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INTRODUCTION

This research paper is a theoretical and conceptual examination of lookouts as mediating factors in, and demonstrative manifestations of, contemporary environmental attitudes. Beginning with a personal anecdote establishing the origins of my ideas and philosophical approach to environmental studies, part one of this paper shifts from a reflective to an analytical orientation of self in relation to the research. Part two of this paper establishes the conceptual groundwork behind the complex metaphysical considerations implicated in this investigation. These ideas are introduced under four subheadings each corresponding to a section of the project title, *Looking Out: An Investigation of the Visitor's Experience of Natural Environment*. Part three is dedicated wholly to discussion of lookouts and draws significantly upon ideas and assertions established in the previous two sections. Part four suggests one possible synthesis for the outcomes of the preceding discussion. This section draws a comparison between the viewing experience of the lookout and that of visual art, in order to indicate how the mediation of natural environment experience can be better understood.

Taking the theme of lookouts as subject matter, the argument of this paper has necessarily been guided by personal observation and experience, supported and informed by broad theoretical research. Sources that have contributed to this research derive from the fields of environmental theory, philosophy, geography, fine art theory, sociology and history. Publications of the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service have provided insight into the policy and ideology of this authority. Several expeditions into national parks and to lookouts throughout the year, informal discussions with employees involved with managing these areas, the writing of three essays during the course of the year (appendices one, two and three) and an opportunity to privately view the Claude Glass believed to have belonged to painter John Glover at the Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery, have also been significant though indirect influences on my research.

The relationship between this paper and the installation work completed for the Professional Practice component of *Looking Out: An Investigation of the Visitor's Experience of Natural Environment* is a supportive and illustrative one. Both aspects

of the project take the theme of 'lookout' as subject matter and explore related issues, with somewhat differing emphasis, through the methods of literary and artistic research respectively. As the theoretical and practical investigations are autonomous, no direct discussion of the installation is included in this paper. However, such analysis and explanation has been undertaken and can be found within the *Research Methods Paper* included in appendix three. Conjointly, this paper and the installation work form a rich, detailed and thorough investigation that is strengthened by the use of the two different research approaches to communicating ideas regarding human connection with natural environment.

PART ONE

Looking on.

In 1997 I spent two weeks with the National Parks and Wildlife Service in Gosford, New South Wales as part of the compulsory work experience program at high school (please see appendix five). Most of that fortnight was spent however, not with the park rangers whom I so admired, but with an all-male team of depot workers. These men cleaned out the barbeques, disinfected the public toilets, routed the signs, moved-on backseat lovers in remote car parks and collected garbage. This was not the adventurous, admirable national parks service I had anticipated joining.

I was lucky the depot workers told me, in shrouded reference to the repetitious nature of their usual duties, for I had arrived at the culmination of a major project, the result of many months preparation and planning. I would witness the construction by helicopter drop of a suspension bridge. Of course, there was little that a work experience student could contribute to such a highly orchestrated event, "It's not sexist or anything," the boss assured me. However, the boys were cautioned about their language in my presence.

That fortnight was spent watching. Watching the transport of materials from depot to creek, witnessing them transform into functional structure. I observed that these were the components used to create the lookouts, amenity blocks, picnic areas and trails I had seen throughout the state. In watching the institutionalisation of this patch of natural environment, I witnessed only the final stages of a long administrative process that had trickled down through tiers of national parks administration in order to issue these labourers with their duties. I became aware of a tension within natural area management between the practical and the idealistic, facts and ideas, utility and aesthetics that was personified in the friction between the field workers and the office workers, regularly erupting in derogatory remarks at morning smoko.

These tensions seemed indicative of something greater than just the management of one national park. Indeed, in retrospect it is precisely these conflicts that have

frustrated and fuelled my interest in environmental issues over recent years and lead me to state, in regards to the motivation behind this project,

From the perspectives of geography, natural science, history, political science, science and technology and philosophy I have experienced the disillusionment brought by the perpetual conceptualisation of the tangible environmental dilemmas existent... Thus, *Looking out* focuses on a topic (i.e. lookouts) which gives access to an extensive range of relevant issues through examination of a structure which is essentially 'real'.¹

My firsthand experience in 1997 gives me some claim to enter this debate and sheds light on my fascination with the commonplace structures of lookouts found in national parks.

Shifting focus.

In the course of research certain areas of initial interest diminish in relevance while others emerge as more central and complex than originally anticipated. This is certainly true in the case of *Looking Out*, which has departed significantly on several points from the original project proposal that was designed shortly after completing *To The Surface*. This summer school involved two field trips to the west coast of Tasmania and *Revisiting Experience, The 'Great Struggle' of Artist in Place*² was written in response to these experiences that lead to an interest in 'place-based' art making. The extent to which the remainder of the Masters of Art, Design and Environment would change focus, pace and character could not have been anticipated. Majority of 2004 has been spent working within the Tasmanian School of Art, requiring a shift in methodology from the subjective observation and response to academic research, technical skill development and application. Participation in a printmaking and drawing elective has reinforced the visual development of the project.

Consequently, in moving away from the field-trip experience this project has tended more toward a metaphysical examination of human relationships to *space* and *place* than a response to particular location. Participation in a philosophy elective titled *Place and Environment*, for which I wrote the paper *What Can it Mean to Talk of a 'Sense of Place'?*³, influenced the decision that 'place-based' art making was no

¹ Appendix three

² Appendix one

³ Appendix two

longer a focus of this project. The decision not to gather information, through interviews with local artist Jonathon Kimberley, was also a result of this shift in focus. The emphasis upon 'the attitudes, expectations and values visitors, as sightseers, bring to natural environments' identified in the original proposal has strengthened, drawing my research into the familiar realm of environmental ethics.⁴

Watching the terminology.

The language and terminology used in this paper are significant in presenting this discussion and key to a full understanding of the argument. Definitions shall be established to avoid problematic interpretation of the following three terms: 'wilderness', 'landscape' and 'natural' (in relation to environment). Often interchangeable in common speech, these words bridge discussion of the physical and tangible as well as the idealistic, in relation to environment. Consequently, awareness must be drawn to sentimental association and moral implication accompanying these terms.

