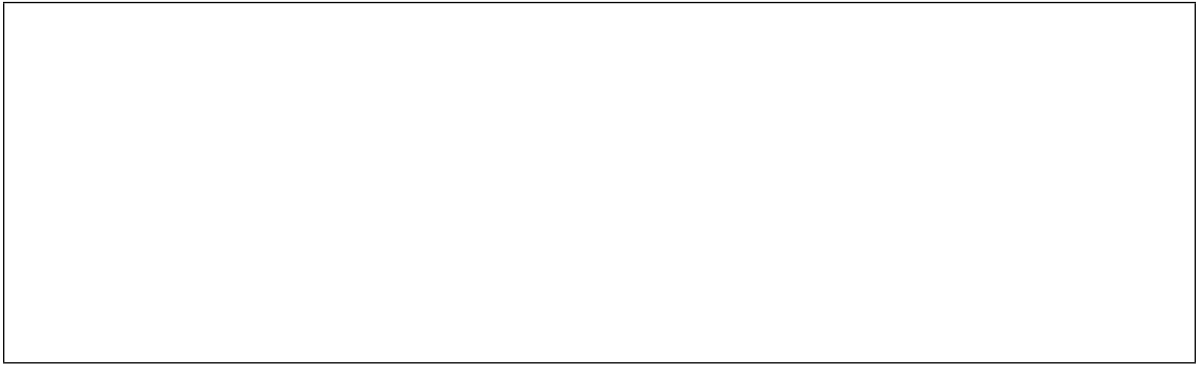
a) Look at the image on the *Voices* cloak. How does it change and why? _____

b) Why do you think the artist has repeated the image? _____

c) Use three words to describe how this cloak would feel to wear. _____

d) The cloak represents an adolescent boy who has been disconnected from his Aboriginal family and culture. Name an object that connects you to your family or your group of friends. Explain how it connects you to aspects of your life. _____

e) Draw your object in the box.



3. Watch Allan Chawner's video *Life in your hands* and view Jeff Mincham's ceramic panels.

a) Describe how you feel after seeing these images of the barren landscape. _____

b) Why do you think Chawner uses music in his work? _____

c) Mincham's ceramic art reflects his connection to the landscape. Close your eyes and imagine your favourite environment and write how you would feel if this environment changed. _____

d) Write a poem describing how it would feel to be in these landscapes.

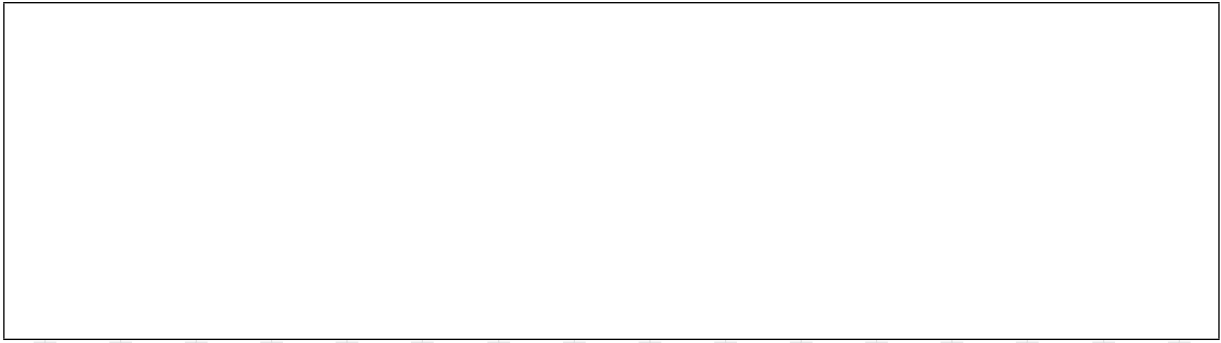
4. Barbara Heath and Melinda Young create jewellery. Find their artworks.

a) How do you think jewellery could be considered an art form? _____

b) Describe the difference in size between these two artworks. _____

c) Jewellery is usually an object worn by people to express their personality. How do these two artworks express a connection to people? _____

d) Choose one of these two artworks and draw it in the box.



5. Find Michelle Hamer's artworks *Noise map* and *Now you're flying*.

a) Hamer uses tapestry to create her artworks. Where would you usually see tapestries and what would they usually portray? _____

b) List three things that you can see in *Now you're flying*. _____

c) Where would you normally see these things? (Think in terms of an urban environment.)

6. Look carefully at the GhostNets Australia shadow puppets.

a) Briefly explain what ghost nets are and why they are dangerous to the marine environment. _____

b) Choose three different puppets and draw them below, adding as much texture as you can.

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CASE STUDY 1:
ART THAT CHALLENGES AUDIENCES
TO EMPATHISE WITH COMMUNITIES
SUFFERING FROM SOLASTALGIA

Before commencing any of the activities read the two essays at the beginning of the kit, then research and discuss the meanings of solastalgia and soliphilia with students.

Refer to Parts 3 and 4 for information on the artists in this case study. Questions and activities for this case study could be useful for HSIE, Science, Agricultural Studies and Visual and Performing Arts.

One function of art is to challenge the audience to think beyond their comfort zone. The art of Allan Chawner and Michelle Hamer presents us with images that represent the fears and concerns of the communities most affected by heavy mining and airport noise pollution, respectively.

These images explore notions of solastalgia on the community, documenting issues and asking the audience to empathise and question change and the community's concerns.

A C T I V I T I E S

- Briefly explain your immediate response to the contrasting landscapes presented by Chawner throughout the work.
- How does Chawner's video document Professor Glenn Albrecht's notion of solastalgia?
- How could Chawner's aerial photographs be considered maps?
- Explain where Michelle Hamer got her inspiration for *Noise map*.
- Discuss Hamer's art practice with particular reference to her use of traditional tapestry techniques and digitalised imagery such as signage and billboards.
- Choose either Chawner's video *Life in your hands* or Hamer's *Noise map* and complete the following activity:
 - Research the effects of human impact on the environment through industrial technology. Collect primary and secondary sources of information. Include maps, interviews, photographs, quotes, fieldwork and drawings.
 - Add some evidence of the effects on communities living with this impact. You could include statistics, graphs, tables. Also, quotes and images (photographs could be cropped for emotional quality).
 - Present your findings to the school either through an installation, a performance piece, a photographic essay or a video. Include aspects which emphasise human emotion such as music.