Wilderness.

'Wilderness' entered the vocabulary of the environmental movement early being synonymous with the Sierra Club who defined the term thus:

[A] region which contains no permanent inhabitants, possesses no possibility of conveyance by mechanical means, and is sufficiently spacious that a person crossing it must have the experience of sleeping out.⁵

Alienation, danger, struggle and adventure still remain an integral aspect of the 'wilderness' idea. Certain environmental thinkers such as Yi-fu Tuan have consequently asserted that 'wilderness' as physical phenomenon does not exist:

... 'wilderness' cannot be defined objectively: it is as much a state of the mind as a description of nature. By the time we can speak of preserving and protecting wilderness, it has already lost much of its meaning.⁶

Marcia Langton questions the appropriateness of the term 'wilderness' in Tasmanian environmental debate stating: "Where Aboriginal people had been brought to the

⁴ Bec Tudor completed a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy at the University of New South Wales in 2003

⁵ Jackson, John Brinkerhoff. *A Sense of Place, A Sense of Time*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1994, p.87

⁶ Tuan, Yi-fu. *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, & Values*, Prentice-Hall, USA, 1974, p. 112

brink of annihilation, their former territories were recast as 'wilderness'.⁷

'Wilderness' is clearly an emotive term, potentially laden with nostalgia, guilt and idealism. Therefore, when the term wilderness is used in this paper it is employed in the colloquial sense complete with its sentimental associations.

Landscape.

'Landscape' is potentially ambiguous in meaning because it accommodates cultural influence, to an unquantifiable extent: "Landscape...is mediated land, land that has been aesthetically processed."⁸ Thus, 'landscape' can become a misleading term when used in a discussion of physical environment and human beings.

Included in the quotations of other authors the term 'landscape' should be interpreted in context. In my writing however, the term will be confined to discussion of the view or scene at the lookout when it is my intention to highlight the cultural mediation of natural space.

Natural environment.

I have chosen to use the term 'natural environment' to describe the spaces with which this paper is concerned. The neutrality of this term is beneficial to my argument, which seeks to discuss common conceptions of environment without employing the very vocabulary that perpetuates them. 'Natural environment' is multidimensional in its meaning, having the potential to accommodate inter-relations between living and non-living aspects of traversable space. Importantly, 'natural environment' as used in this paper, does not exclude human beings and their activities for, "...although we are accustomed to separate nature and human perception into two realms, they are, in fact, indivisible."⁹ In this sense, 'natural environment' is the ideal term for the spaces contained within national parks, discussed later in this paper.

⁷ Thomas, Martin. *Uncertain Ground*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1999, p.13

⁸ Andrews, Malcolm. *Landscape and Western Art*, Oxford University Press, N.Y., 1999, p. 7

⁹ Schama, Simon. *Landscape and Memory*, Fontana Press, London, 1995, p.6

PART TWO

Knowing place.

The discussion of the visitor's experience of natural environment is in part about how place can be known. Knowing place results from a relationship with the spirituality, atmosphere and culture of an area as well as its physical elements. How this relationship is established and operates is a complex question in regards to places of familiarity and regular contact. How we establish genuine relationship with places of occasional visitation, and whether such meaningful relationships are even possible, is a more challenging query.

The depth and quality of individual's knowledge or experience of place may have once related to the amount of time spent there. Transitory lifestyle today however, means it becomes necessary to either rethink this assertion or else face the unpalatable conclusion that society no longer requires overt connection with place. That the latter is improbable is indicated by the instinctive repulsion such a suggestion generates and the resonance of Kent Ryden's observation: "...when we feel morally buffeted, emotionally strained, cut loose from any source of centre of value, sometimes the best thing we can do is dig down into place."¹⁰

The powerful notion of 'home' and the experience of 'home-sickness' (being over-extended relationship with loved place) is testament to the human need for strong relationships with place. These notions demonstrate that such a relationship can indeed exist, and be maintained, whilst the individual is physically located elsewhere. This point has relevance to the provocative suggestion that as the pressure of population growth intensifies on national parks threatening serious environmental degradation, individuals can visit those remembered places mentally.¹¹ The argument is that those who support national parks, and genuinely value their perpetual preservation will be content to forego direct contact, to ensure that they exist, in full beauty, forever.

¹⁰ Ryden, Kent. *Mapping the Invisible Landscape*, University of Iowa Press, Iowa, 1993, p. 96

¹¹ Cahn, Robert & Glenn Ketchum, Robert. *American Photographers & The National Parks*, The Viking Press & The National Park Foundation, New York, 1981, p. 137

The above discussion offers an inadequate intellectual solution to a problem of bodily and spiritual fulfilment, and reveals that there is a third conclusion to draw from the contemporary tension between place and transience. Modern human beings do indeed require genuine connection with place to thrive and suffer under lifestyle and cultural factors that hinder or devalue such relations. The following excerpt from a paper written by this same author on the philosophy of place and environment¹² illuminates the historical basis for this argument:

Talking about place today theorists from diverse disciplines often depict the period of modernity as one in which issues of place were subordinated to those of space. In making this case, a philosophical history of these concepts is often traced from Plato and Aristotle through Rene Descartes, John Locke, Isaac Newton, Gottfried Willhelm Leibniz, Immanuel Kant, Martin Heidegger and into (post)modernism where we are presented with a description of ourselves as “radically dislocated, someone who does not know the difference between place and space.”¹³

The concept of unlimited, homogeneous spatiality that emerged from the Renaissance was a seductively powerful and inspiring one. However, the consequence of this conceptual shift was that “the concept of space as extension is steadily refined, but in the course of which refinement the idea of location is gradually lost.”¹⁴ The ‘modern subject’ was consequently cast adrift in the expanse between the extremes of the universe and self.¹⁵

Today this ‘problem of place’, to borrow a term from Malpas, is worsened by our sense of ‘global nomadism’, the sense that we can go any place.¹⁶ This attitude accompanies the process of globalisation and the related advances in technology in areas of communication and travel particularly...So those whose gender, nationality, culture and socio-economic position do enable them to experience this ‘time-space compression’, have the greatest difficulty in understanding and relating to place for “to be able to go anywhere is to be located nowhere.”¹⁷ Stressing the seriousness of this problem, Malpas writes, “The problem of place is not a marginal problem concerning merely the way in which spatiality alone is to be understood, but is fundamental to epistemological, anthropological and psychological inquiry – even, indeed, to problems of ethics and politics.”¹⁸

Thus, temporal disjuncture between people and their surroundings, which appears to hinder genuine relationships with place, has serious implications for basic human experience. In order to understand these implications, and the ways in which society attempts to avoid or manage them, it is necessary to identify what kinds of

¹² Appendix 2

¹³ Casey, Edward. *Smooth Spaces & Rough-Edged Places* in *Review of Metaphysics*, Number 51, 1997, p.293

¹⁴ Malpas, Jeff. *Finding Place: Spaciality, Locality and Subjectivity* in Light, A. & Smith, J. (eds) *Philosophies of Place*, Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield, 1998, p. 31

¹⁵ Casey, Op. Cit., p.290

¹⁶ Casey, Op. Cit., p.293

¹⁷ Casey, Op. Cit., p. 293

¹⁸ Malpas, Op. Cit., p.35

relationships with place are possible. The following quote, discussing the philosophy of Seamus Heaney, indicates two possible ways of coming to know place:

The first way is “lived, illiterate and unconscious”, being an unanalysed relationship which sprouts from an absolute immersion in the life of a place.¹⁹ This way of relating to place seems simple and at times involuntary. He counters this position with the “learned, literate and conscious”²⁰ way of knowing and appreciating place that assumes an outside standpoint and a self-aware attempt at developing this relationship.²¹

It seems the former method of relating to place has been compromised in preference for an increasingly transient and technologically mediated lifestyle. Comparison between the contemporary technological viewpoint and an idealised ancestral view may lead to the conclusion that authentic relations to place now exist exclusively in the idealised stereotypes of country-folk, primitive cultures and indigenous peoples as symbolic of a pre-urban world.

Keith Critchlow questions, “What, then, are our grounds for nostalgia?” in regards to the sense of a once-ideal ancestral connection with place, and concludes, “...it represents the ‘surfacing’ or ‘landing’ of an archetype: echoes of those brief moments of clarity in which we all recognise our inextricable intimacy and unity with the land.”²² Revealing the absurdity of this sentiment at its most extreme, John Szarkowski states of Ansel Adams, “the best of his pictures stir our memory of what it was like to be alone in an untouched world.”²³ Szarkowski here cannot be appealing to ancestral memory, for even in a past without over-population and severe environmental degradation, human presence negated the ideals of solitude and natural purity. Indulgence in such fantastical sentiment is nostalgia for a past that simply never existed.

The ‘learned’ relationship to place is retrospectively imposed onto the initial experience with place when ‘lived’ connection fails to emerge. It is difficult to argue that a ‘learned’ relationship with place is as strong, rewarding or genuine as that which emerges instinctually and subconsciously. However, in regards to natural

¹⁹ Heaney, Seamus. *The Sense of Place*, in *Preoccupations: Prose 1908-1978*, London, Faber & Faber, 1980, p.131

²⁰ Heaney, Op. Cit., p. 131

²¹ Appendix 2

²² Haworth-Booth, Mark (ed), *The Land: Twentieth Century Landscape Photographs*, Gordon Fraser, London, 1975, p.25

²³ Jussim, Estelle & Lindquist-Cock, *Landscape as Photograph*, Rembrandt Press Inc., Connecticut, 1985, p.22

environments, with which urbanised society has increasingly limited and indirect contact, this perhaps the only option.

This suggestion has particular resonance in Australia where non-indigenous relations to the land have been wrought with tension from the time of European settlement. As Schama notes, our environmental history inevitably presents a tale,

...of land taken, exploited, exhausted; of traditional cultures said to have lived in a relation of sacred reverence with the soil displaced by the reckless individualist, the capitalist aggressor.²⁴

Indeed, the idealism of wilderness sentiment and mainstream assumptions regarding indigenous lifestyle, reveal an underlying discomfort that characterises modern relations to the environment. Inherent in these sentiments is the sense of purity, fecundity and harmony lost, evident in a yearning for reinstatement and guilt. The truly 'natural' state of the Australian continent, in common thought, was permanently tainted by the arrival and settlement of European visitors.

Sight.

It is widely accepted that sight is the most influential of the five human senses: "...man is more consciously dependent on sight to make his way in the world than on the other senses. He is predominantly a visual animal."²⁵ If this is indeed true, then sight must also constitute one of the most significant means by which human beings formulate their ideas towards, and feelings about, their surroundings. George Seddon intercepts the assumption however, that sight provides information of universal value when making the deceptively simple point that "What a place looks like depends on where you are looking from."²⁶

Regarding the role experience plays in deciphering visual phenomena, Seddon argues,

...even some of our most basic perceptions...which we take to be an objective response to the real world, are in fact conditioned by our prior experience, which is not necessarily relevant, and may be positively misleading.²⁷

²⁴ Schama, Op. Cit., p. 13

²⁵ Tuan, Op. Cit., p. 6

²⁶ Seddon, George. Landprints: Reflections on Place and Landscape. Cambridge University Press, U.K., 1997, p.63

²⁷ Seddon, Op. Cit., p.61

E.H. Gombrich, in *Art and Illusion* argues that vision is influenced by prefabricated cultural templates, and concludes that aesthetic value is constructed.²⁸ Thus, the experience of sight is fundamentally subjective in extracting meaning from what is seen.