SECONDARY STUDENTS

CASE STUDY 2: SOLASTALGIA VS SOLIPHILIA: ART AS A FUNCTION OF HEALING

Before commencing any of the exercises, read the two essays at the beginning of the kit and discuss the meaning of solastalgia and soliphilia with the students.

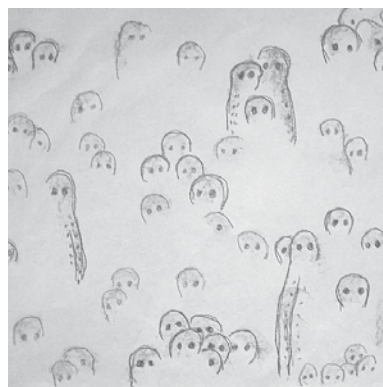
Questions and activities for this case study could be useful for Aboriginal Studies and Visual Arts.

Solastalgia is the adverse effects of a changed environment on a community. The phenomenon of soliphilia occurs when the community unites to take responsibility for the wellbeing of its home environment. Soliphilia empowers the community.

Art can be recognised as a form of soliphilia because it helps to give the community expression. The emotional expression of creating can make the community feel as though they are being heard.

A C T I V I T I E S

- Watch Professor Glenn Albrecht's lecture at TEDx in Sydney in 2010.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-GUGW8rOpLY>
- Students have a class discussion about Professor Albrecht's theories on solastalgia and soliphilia. Outline the way art has been used to help heal the Indigenous communities in this exhibition. In your discussion investigate how traditional art-making practices within the Indigenous culture give meaning to the ideas of caring for country and searching for identity.



L-R: Photograph taken by the artist of Glenn Albrecht (left) plotting a route over the Hunter Valley with the helicopter pilot, 2008. Douglas Archibald, preparatory drawings for *Voices* (detail) 2011, photography Douglas Archibald and Selena Archibald. Children performing *The young man and the ghost net* 2010, photography by Corey Austin. All images © the artists

CASE STUDY 3: A PERSONAL RESPONSE TO SOLASTALGIA BY THE ARTIST

Before commencing any of the exercises, read the two essays at the beginning of the kit and discuss the meaning of solastalgia and soliphilia with the students.

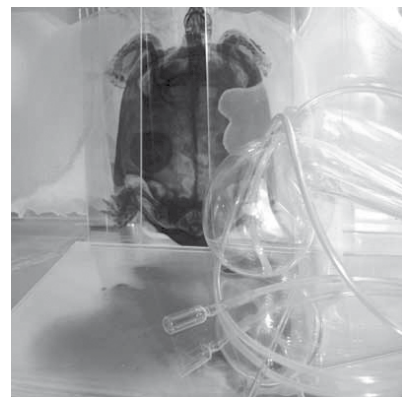
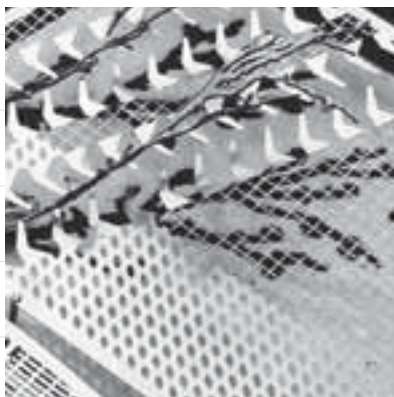
In *Life in Your Hands: art from solastalgia*, the artists involved in the project consulted with particular communities to create art that speaks of the community's concerns. However, the results of the art-making process show how emotional and personal the project became to the artist.

Some of the artists created artworks with themes that are close to them. Allan Chawner often photographs rural communities in the Hunter Valley. Janet Laurence likes to create art about animals. All of the artists were directed by their art practice; letting the materials that they normally use adapt to the issue of the community.

What is clear from the artworks produced is that the artists were deeply affected by the experience of consulting with and sharing the community's concerns. They created intimate artworks that speak from a position of empathy.

A C T I V I T I E S

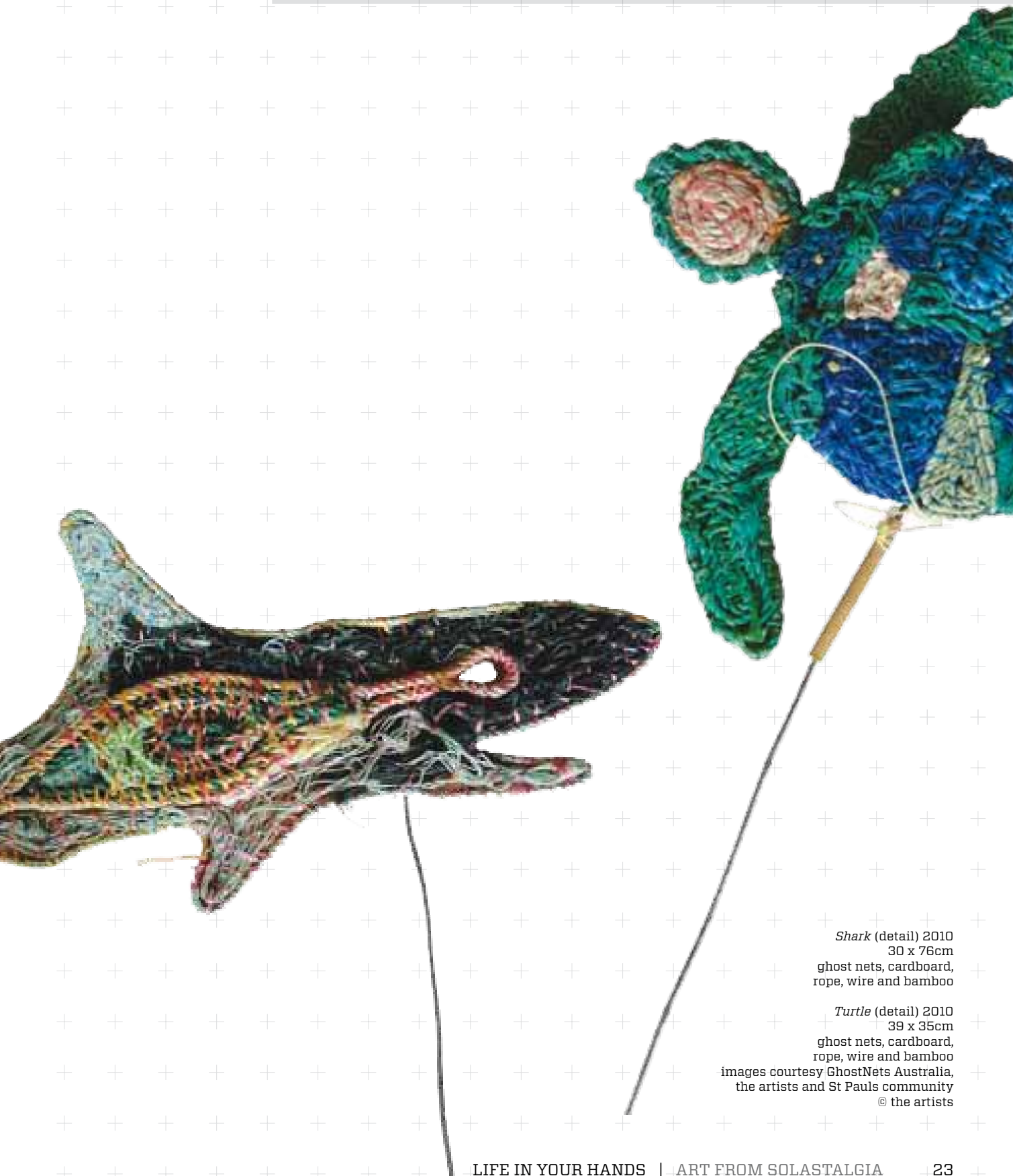
- Develop an art exhibition at your school with the theme of solastalgia. Students can create an expressive artwork in response to a changing environment that affects them in some way and they feel most strongly about. Develop a catalogue for the exhibition.
- Barbara Heath has taken the plants in her artworks out of their usual context. They appear to be objects within an intimate sculptural environment created by the artist. How is she changing their normal meaning and function or retelling their history? Students could create small sculptures inspired by structures found in nature (plants, insects, animals). Keep the sculpture intricate by using wire, cane and paper.
- Laurence's installation and the GhostNets Australia project are connected through their stories of marine life. Students could sculpt turtle and dugong puppets from recycled materials (include such objects as X-rays). Consider effective ways of joining various objects together for strength and aesthetics. Students then present a puppet show based on a story about these marine creatures.