Modern technology, through innovations in transport, media and entertainment, has intensified reliance on sight through increasing possibilities for exclusively visual experiences of space. The vicarious desire to see all and consequent endeavours to visually present the humanly unperceivable (the microscopic for example) demands new relations between human beings and their surroundings. Failure to successfully make this transition has serious implications for human thought and values, as Martin Thomas notes in regards to those who rely purely on visual media for experience of the natural: "...to the urbanised classes, the realm of nature might seem at times a virtual zone, a reserve of images and nothing more."²⁹

Describing the experience of looking through a vehicle window, Malcolm Andrews notes the distorted sense of reality mediated visual experience can encourage:

We imagine ourselves, by an odd transference, as seated in a stationary interior with the world rushing past outside for our amusement...The perception in such circumstances of landscape scenery as spectacle, a commercial amenity, becomes a kind of a habit.³⁰

That the sense of sight does abstract and objectify the seen, rendering the viewer emotionally distant, is supported by the observation that, "The person who just 'sees' is an onlooker, a sightseer, someone not otherwise involved with the scene."³¹ The consequence of this mode of perception is introversion through sensitised self-awareness.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty when discussing the phenomenology of sight states:

"...seeing is not a certain mode of thought or presence to self; it is the means given me for being absent from myself."³² This statement may initially appear to negate the comment above, that sight encourages introversion. However, 'being absent from myself' can be seen as interchangeable with 'being lost in myself', both constituting a

²⁸ Andrews, Op. Cit., p.4

²⁹ Thomas, Op. Cit., p.12

³⁰ Andrews, Op. Cit., p. 115

³¹ Tuan, Op. Cit., p. 10

³² Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Eye and Mind* in Johnson, G.A. (ed) The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting, Northwestern University Press, USA, 1993, p.146

counterpoint to the notion of 'thought or presence to self'. "This is how we see the world," stated Rene Margritte, "We see it as being outside ourselves even though it is only a mental representation of what we experience on the inside."³³

Intense visual experience can temporarily suspend a viewer in time and space, as Andrews observes in relation to fine art, "How much of the encounter between the visitor and the landscape painting is true connoisseur appraisal, and how much a daydream of venturing into the seductive world depicted on the canvas?"³⁴

Daydreaming involves becoming lost in oneself - in thoughts, emotions and sensations, moving into seen space imaginatively. Visual experience can have a metaphysical impact, in which worldly concerns are neutralised, as the following quote by a critic speaking at the time of the Nazi atrocities explains:

...imagery of nature is misleading because it convinces us, especially through images of the sublime – sea, space, night, mountains – that human strife and pain are not important; that the cosmos is a timeless whole transcending hope and fear.³⁵

The dual nature of visual experience, which objectifies the seen while drawing the viewer inwards into a subjective realm, fascinates human beings. Optical devices such as cameras, telescopes and binoculars aid vision and accentuate objective/subjective perception through enhancing the individual's sense of separation from the scene before them. The Claude Glass of artists and sightseers in the late eighteenth century exemplifies this fascination aptly.

A pocket-sized convex mirror, the Claude Glass frames, composes and tints reflections to create the vision of an idealised landscape scene. Andrews argues of the Claude Glass that:

This contrivance with its special ability to afford the tourist a 'kind of modified vision', raises some teasing aesthetic problems...both faithful realism and stylised idealism: it reflects whatever landscape is presented to it, and yet it also modifies that landscape.³⁶

The distorted 'truth' to nature of the Claude Glass accentuates the paradoxical characteristics of visual perception with the consequence of presenting a predicament of more than just aesthetic ramifications. The Claude Glass requires users to turn their

³³ Schama, Op. Cit., p.12

³⁴ Andrews, Op. Cit., p. 2.

³⁵ Jussim & Linsquist-Cock, Op. Cit., p.141

³⁶ Andrews, Malcolm. The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain 1760-1800, Stanford University Press, California, 1989, p. 69

backs on *actual* landscape in order to view a 'pre-digested' scene in the reflection (see appendix four). This device, designed to enhance visual appreciation of landscape, dislocates users from their physical context emotionally and conceptually.

John Ruskin anticipated, in characteristic opposition to the changes brought by industrialisation, that, "...the use of instruments for exaggerating the powers of sight...would deprive us of the pleasures of sight", and asserted that an ignorant enjoyment of nature through direct contact was preferable.³⁷ Ruskin's warnings went unheeded and contemporary experiences of the natural are "...increasingly mediated by frames of one kind or another: the window, the camera viewfinder, the television set, the cinema screen."³⁸

Modern sightseeing devices such as the camera operate in much the same way as the Claude Glass revealing that we are still what Andrews calls 'Picturesque tourists', "...engaged in an experiment in controlled aesthetic response to a range of new and often intimidating visual experiences."³⁹ Discovering the dislocating force his camera presented to connection with the environment photographer Dave Bohn recounts an epiphany whereby:

...the camera was starting to get in the way of the landscape. So I...put the cameras back where they belonged; somewhere out there in the landscape but never the landscape in front of the cameras.⁴⁰

Aids to visual perception can form physical and conceptual wedges between individuals and their environment. Such devices at once enhance what can be seen, while extracting the experiential subject from immersion in place, gratifying one of the five senses at the expense of the other four. Even such simple instruments as the Claude Glass reveal that vision, exercised in isolation, denies human beings full connection with their surroundings and therefore cannot constitute a reliable source of sensory information upon which to build fully informed concepts of the world and others.

³⁷ Scharf, Aaron in Haworth-Booth Op. Cit., p.19-23

³⁸ Andrews (1999), Op. Cit., p. 116

³⁹ Andrews (1989), Op. Cit., p. 67

⁴⁰ Cahn & Ketchum, Op. Cit., p. 137

Visitation.

If, “In modern life physical contact with one’s natural environment is increasingly indirect and limited to special occasions,”⁴¹ it is appropriate to take up discussion of environmental perceptions from the perspective of visitation. While the temporary nature of a visitor’s contact with place shapes the character of their knowledge, their experience ought not be dismissed. Visitors are often more sensitive to, and observant of, the character of place than those for whom it constitutes a backdrop to daily life: “In our mobile society the fleeting impressions of people passing through cannot be neglected. Generally speaking, we may say that only the visitor...has a viewpoint.”⁴² This opinion is supported by Denis Cosgrove who states: “For the insider there is no clear separation of self from scene...the insider does not enjoy the privilege of being able to walk away.”⁴³

In the case of national parks the invisible ‘insider’ may be understood as the original indigenous inhabitants of the region, recognised in historical information provided for visitors and occasionally represented by displayed artefacts, noted sacred sites and the use of indigenous place names. These absent inhabitants, portrayed as once existing harmoniously with the land, enhance the melancholic mysticism of wilderness sentiment and magnify the visitor’s ‘outside’ viewpoint with their desire to connect with natural environment.

When focusing on national parks the visitor’s perspective is particularly appropriate because by definition these areas are protected from settlement and inhabitation. Parks and Wildlife Service Tasmania identifies three types of visitors to their parks; ‘shortstop visitors’, ‘comfort seekers’ and ‘getaways’, which categorise park users in terms of the length of their visit.⁴⁴

The ‘shortstop visitors’, defined as those who “want to be in the natural setting as soon as they step from their car, bus or boat”, are the most relevant to the discussion of this paper. These visitors, sightseers, have a particularly visually orientated attitude

⁴¹ Tuan, *Op. Cit.*, p. 96

⁴² Tuan, *Op. Cit.*, p.63

⁴³ Andrews (1999), *Op. Cit.*, p. 20

⁴⁴ Parks and Wildlife Service Tasmania, *Strategic Framework for Visitor Services in Tasmania’s Parks and Reserves*, <http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/publications/techrep.html>, 27/10/04, 4.50pm

towards natural areas since the length of their visit negates more fully sensory, time-consuming activities (e.g. over-night camping). In order to gain maximum stimulus at greatest convenience, these visitors take guidance from information centres, follow maps and signage and take advantage of such facilities as short walking tracks, interpretation boards, seating and lookouts. Of all visitors to national parks, this group is the most dependant upon park management to facilitate their experience of natural area.

National parks.

National parks, as protected areas managed by and for people, are manifestations of the attitude towards natural environment that, "...in order to keep it pure we have to occupy it."⁴⁵ Any environment known to human beings can be considered as influenced or changed by human presence and awareness. Pollution of global water, air and soil systems lead theorists such as Schama to state no environment on earth is truly untouched: "...it is this irreversibly modified world...that is all the nature we have."⁴⁶

Thus little is gained from defining the natural at the complete exclusion of the human:

A danger exists in an intolerance towards anything slightly 'impure' in nature, but our urge towards it is fuelled by 'observing the summer hordes trampling down the last vestiges of virgin wilderness in the national parks'⁴⁷

The national park idea rests on ethical imperatives that are best documented in relation to the world's first national park, Yellowstone in America, set aside in 1872.⁴⁸ The driving motivation behind preservation at this time was to ensure natural heritage did not become the exclusive domain of the few: "...the national parks were conceived in the spirit of democratic sharing, rich and poor alike."⁴⁹ The national park idea also involved providing a counterpoint to the city and spaces of commercialism and industrialisation. Behind this motivation lay the implicit idea that natural environment provided a well-spring of spiritual replenishment and repair: "...the

⁴⁵ Adams, Ansel. in Schama, Op. Cit., p. 9

⁴⁶ Schama, Op. Cit., p.7

⁴⁷ Jussim & Lindquist-Cock, Op. Cit., p. 11

⁴⁸ Commonly thought to be the first national park, Yosemite was preserved as a public park in 1864 but not designated a national park until 1890.

⁴⁹ Jussim & Lindquist-Cock, Op. Cit., p. 140.

national parks represent those intangible values which cannot be turned directly to profit or material advantage.”⁵⁰ Equally important in establishing the national parks was a sense of moral obligation to ensure future generations had access to quality natural environment for recreational and educational purposes. Prevention of settlement, over-development and physical alteration in natural areas was an important aspect of the stated imperative,

To conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such a manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.⁵¹

These ethical concepts still characterise national parks today in the mind of administrators and the general public alike. However, Robert Cahn points out that the national park,

...is a concept that is distinctly part of the democratic tradition – so much so that it is all too often taken for granted nowadays by the very people who cherish it and whose support is needed to keep it alive.⁵²

Proposals to cordon off dedicated tracts of land for posterity are still interpreted by some as a challenge to the democratic principles of private land ownership and the right to utilize natural resources for economic gain. While national parks have come to occupy a central position in our society, they are perpetually characterised by tensions between ethical ideals, practical functions and public expectations.

George Seddon highlights one such tension through the assumption that the natural areas of national parks ought to be original and native:

I have been shown degenerate rainforest (a so-called national park) from which all of the valuable timber was removed over a century ago...so that little remains today other than lawyer vines and the giant stinging nettle tree (*Laportea*), a weed species. This sorry relic was presented as a pristine rainforest.⁵³

Tension of another kind results from the fact that although national parks are public, costs are incurred for park entry, camping permits and parking. This economic restriction confronts the idea that the area has been preserved for all citizens. Visitors

⁵⁰ Adams, Ansel. in Cahn & Glenn Ketchum, Op. Cit., p. 133

⁵¹ Cahn & Ketchum, Op. Cit., p. 131

⁵² Cahn & Ketchum, Op. Cit., p. 12

⁵³ Seddon, Op. Cit., p. 70

seeking relaxation and rejuvenation through isolation in the national park experience a similar tension when unable to escape other park users,

You could list several prime candidates: the arrival of a helicopter, or the sound of a radio, for example. But surely one of the quickest and deadliest ways... to exorcize the precious spirit of wildness, is the unexpected arrival of a group of 25 hikers.⁵⁴

Though they are seen as 'natural environment' in popular thought, it is by no means unproblematic to discuss national parks in this way. Such tensions however give texture to the slippery metaphysical concepts with which this paper is concerned and correspond to the *actuality* of the visitor's experience. Lookouts are an excellent example through which such tensions can be explored.

⁵⁴ Waterman, Laura & Waterman, Guy. Wilderness Ethics: Preserving the Spirit of Wildness, The Countryman Press, Vermont, 2000, p. 67

PART THREE

Looking out.