L-R Barbara Heath *Land race II - Briar* (detail) 2012, © the artist
Janet Laurence, research image, Townsville, August 2011.
Janet Laurence, *STRANDED* (detail) 2012 © the artist


PART 3

ARTISTS
AND ARTWORKS



Shark (detail) 2010
30 x 76cm
ghost nets, cardboard,
rope, wire and bamboo

Turtle (detail) 2010
39 x 35cm
ghost nets, cardboard,
rope, wire and bamboo
images courtesy GhostNets Australia,
the artists and St Pauls community
© the artists



DOUGLAS ARCHIBALD

Douglas Archibald was born in 1959 in Armidale, New South Wales and currently lives in Cardiff South (Lake Macquarie), New South Wales. Archibald is an Aboriginal man, a descendant of the Gumbangurri people; he is also a proud father and grandfather. He has lived the majority of his life in Lake Macquarie, and is an active and respected member of the Aboriginal community.

As an artist, he has made a considerable impact in and around Lake Macquarie and Newcastle with significant murals, mosaics and sculptures, among his many fine art works. Archibald attended the Hunter TAFE (1976-1979) and graduated with a Diploma in Fine Arts. He has been a senior member of the Aboriginal Reference Group of the Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery since its inception in 2000, acting as coordinating artist on many projects including *A Possum Skin Cloak by the Lake* (2010-11) and *Bridging Cultures* (2011).

Voices 2011

possum skin, pyrography, synthetic polymer paint and waxed thread

120 x 115cm

courtesy the artist

In his work *Voices*, Douglas Archibald has addressed a complex issue facing the children whose parents are part of the Stolen Generations by asking the question: what is the ongoing effect of the removal policy on following generations? In New South Wales, the *Aborigines Protection Amending Act 1915* removed the requirement that Aboriginal children had to be found to be neglected before the Board could remove them. They could be taken simply for having an Aboriginal parent. While Archibald has clear links to his own ancestry, to inform this work he consulted directly with men whose parents had been removed as children. These men may know their parents and be secure in that knowledge, but do not necessarily know who their grandparents are, or their aunts, uncles or extended family. By talking openly and honestly through a series of face-to-face discussions, the men revealed the impact of the removal policy on their relationships with their parents, on their Aboriginal identity and on their everyday perceptions of themselves.

The imagery for the final piece came from listening to the men, and the stories and experiences of our people.

Voices continues Archibald's investigation into reconnecting with cultural heritage through reviving traditional Aboriginal practices. This possum skin cloak was made using a technique similar to that used by his ancestors who lived in the Armidale area; burning and painting designs into possum skins which are then sewn together. *Voices*, however, is a contemporary interpretation of the traditional cloak and made to fit an adolescent boy. The teenage years are usually when people start to investigate their identity with great interest: who they are, where they have come from, and where they will go. With no knowledge of their ancestry beyond their parents, this becomes a difficult journey for the children of the Stolen Generations.

My hope is that going through this process will encourage the men to engage [where they have not] with the Aboriginal community, and to reach out for individual support. Douglas Archibald 2012

Voices complements the companion work *Bounnoun kinbirug – from her, away from her* by Selena Archibald and Donna Fernando.



Douglas Archibald
Voices (detail) 2011
 photography Douglas Archibald and
 Selena Archibald
 © the artist

SELENA ARCHIBALD AND DONNA FERNANDO

Selena Archibald was born in 1961 in Moree, New South Wales and currently lives in Cardiff South (Lake Macquarie), New South Wales. Archibald is an Aboriginal woman of the Kamilaroi people (Central NSW), and a proud mother and grandmother. She grew up in Moree on the Mehi Aboriginal mission, and studied and worked in Dubbo and Adelaide, before settling in Newcastle. Archibald attended the University of Sydney as a mature-aged student after raising her family, and graduated with a Diploma of Aboriginal Education Assistants. She is a respected member of the Aboriginal community and has been active in women's groups and community events and is now Aboriginal Education Officer at Morisset High School. She has been an integral member of the Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery Aboriginal Reference Group since 2000.

Donna Fernando was born in 1972 in Glen Innes, New South Wales and currently lives in Belmont (Lake Macquarie), New South Wales. Fernando is an Aboriginal woman from the Muruwari and Ngemba people of the central west of New South Wales. Also a proud mother, she has spent most of her life living in Newcastle and has been an active member of the community from a young age. Fernando attended the University of Newcastle where she completed a Bachelor of Education (English Literature and History), later working at the University of NSW (Aboriginal Research and Resource Centre) and with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission. Fernando has been an influential member of the Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery Aboriginal Reference Group since 2000, curating and project coordinating a number of exhibitions including: *Stories* (2006), *yapang marruma: making our way (stories of the Stolen)* (2009) and *A Possum Skin Cloak by the Lake* (2011).

*Bounnoun kinbirug -
from her, away from her* 2012
possum skin, waxed thread and ink
75 x 100cm
courtesy the artists

Selena Archibald and Donna Fernando initially held a group meeting to discuss solastalgia and its effects within the Aboriginal community. Through undertaking a series of concentrated discussions, they identified and teased out the best way to approach the issue. Having both worked on the exhibition *yapang marruma: making our way (stories of the Stolen)* for Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery in 2009, they wove stories from their own and others' experiences and 'a lifetime of family histories' into their joint work *Bounnoun kinbirug - from her, away from her* for *Life in Your Hands*.

'Bounnoun kinbirug' was translated in *An Awabakal-English Lexicon to the Gospel according to St Luke* (LE Threlkeld, Govt. Printer, Sydney, 1892) as 'from her; away from (apart from) her'. The Awabakal language is the Aboriginal language of the Lake Macquarie and Newcastle area, where Archibald and Fernando live.

Bounnoun kinbirug - from her, away from her is a small, infant-sized possum skin cloak nestled in a Perspex coolamon. The work makes direct reference to Aboriginal children stolen as babies, and the resultant maternal loss and grief. The title also alludes to the resultant, complex disconnection to mother, family, skin and language - the baby may be 'from her' but is simultaneously 'away from her': taken under the *Aborigines Protection Amending Act 1915*. For *Life in Your Hands*, Archibald and Fernando have made a cloak for an absent baby that did not, or perhaps has not yet, received a gift that will connect them to their cultural history. The tiny cloak awaits its - yet unknown - wearer, who may grow up in the full knowledge of his or her Aboriginal identity. It also sensitively expresses the potency of family connections. *Bounnoun kinbirug - from her, away from her* complements the work *Voices* by Douglas Archibald.



Selena Archibald and Donna Fernando
Bounnoun kinbirug - from her, away from her (details) 2012
 photography Donna Fernando and Douglas Archibald
 © the artists



ALLAN CHAWNER

Allan Chawner was born in 1949 in Lismore, New South Wales and currently lives in Newcastle, New South Wales. Fine art photography and the moving image are the basis of Chawner's artistic practice. His themes are based around notions of sense of place in portraiture and landscape. Over many years Chawner has consistently shown exhibitions of photographs and collaborated with writers or composers. He presents exhibitions internationally and has also developed links with small communities, exhibiting in venues outside mainstream art galleries. His work is a response to identity: both of the self and of communities. Chawner has lectured in visual arts since 1978 and currently holds the position of Conjoint Associate Professor of Fine Art at the University of Newcastle, New South Wales.

Life in your hands 2012

digital video duration 8'00"

music by Ross Edwards, *Veni Creator Spiritus* (1st movement), as performed by Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra with conductor Richard Mills, from the CD *Stillness: music of calm in a changing world*. ABC Classics 476 3951, dated 2011 © United Artists
courtesy the artist


In August 2008, photographer Allan Chawner and Glenn Albrecht, then Associate Professor in Environmental Studies at the University of Newcastle, set out in a helicopter from Newcastle to photograph Hunter Valley mines and the countryside surrounding mining areas. Their intention was to generate visual information for later use in programs and projects associated with the concept of solastalgia, which Albrecht had formally identified and was continuing to research. As they flew over Singleton, out to Muswellbrook and The Rouchel, then north towards Stroud and Gloucester and back via the west of Maitland, Chawner took photographs of the landscape below, looking at the visual impact of the mines on surrounding farms and built-up areas.

Solastalgia is at the heart of Chawner's photographic work. His understanding of, and passion for, the land and his intimate and long-established love of the Hunter Valley is apparent. Chawner's photographs reveal the devastation facing the people of the Hunter. They give visual form to Albrecht's concept of solastalgia, aptly describing the sense of loss that might be felt by people affected by the mining industry directly or by its visual impact. In Chawner's images the contrast between natural forested areas, cultivated farming land and the sprawling mines could not be greater. The places may still be there, but they have been irreparably changed. They are no longer 'home' to the people who have lived on, and cared for, the land that has sustained them for generations, but have been transformed into something else. The music selected by Chawner for his work *Life in your hands* is the first movement of *Veni Creator Spiritus*, composed by Ross Edwards. Seductive and seemingly calm, the movement conveys an underlying sense of dread providing a sympathetic soundtrack to the powerful images.

The place is still there but it is irreparably changed. People no longer recognise the landscape of their own home due to mining in the area. Allan Chawner 2012



Allan Chawner
Life in your hands (video stills) 2012
 digital video with music by Ross Edwards
 duration 8'00"
 © the artist



MICHELLE HAMER

Michelle Hamer was born in 1975 in Melbourne, Victoria and currently lives in Melbourne, Victoria. Exhibiting since 2005, Hamer creates hand-stitched works on perforated plastic to explore the small in-between moments of apparent ‘nothingness’ that characterise everyday life. Drawing on her background in architecture, her work focuses on signage within urban landscapes. She is particularly interested in contemporary societal edicts and ideals, and the impermanent and in-between spaces as represented through signage and billboards. Hamer’s work is based on her own photographs and translated predominantly by eye into her tapestries. She continues to use this traditional technique to explore an ironic romanticism present between tapestry and the digitalisation of imagery in contemporary society.

Noise map 2012

hand-stitched mixed yarn on perforated plastic
69.3 x 54cm

Now you’re flying 2012

hand-stitched mixed yarn on perforated plastic
69.3 x 54cm
courtesy the artist

Melbourne-based Michelle Hamer sought, through Object: Australian Centre for Design, to work with a specific community and examine a key cause of solastalgia affecting urban life in Sydney. One of the identified triggers was the increase in noise pollution, in particular from the airport, which was affecting people’s physical and mental health. The No Aircraft Noise Party was formed as a political party in 1995 to fight the issue of noise from Sydney Airport. Hamer met with the group and visited affected suburbs to document and gain further understanding of the cause of such distress. Meeting with members of the community and having them explain the issue allowed Hamer to consider their specific concerns such as the impact of constant, loud noise and fears of potential accidents with increased air traffic. The community welcomed the opportunity to talk and provided Hamer with background material including noise maps, and locations of signage and noise, which became the subjects of her works.