Being such familiar and seemingly simple phenomenon, lookouts may initially appear in no need of examination or analysis. So common are lookouts that it would occur to few Australians to wonder whether they exist in other countries and if so, whether they went by the same name. In fact, the Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary claims 'lookout', as used in this way, is uniquely Australian.⁵⁵ 'Overlook', for example, is the closest American approximation. The concept of the American overlook however, differs from the Australian lookout in that it facilitates sightseeing from the comfort of a vehicle. Elizabeth Beazley illustrates this point in her book *Designed for Recreation: A Practical Handbook for all Concerned with Providing Leisure Facilities in the Countryside* where she recommends overlooks be designed as, "...a terraced car park so that cars can look over each other"⁵⁶ Given Kenneth Clark's assertion that, "With the exception of love, there is perhaps nothing else by which people of all kinds are more united than by their pleasure in a good view"⁵⁷, it seems reasonable to assert that facilitated opportunities for viewing scenery exist across cultures. The American overlook however, demonstrates that there are certain defining, and possibly even unique, attitudes in Australia towards viewing the natural environment that are revealed by the concept of the lookout.

The view from a lookout is often referred to as 'landscape'. There exists an ambiguity in this term however, which Andrews identifies as deriving from uncertainty regarding the referent: "...use of the same word, 'landscape', to designate both a stretch of countryside and an artistic representation of that countryside suggest that an elision of an conceptual kind has taken place."⁵⁸ W. J.T. Mitchell builds on this argument, to claim the ambiguity of 'landscape' perpetuates its own lack of clarity: "...fundamental assumptions about the aesthetics of landscape...are almost never brought into question, and the very ambiguity of the word 'landscape'...encourages

⁵⁵ Moore, Bruce (ed). *Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 4th Edition, Oxford University Press, Victoria, 2004, p.829

⁵⁶ Beazley, Elizabeth. *Designed for Recreation: A Practical Handbook for all Concerned with Providing Leisure Facilities in the Countryside*, Faber & Faber, London, 1969, p. 79

⁵⁷ Andrews (1999), Op. Cit., p. 7

⁵⁸ Andrews (1999), Op. Cit., p. 126

this failure to ask questions.”⁵⁹ If indeed the view from the lookout is landscape, then these uncertainties must also accompany the lookout experience.

The following definition suggests that ‘landscape’ is an appropriate term for the lookout view:

A landscape...is what the viewer has selected from the land, edited and modified in accordance with certain conventional ideas about what constitutes a ‘good view’. It is land organized and reduced to the point where the human eye can comprehend its breadth and depth within one frame or short scan.⁶⁰

In the case of lookouts, the viewer need not edit the scene, for the design of the structure and the position of the viewing platform already does so. The national park authority selects, edits and modifies what is seen and therefore has complete control over the particular landscape it creates (or chooses not to create). The position and angle of the of the lookout is preselected on the basis of ideas regarding what constitutes beauty, interest or curiosity in the natural environment and consequently (in most cases) avoids featuring signs of human intrusion.

The mediatory ability of the national parks service, in regards to lookouts, would be greatly diminished were the structures less conceptual and perceptual cul-de-sacs. After taking in the landscape lookout visitors must turn around and walk back the way they came or onto the next designated lookout, bypassing less sanctioned views. In this sense, lookouts are partition-like structures where it seems too difficult, inconvenient or somewhat inappropriate for a visitor to deviate off the designated path or venture out from the viewing platform into the spaces beyond. The duckboards that provide smooth, clean, regular pathways over the mud and rocks relate to the argument of Paul Carter in his book *The Lie of the Land* where he asserts that human development encourages a denial of the ground: “We do not walk with the surface; we do not align our lives with its inclines, folds and pockets. We glide over it.”⁶¹ Clearly, one way that lookout design directs and mediates the users experience is by discouraging engagement with the *immediate* environment through limiting physical access to its constituents.

⁵⁹ Mitchell, W.J.T. *Landscape & Power*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1994, p. 8

⁶⁰ Andrews, Op. Cit. p.4

⁶¹ Carter, Paul. *The Lie of the Land*, Faber & Faber, London, 1996, p.2

Unlike a walking trail, which presents hikers with a moving panorama of traversable space, the lookout showcases a dislocated 'still shot' of which visitors can only have (limited) visual experience. Borgmann's discussion of the 'inexhaustible richness of reality' relates to these two visual experiences.⁶² He argues that 'real' space (as opposed to technologically mediated space) is irreplaceably beneficial to human growth and learning and that only 'natural information' has depth and distance, where 'nearness' or 'farness' characterises knowledge:

The substance of nearness makes itself felt in the commanding presence of things and persons, in my intimacy with them, and normally in a sense of security and of being at home. The substance of farness lies in the reference of signs to things and persons that are concealed by distance in space or remoteness in time.⁶³

This quote relates to the previous discussion regarding the two ways of knowing place, one 'lived' the other 'learned'. The implication that begins to emerge from these arguments is that there are certain forms of knowledge and experience that can only be achieved through direct, multi-sensory and unmediated contact with natural environment.

Tuan states, "...people are known to have sought, repeatedly, the wilderness, to escape from not only the corruption but the voluptuous luxury of city life."⁶⁴ John Brinkerhoff Jackson discusses two manifestations of this urge, that lie at the heart of the national park idea:

Wilderness buffs, passing through the park in their search of 'meaningful' experiences, scornfully dismiss the activities of the crowd as mere recreation. Recreation is indeed the right word: recreation as pleasure and relaxation, but also as a recharging of exhausted bodies and minds.⁶⁵

The lookout, it seems, fulfils both of these desires in the national park visitor. On the one hand, lookouts are conveniences, designed for easy access by all people in safety. They facilitate recreational sightseeing, alleviating visitors of the task of searching out special places themselves. On the other hand, lookouts are generally successful in facilitating, albeit momentarily, a sense of solipsism where connection with natural

⁶² Borgmann, Albert. *Information, Nearness, and Farness* in Goldberg, Ken (ed). The Robot in the Garden, MIT Press, USA, 2000, p. 95

⁶³ Borgmann, Op. Cit., p. 96

⁶⁴ Tuan, Op. Cit., p. 51

⁶⁵ Jackson, Op. Cit., p. 89

environment is perceived as a function of self, therefore enabling 'meaningful', spiritual or transcendental experience. These points require further elaboration.