The community was enthusiastic and happy to be included in a discussion process that considered their issues. Michelle Hamer 2012

The two works that resulted, *Noise map* and *Now you’re flying*, are based on information provided from Hamer’s investigations with No Aircraft Noise and her direct observations in the inner city area affected by noise. The map shows the noise levels predicted by No Aircraft Noise based on the approved Sydney Airport Master Plan 2009, and using the Australian Noise Exposure Forecast system. *Now you’re flying* offers a caustic view of advertising luxury flights in the inner city area of Sydney most affected by air traffic noise – the plane appears to crash into buildings, one of the risks No Airport Noise party fears.



Michelle Hamer
Now you're flying 2012
 photography Marc Morel
 © the artist

BARBARA HEATH

Barbara Heath was born in 1954 in Sydney, New South Wales and currently lives in Brisbane, Queensland. Heath's work – whether commissioned or ©Bh brand jewellery, major public artwork or bespoke architectural detailing – describes her distinctive approach to creating contemporary objects imbued with histories, narratives and symbolism. With an international exhibiting career spanning over 30 years and demonstrating her skills as an artist, jeweller and designer, Heath is represented in numerous public collections. She has worked in Brisbane for more than two decades and describes her studio practice as 'Jeweller to the Lost'; a title that hints at the intimate collaborative nature of making meaningful objects to articulate personal stories on a human scale. 'I work in a medium that is both precious and symbolic,' says Heath, 'in effect a sign language carried on the body; expressing ideas of continuity, belonging and inheritance.' As the work crosses from human to large urban scale these narratives expand to scope ideas of place and of a collective history.

Land race I – Apple 2012
copper, white enamel, stainless
steel and silver
4.7 x 18 x 14.2cm

Land race III – Aloe 2012
copper, white enamel, stainless
steel and silver
3.3 x 18 x 14.2cm

Land race II – Briar 2012
copper, white enamel, stainless
steel and silver
3.3 x 18 x 14.2cm

courtesy the artist

By the time Barbara Heath visited Horsham, the town and the surrounding Wimmera region of Western Victoria were in the process of recovering from a decade-long drought. To inform her work, which was initially to address issues of drought, Heath held a number of planned and fortuitous conversations with the assistance of Horsham Regional Art Gallery staff. Through this process, she came to focus on the changes in agricultural practices in the area. The list of people with whom Heath consulted is lengthy, but Dr Bob Redden, Curator Australian Temperate Field Crops Collection of the Grains Innovation Park, became her main contact. In an email of August 2011, Dr Redden wrote to Heath: 'Now with unprecedented population levels and growth, there is a risk of disconnect and taking food supply for granted, even with climate change. Humans will need to change if they wish to continue their increasing diverse interests, but will need to prioritise agricultural research, better understanding our available genetic resources, plant growth and development, and imaginative paths to harnessing science and truly earn the title *Homo sapiens*.'

Land race is Heath's direct response to the urgency of maintaining biodiversity. Agriculture today requires economies of scale that change the social landscape and limit population diversity. This results in the erasure of many small communities, loss of connection to the past and cultural loss. Dr Redden explained his department's work to ensure plant gene diversity by sourcing and saving seed from land race crops. 'Land race' is the term used to describe heritage seed varieties now being displaced by International Seed Uniformity Standards. Heath's *Land race* series shows distinct levels, from colourful biodiversity in the soils at the base to the patterns of farming practices above. Each *Land race* also features a remnant plant species that reaches up and through the tractor track patterns: briar, apple and aloe.

In so many ways the blanket displacement of crop gene diversity mirrors the disruption of small 'whole' rural communities. Somehow the urgency of the hunt for remaining land race varieties, in the face of all the implications of risk inherent in the seed uniformity standard, might also mirror a way to resolve the social implications of escalating rural change. Barbara Heath 2011



Barbara Heath
Land race II - Briar (detail) 2012
 photography Malcolm Enright -
 'Jeweller to the Lost' studio 2012 ©Bh

GHOSTNETS AUSTRALIA

WITH ILKA WHITE AND KAREN HETHEY AND ST PAULS
COMMUNITY, MOA ISLAND, TORRES STRAIT, QUEENSLAND

GhostNets Australia is an alliance of over 30 Indigenous communities from coastal northern Australia, from the Northern Territory, across the Gulf of Carpentaria to the Torres Strait. The program was established in 2004 with funding from the Australian Government. Since its inception, the program has supported Indigenous Rangers to remove over 8,000 ghost nets of varying sizes, some weighing up to six tonnes. This has resulted in the recovery of a proportion of the trapped wildlife, particularly marine turtles (52%), and the prevention of the ghost nets from returning to the sea to continue their destructive lifecycle. Less than 10% of these nets have been attributed to Australian fisheries. This project is also enabling Aboriginal communities to fulfil their aspirations of having stewardship of their customary lands and adjacent marine environment, known as 'caring for country'. St Pauls community is one of two communities on Moa Island, the second largest island in the Torres Strait. St Pauls is located on the northern end of the island, accessible by boat and aeroplane. Similar to surrounding islands, Moa is characterised by mounds of rock and is lightly vegetated and well watered.

The young man and the ghost net 2010-11
digital video duration 10'00"
dimensions variable
courtesy GhostNets Australia
and Visual Obsession

Turtle 2010
39 x 35cm

Little fish 2010
16 x 11cm

Boat 2010
22 x 70cm

Coloured fish 2010
22 x 10cm

Shark 2010
30 x 76cm

Coral reef 2010
50 x 23cm

Dugong 2010
25 x 60cm

ghost nets, cardboard, rope, wire and bamboo
courtesy GhostNets Australia, the artists and
St Pauls community

In 2010, St Pauls village on Moa Island celebrated not only the first puppet show of its kind in the Torres Strait, but also the first puppet show ever made out of ghost nets and marine debris. Artists Ilka White and Karen Hethey spent four weeks on Moa drawing together people's real life experiences of seeing the damage ghost nets do to sea creatures like turtles, dugongs, coral reef and mangroves, and also the dangers they present for people crossing the open waters between islands. Materials were collected locally and puppets woven together in community workshops, with the arts centre, schools, churches and wider community all contributing significantly. The story was told using a shadow-puppet screen, narration, live music and full choir. The audience sang and wept their way through the story of a young fisherman's encounters with ghost nets, performed by around 65 local musicians, singers and puppeteers of all ages.

The ghost net issue is an international one as nearly all (90%) of the marine debris entering the northern coastal and island regions of Australia is of a fishing nature and originates from South East Asia. GhostNets Australia initiated the puppet project as well as the film of the process, including the lead up to the performance, interviews with locals and the final show. The puppets and film have kindly been lent for inclusion in *Life in Your Hands*.

A large percentage of the [St Pauls] community was involved in the project.

Community members found it very rewarding and felt proud to be part of it. Many were quite emotional and it affected them deeply. Sue Ryan GhostNets Australia 2012



GhostNets Australia
Children performing *The young man and the ghost net* 2010
Photography by Karen Hethey and
image courtesy GhostNets Australia.



JANET LAURENCE

Janet Laurence was born in 1947 in Sydney, New South Wales and currently lives in Sydney, New South Wales. Laurence's work echoes architecture while retaining organic qualities and a sense of instability and transience. Her work occupies the liminal zones or meeting places of art, science, imagination and memory. Profoundly aware of the interconnection of all life forms, 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. Laurence exhibits widely and has an impressive record of solo and group exhibitions in Australia and overseas. She has completed significant national and international public commissions including *The Edge of the Trees* 1994 (with Fiona Foley), Museum of Sydney; *49 Veils* 1999 (with Jisuk Han), Central Synagogue, Sydney; *In the Shadow* 1998–2000, Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, Homebush Bay; The Australian War Memorial (with Tonkin Zulaikha Greer architects), Hyde Park, London; and *Ghost* for Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery in 2009. From 1996–2005 Laurence was a Trustee of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney and in 2006 was awarded a Churchill Fellowship. Her work is represented in Australian and international public, corporate and private collections. In 2012 she was commissioned to create a major exhibition, *After EDEN*, for Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, Sydney.

STRANDED 2012

glass, acrylic, Duraclear, oil, pigments and video
dimensions variable
courtesy the artist and BREENSPACE, Sydney

In her book *Wild dog dreaming: love and extinction*, Deborah Bird Rose developed the idea of ecological existentialism concerned with how we, as people, operate in a changing environment: 'Love in the time of extinctions, therefore, calls forth another set of questions. Who are we, as a species? How to find our way into the Earth system? What ethics call to us? How to find our way into new stories to guide us, now that so much is changing? How to invigorate love and action in ways that are generous, knowledgeable, and life-affirming?... extinctions are casualties of production for consumption ... Species, ecosystems, habitats, relationships, and connections that sustain the web of life on Earth become "collateral casualties" in the rush for consumption.'

Rose's ideas of uncertainty and connectivity resonated strongly with Janet Laurence. *At the same time as this unmaking of the world is occurring, there is a calling need being answered and reciprocated by a growing number of people dedicating their lives and love to the conservation and care of threatened species. My work STRANDED looks at the marine turtle as a great ancient species that has survived eras and is now under threat from direct human action and climate change. Turtles, like dugong, are mega fauna that have been embedded in the human imagination through myths and stories since man evolved. They are a major part of our marine world. They are loved creatures and their loss and fragility is of great concern to local people. I think, I want to believe, that art can bring one into this intimacy and this, hopefully, can generate empathy and thus continue the necessary care.* Janet Laurence 2012

With the support of staff from the Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Laurence travelled to Townsville and met with marine scientists, including those from the Australian Institute of Marine Science at James Cook University and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. Assisted by their knowledge of the reef, Laurence gathered the necessary information to create *STRANDED*.



Janet Laurence
STRANDED (detail) 2012
 image courtesy the artist
 and BREENSPACE, Sydney
 © the artist

JEFF MINCHAM

Jeff Mincham was born in 1950 in Milang, South Australia and currently lives in the Adelaide Hills, South Australia. For decades Mincham has been influenced by the rich and evocative landscape of the Adelaide Hills in which he lives and works. His studio window looks eastward across deep timbered valleys and forested ranges that provide a dramatic backdrop to some spectacular weather events. The colours, moods, textures and events of this landscape find their way into his work, which expresses the nuanced relationship between the artist and the environment. He builds in clay, a material dug from the earth, to create forms that are simultaneously robust and delicate. Mincham's ceramics have sensuous, tactile surfaces that are the result of a unique process of patination described by the artist as 'firing and weathering at the same time'.

Since his first exhibition in 1976 at the Jam Factory in Adelaide, Mincham has worked full-time as a ceramic artist; teaching, exhibiting and experimenting with ceramic techniques and methodologies. He is represented in over 100 public and private collections in Australia and overseas, including major national, state and regional public collections. In an acknowledgement of Mincham's outstanding contribution to ceramic art, he became the fifth artist to be celebrated and his work showcased in Object: Australian Centre for Design's exhibition series *Living Treasures: Masters of Australian Craft*. 'I have survived a long journey myself to arrive at a point of strong resolution in my work,' says Mincham, 'and I conclude that it is the constant struggle that produces the best results.'

Full Moon - Dry Lake
(*No end in sight - ruin: January 2009*) 2012
40 x 59 x 11cm

Coorong Landscapes
(*What have we learned - recovery: January 2012*) 2012
39 x 58 x 12cm

The Water Returns
(*Hope at last - revival: January 2010*) 2012
40 x 58 x 12cm


The Southern Lagoon
(*Dried out: January 2009*) 2012
3 panels, each 41 x 41 x 4cm

hand-built ceramic, multi-glazed
and multi-fired, mid-fire
courtesy the artist

Jeff Mincham worked in and around Goolwa, at the mouth of the Murray River on Lake Alexandrina, to explore the impact of environmental changes on coastal communities. The fragile ecology of the area suffered heavily during the drought. The CSIRO stated that more than 50 wetlands, lakes, river channels and the Coorong were seriously impacted by a combination of low water levels and the presence of acid sulfate soils (ASS). Birdlife, once abundant and a magnet for tourists and birdwatchers alike, dwindled in number. When the rains eventually came, and the community was spared the decision whether or not to introduce saltwater into the freshwater Lake Alexandrina to stop the effects of ASS, the turtles returned but the birds did not. Mincham contacted the Strathalbyn Field Naturalists, an avid birdwatching community, and his visits to their fieldwork area informed his series of ceramics, based on what had happened to the landscape over a 10-year period. Mincham was told of the enormous transition undertaken by the people living in this fragile coastal area. For them the world was changed, it was wiped out and then reconstructed - communities fell apart, the irrigation closed, farming practices changed, wildlife disappeared. Of particular interest to Mincham was a migratory bird recalled from his boyhood, when he spent many hours as a birdwatcher around the Coorong. The Japanese or Latham's Snipe (*Gallinago hardwickii*) travels and nests in two places: the Coorong and Fukushima, site of the nuclear incident in 2011. The community recognised the local-global connection of solastalgia through this migratory bird. They were concerned that the bird may not return but, if so, in what numbers, and would they be radioactive?