First let us explore the notion of recreation. Recreation involves relaxation and entertainment, and generally is associated with escaping the home and spending time with others. People often engage in recreational activities, not for the sake of the activity itself, but in order to achieve these ends. In many ways, recreation is a non-intellectual pursuit focused on gratification of 'simple pleasures' and temporary freedom from the oppression of duties and ordinary concerns. Pleasure is an integral element of recreation and for this reason many people choose to undertake recreational activities in places of scenic natural beauty, like the beach or park. Recreation often creates memorable experience, of 'good times' and beautiful places, mentally revisited periodically with the aid of photo album, home video, postcards and souvenirs.

Lookouts, as sites for public recreation, can be thought of as amenities. Andrews links the word 'amenity' to the Latin word *locus amoenus* meaning 'pleasant place'.⁶⁶ He explains that traditionally such a label applied to a beautiful scenic retreat that embodied elements of both the natural and the domesticated, was safe and free from the concerns of politics. Safety is indeed an important aspect of the lookout. Even nature can be suspect for, as Jackson states:

...direct contact with it can be dangerous. In consequence, it has to be filtered, diluted, made to conform to federal standards of health and safety. Sun, air and water, taken straight, can harm us.⁶⁷

Indeed, of the range of experiences possible in a national park, lookouts involve perhaps the lowest risk. Despite their precipitous positions, the solid foundations and steel rails of the lookout leave no doubt that the managing authority has the safety of users as foremost priority.

In order to facilitate sightseeing as a recreational activity, lookouts process and prioritise sprawling natural space and perform a domesticating role in relation to natural environment. If, "...every effort to define space is an attempt to create order

⁶⁶ Andrews (1999), Op. Cit., p.53

⁶⁷ Jackson, Op. Cit., p. 90

out of disorder,⁶⁸ then the meagre lookout structure, with set path and fenced viewing platform, can indeed be seen as humankind's vain effort to define place within sprawling natural space. While the built structure may create definable space to sit or stand and view, from the previously undifferentiated land on which they are situated, the *raison d'être* of the lookout is to focus attention away from that space onto an apparently distinct place in view.

For example, the *place* of Wineglass Bay Lookout is not the same place that is Wineglass Bay. In one sense they can be understood as both being contained within Freycinet National Park, but to be at the lookout is clearly not to be at the bay. If a traveller exclaims to a friend, "When you go to Freycinet National Park you *have* to walk up to Wineglass Bay Lookout, it's gorgeous!" they undoubtedly mean that the view from the lookout is gorgeous. Surely that is also what the friend understands the traveller to be saying. However, it is interesting to note that this is not what was actually said.

The lookout view shows that the bay is the geographic meeting point of the Freycinet Peninsula and the Tasman Sea. Perhaps the lookout helps visitors to identify this place called 'Wineglass Bay', to conceptually separate it from the landforms surrounding it, including the distinct vantage point offered by the lookout site. The elevated viewpoint of the lookout would certainly assist in this perception. Indeed, it is this perspective that leads to the observation the bay resembles the bowl of a wineglass, and hence its name. Thus, lookouts bring order and perspective to seemingly erratic natural environment by helping outsiders and visitors to separate general area into distinct places. For the recreational sightseer lookouts provide safe, convenient and predictable methods of gathering readily pre-digested, single-serve packets of visual information about large natural areas.

Evidently, lookouts are more profound and complicated constructs than is generally warranted. As demonstrated above, observation of informal conversation reveals great ambiguity regarding the precise place under discussion when talking about lookouts. Focus flips between the actual site of the lookout and the scenery it showcases, as though the immediate physical space and the expanse of the vista were

⁶⁸ Tuan, Op. Cit., p. 146

one. Behind the conceptual murkiness marring the theoretical site/scene distinction lies a parallel duality in values. Perhaps the reason why reference to 'lookout' so often constitutes discussion of view is because the site itself is valued only in so far as it facilitates visual access to a scene. This is a secondary, extrinsic kind of worth afforded the lookout that results from being a site for recreation. By contrast, the scenic view appears to possess intrinsic worth, if for no other reason than because so much effort is spent by others glorifying it through the constructed lookout. That this observation of ambiguity is of the lookout *idea*, and not merely of laziness in colloquial verbal communication, is evidenced in the body of this paper and the challenge required to clearly conceptualise and discuss these ideas without succumbing to the same slippages in meaning.

This subjugation of the lookout site extends to the point that to talk of a lookout without a view would seem nonsensical. However, the site itself *is* genuine place, and more importantly, a patch of natural environment that has been deemed dispensable by the governing national park authority. The presence of a lookout indicates something greater than a once-off imposition upon the immediate elements and organisms occupying that spot. For once the land is cleared and landscaped, and the lookout structure built, on-going maintenance is required to prevent the structure from being engulfed in vegetation and the view overgrown or compromised by dilapidation, neglect or vandalism.

Interestingly, by policy this kind of maintenance in national parks is conducted out of the sight of visitors. While partly an issue of safety, it is equally a decision based on concern for the experience of park users. Once a tree is felled, rarely is the stump left at the base of the lookout for awareness that the natural environment is being modified for purely aesthetic purposes implies a contradiction in values that affronts public assumption regarding the national park ideal. Tim Bonyhady's argument of 'Artists with Axes', a chapter of *The Colonial Earth* that examines the behaviour and practices of Romantic *plein-air* landscape artists, reinforces this comment. Bonyhady argues that historically many of those who came to be known for their sensitive depictions of the natural environment, and have been recruited retrospectively to the cause of the environmental movement, felt it was their right and indeed obligation to

‘improve’ nature through clearing forest. This attitude thrived also in the philosophy of national park management:

One of the primary objects of the trustees responsible for the National Park south of Sydney was to open new roads and walks and clear old ones so that all visitors, ‘including ladies and young children’, could enjoy the ‘excellent views’ and ‘charming vistas’ with ‘ease and safety’.⁶⁹

Highlighting the ethical contradiction of such an attitude, Bonyhady states, “The realisation that artists were axemen matters a great deal...if we start from the premise that celebration rests on appreciation and respect. The artist’s use of the axe...breaks this nexus.”⁷⁰ This point is of equal pertinence to the contemporary national park service that fells trees, lops branches and cuts back foliage at lookouts within conservation areas.