Jeff Mincham
Full Moon - Dry Lake
(No end in sight - ruin: January 2009) 2012
 (front and back view)
 photography Michal Kluvanek
 © the artist



MELINDA YOUNG

Melinda Young was born in 1972 in Amersham, England and arrived in Australia in 1976. She currently lives in Sydney, New South Wales. Young has a Master of Visual Arts from Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney. Since 1997, she has participated in over 120 exhibitions in Australia and overseas, with recent solo exhibitions in Sydney, Adelaide and Melbourne. For the past three years, she has also been committed to the ongoing collaborative exhibition project *unnatural, Naturally* with Lauren Simeoni, which to date has been shown at galleries around Australia, New Zealand and USA. In 2008, Young received the inaugural Jewellers and Metalsmiths Group of Australia, NSW Profile Award for an established artist. Her work is held in the collections of the Art Gallery of South Australia and the Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Norway, and has been included in publications including *The Compendium Finale of Contemporary Jewellers* and *500 Plastic Jewellery Designs*. Alongside her practice, Young has been professionally involved with contemporary craft and design through employment in galleries and as a teacher since 1999. She is currently a sessional lecturer at the College of Fine Arts, University of NSW, Sydney.

Arborescence 2012

found wood, artificial plant foliage, oxidised 925 silver, ruby, garnet, carnelian, jasper, labradorite, aventurine, jade, smoky quartz, tourmaline, opal, stone, glass, paint and waxed linen thread

140 x 60 x 10cm

courtesy the artist

Melinda Young visited Canberra on the ninth anniversary of the 2003 Canberra bushfires. She spoke to a broad cross-section of people from the Canberra community, all of whom had been affected by the fires at the time, and were dealing with the ongoing aftermath. Community consultation added significantly to Young's independent research and provided touchstones from which the work developed. Key phrases, recurrent themes of conversations and visual descriptions from the interviews she undertook all had a major impact and influence on the development of the work and its final form. The people Young met and with whom she corresponded gave the concept of solastalgia serious thought, not only with respect to their own individual relationship with their environment, but also considering a community consciousness.

The landscape destroyed by the fires on the outskirts of the city is now in varying states of natural and artificial regeneration/reinvention. Nature and the National Arboretum are doing their work sending new shoots of green and hope, healing the wounded land and hearts of the community. Melinda Young 2012

One of the most arresting sights for Young was the creation of the new housing development adjacent to Stromlo Forest Park and the Canberra Bushfire Memorial. A raw, orange tract of dirt and dust had been carved up by tarmacked streets, already named and signposted, with street lamps towering over the barren vista, waiting to be filled with the hopes and dreams of those who build there. Yet for each newcomer, there are also those who mourn the loss of natural beauty that is the cost of such development.

Regeneration in nature, rather than urban planning, has influenced Young's work *Arborescence*. In it, she has combined natural and synthetic materials to create a narrative of growth and renewal on an overabundant scale. Her suggestion is that the power of nature can overcome man-made disasters – it just takes time.



Melinda Young
Arborescence (detail) 2012
image courtesy the artist
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Bush tucker: Food native to Australia which was present before European colonisation.

Collage: Objects or material adhered to a surface.

Container: An object that can be used to hold or transport something.

Coolamon: A traditional Aboriginal multi-purpose shallow vessel, or dish with curved sides, ranging in length from 30–70cm, and similar in shape to a canoe. Coolamons were traditionally used by Aboriginal women to carry water, fruits, nuts, as well as to cradle babies.

Endangered species: A species whose numbers are so small that the species is at risk of extinction.

Environment: The surroundings or conditions in which a person, animal or plant lives or operates.

Ghost nets: Ghost nets are fishing nets that have been abandoned at sea, lost accidentally, or deliberately discarded. They travel the oceans of the world with the currents and tides, continually fishing as they progress through the waters. As they are unattended and roaming they fish indiscriminately, not only catching threatened species but undersized and protected fish as well.

Heirloom: A valuable object that has belonged to a family for several generations.

Installation art: Artwork that is or has been installed — arranged in a place — either by the artist or as specified by the artist.

Marine debris: Human-created waste that has deliberately or accidentally become afloat in a lake, sea, ocean or waterway.

Mural: A large design or picture, most commonly created on the wall of a public building.

Noise pollution: Harmful or annoying levels of noise, as from airplanes, industry, etc.

Performance art: Artwork in any media executed before a live audience. Although this might appear to be theatre, theatrical performances present illusions of events, while performance art presents actual events as art.

Photographic essay: A group of photographs, usually with supplementary text, that conveys a unified story and is published as a book or as a feature in a magazine or newspaper.

Possum skin cloak: A form of clothing worn by Australian Aboriginal people in the south-east of the continent (present-day Victoria and New South Wales). The cloaks were made from numerous possum pelts sewn together with kangaroo sinew, and often decorated with significant incisions on the inside such as clan insignias. They were rubbed with ochre and fat to both decorate and protect them. As well as being a significant means of keeping warm in this often chilly part of Australia, there was much importance around the making of the cloaks and their wearing. They were handed down through generations as heirlooms. As with most Australian Aboriginal belongings, there were many uses for the one thing – the cloaks were also used as blankets, mattresses and to wrap babies.

Recycle: Convert (waste) into reusable material.

Solastalgia: A form of homesickness one gets when one is still at home, but the environment is changed.

Soliphilia: The love of and responsibility for a place, bioregion, planet and the unity of interrelated interests within it.

Sustainable: Capable of being continued with minimal long-term effect on the environment.

Definitions from <http://dictionary.references.com> and the Macquarie Dictionary

RESOURCE

WEBSITES

SOLASTALGIA AND DR GLENN ALBRECHT

<http://www.sustainability.murdoch.edu.au/dirs/>
http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Glenn_Albrecht&oldid=446876264
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-GUGW8rOpLY>
<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/saturdayextra/solastalgia/3049134>
<http://www.abc.net.au/local/audio/2011/11/25/3376294.htm>

LIFE IN YOUR HANDS EXHIBITION

<http://www.artgallery.lakemac.com.au> (search under on-tour)

ARTISTS FROM THE EXHIBITION

Douglas Archibald, Selena Archibald and Donna Fernando

<http://australianmuseum.net.au/image/Doug-Archibald-in-a-possum-skin-cloak>
<http://www.abc.net.au/local/videos/2011/01/24/3120678.htm>
<http://open.abc.net.au/openregions/nsw-hunter-70MU6Ji/posts/how-to-make-a-possum-skin-cloak-56Tj9oa>
<http://australianmuseum.net.au/BlogPost/From-the-Floor/Wrapped-in-a-Possum-Skin-Cloak-by-the-Lake-exhibition-is-launched>
<http://www.artgallery.lakemac.com.au> (search under Aboriginal program)

Allan Chawner

http://www.chawner.com.au/Allan_Chawner/Introduction.html
<http://www.slideshare.net/2010colombia/solastalgia-glenn-albrecht-5121619>
http://aomm-home.org/index/Chawner_Albrecht.html

GhostNets Australia

<http://www.ghostnets.com.au/>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghost_net
<http://www.turtlecare.com.au/ghost-nets-threaten-sea-turtles.php>
<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/breakfast/ghost-nets/3593838>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r8F-jKlEvUw>

Michelle Hamer

<http://www.michellehamer.com/works>
<http://www.artabase.net/artist/80-michelle-hamer>
<http://www.broadsheet.com.au/melbourne/arts-and-entertainment/article/dangling-carrots-michelle-hamer>

Barbara Heath

<http://viewersite.wordpress.com/>
<http://viewersite.wordpress.com/2011/08/17/new-public-art-commission-under-way-with-lake-macquarie-city-art-gallery/>

Janet Laurence

<http://www.janetlaurence.com/>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Janet_Laurence
<http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2004/05/21/108512011843.html>
<http://www.ecologicalhumanities.org/rose.html>
<http://www.ecologicalhumanities.org/wilddog.html>
<http://www.aims.gov.au/>

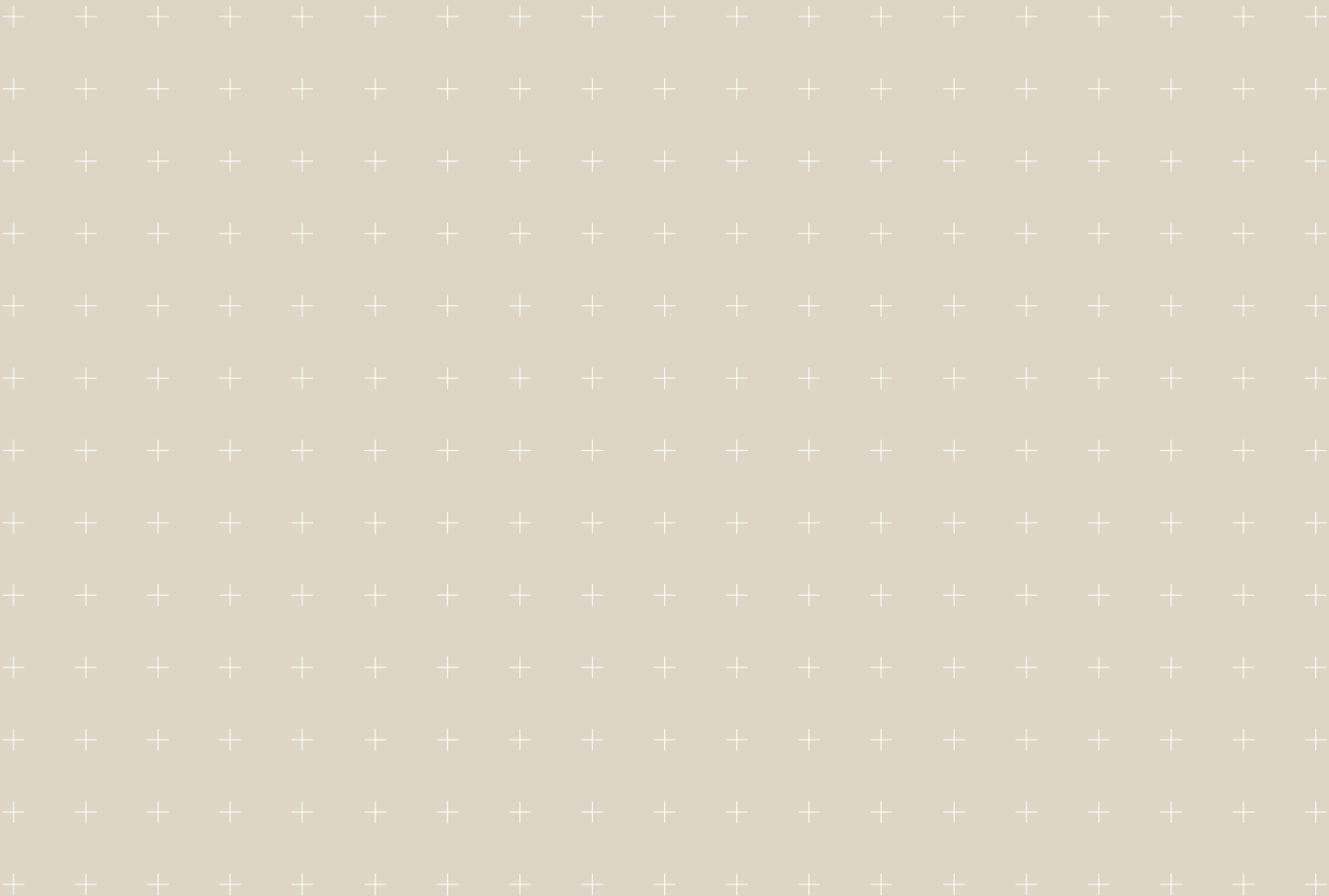
Jeff Mincham

<http://www.sabbiagallery.com>
<http://www.object.com.au/cms/images/uploads/pdf/JeffMinchamEdKit.pdf>

Melinda Young

<http://www.melindayoung.net/>
<http://kitandcaboodle.ning.com/profile/MelindaYoung>
<http://smtp.markbutz.com/Bartlett%20Butz%20Kanowski%202005%20Engaging%20the%20community%20in%20reforestation%20etc.pdf>
<http://www.nationalarboretum.act.gov.au/>

Note: Web links accurate at time of publishing



Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery
New South Wales
30 March - 13 May 2012

Horsham Regional Art Gallery
Victoria
1 June - 29 July 2012

Signal Point Gallery
South Australia
6 October - 28 October 2012

Object: Australian Centre for Design
New South Wales
17 November - 22 December 2012

Craft ACT: Craft and Design Centre
Australian Capital Territory
28 March - 11 May 2013

**Gladstone Regional
Art Gallery and Museum**
Queensland
1 June - 27 July 2013

Perc Tucker Regional Gallery
Queensland
9 August - 6 October 2013