That the national park service undertakes such activities in a covert manner only renders their actions more sinister in Bonyhady’s view:

This rupture is disturbing enough when the work...includes some sign of what has gone on...at least there is some evidence of something awry. We have a chance to recognise the basis of the celebration offered. The breakdown between celebration and conservation is even more disturbing where the work itself gives no hint of what has gone on...⁷¹

However, a lookout that exposed the environmental cost of its own existence would draw attention from the scenery to the (devastated) lookout site itself, and in doing so would break down the relationship of facilitation between site and scene that is integral to the function of the lookout. In consequence, the aesthetic experience of the sightseer would be spoiled. At the lookout, like the theatre, the most effective viewing experiences rely on concealment of the mechanisms behind the visual spectacle. In the case of lookouts this ‘mechanism’ is the lookout structure and the immediate site itself.

Interestingly, the combined concerns for safety, structural longevity and economy, result in similarity in the mundane appearance of lookout structures. This is particularly true of national parks where materials (such as treated pine, wire mesh, concrete and gravel) are purchased in bulk and utilized in all appropriate projects. The interest of the National Parks Service in aesthetic consistency between interventions

⁶⁹ Bonyhady, Tim. *The Colonial Earth*, Melbourne University Press, Australia, 2000, p. 210-211

⁷⁰ Bonyhady, Op. Cit., p. 215

⁷¹ Bonyhady, Op. Cit., p. 217

in natural areas is reflected in national park signage, which is more or less standardised all across Australia. The use of a lettering template and the consistent colour scheme imbues the wooden signs with a visual familiarity and authority. This exemplifies the way in which natural environments, when managed as national park, are inevitably institutionalised through a process of visual repetition, "...whereby intimidating novelty graduates into safe familiarity."⁷² Many visitors, perhaps on a subconscious level, derive comfort from subtle visual reminders of the fact that someone has gone before, identified the best places and rendered the area safe for visitation.

Turning now to the potentially spiritual experience at the lookout, the notion of solipsism must be introduced. This is a view, or sense, that the self is all that exists or can be known. The sense of solipsism provoked at the lookout is the basis of spiritual, transcendental and meaningful moments in the natural environment, where for example, "...you lose yourself in boundless spaces, your whole being experiences a silent cleansing and clarification."⁷³ This idea relates to previous discussion in this paper of visual perception and temporal disconnection of viewers from physical reality, when individuals become lost in inner thought, emotion and imaginings. The sense of sight, which objectifies that which is 'other', is particularly powerful in generating a sense of solipsism because seeing can be highly selective.

The solipsistic retreat into self is conceivably the process whereby, "The entire intellectual, ideological apparatus of each individual – socio-economic background, political ideologies, religion – enters into the transactional search for 'meaning'."⁷⁴ In a spiritual sense this 'meaning', sought increasingly as population expands, is often accessed through perceived beauty. Here, the Romantic notion of the *Sublime* is relevant, a concept emerging from philosophical inquiry into aesthetics in the eighteenth century. The *Sublime* in nature, according to Edmund Burke, is associated with such powerful emotions as astonishment, uncertainty, terror, magnificence and solitude.⁷⁵ As visual stimulus of terrible beauty, the *Sublime* is also capable of stirring

⁷² Andrews (1999), Op. Cit., p. 129

⁷³ Andrews (1999), Op. Cit., p. 143

⁷⁴ Jussim & Lindquist-Cock, Op. Cit., p. 41

⁷⁵ Andrews (1999), Op. Cit., p. 134

spiritual awe. John Ruskin for example linked such experience of the natural environment to fear and faith in God.⁷⁶

It is interesting to observe that a sense of solitude, or solipsism, is as much a key characteristic of the *Sublime* as it is the lookout experience. Perhaps John Szarkowski's observation that, "...in our hearts we still believe that the only truly beautiful landscape is an unpeopled one"⁷⁷ is correct, and leads viewers of natural scenery to attempt to transcend even their own presence to achieve an intensely emotional, or spiritual experience. This desire to "...become a 'transparent eyeball', a creature abstracted out of himself"⁷⁸ is the desire to see without being seen and is satisfied to a certain extent by the objectifying power of optical devices such as binoculars. Cameras also provide an artificial impression of solipsism, for even when a snapshot is taken of a companion at the lookout we seek to eliminate all other sightseers from the shot and the telltale sign of our own presence through a flyaway hair or finger over the lens. The photographic image kept as a reminder of that experience portrays the visual untruth of utter solitude.

The sense of solipsism, which allows for spiritual experience at the lookout, can only be sustained temporarily. For, human experience is essentially one of perennial self-awareness and deconstruction of surroundings, and the lookout is ultimately a public site that must be negotiated and shared with others. However, lookouts, designed for 'shortstop visitors', are not designed for, or conducive to, long durations of visitation. The length of time a visitor can sustain visual attention and genuine interest on the landscape at a lookout is limited. On this subject Tuan cynically states,

The scenic spot...presents us with a picture-window glimpse of nature which, sublime as it often is, rarely moves us to any response more strenuous than the taking of a snapshot.⁷⁹

An explanation for this attitude can be found in Borgmann's argument that technologically mediated information, be it visual or otherwise, inherently fails to fulfil or reward individuals. His claim that, "...being at length oversaturated with information that has failed to fit the focal area of our lives and our gifts of body and

⁷⁶ Jussim, & Lindquist-Cock, Op. Cit., p. 29

⁷⁷ Jussim & Lindquist-Cock, Op. Cit., p. 149

⁷⁸ Jussim & Lindquist-Cock, Op. Cit., p. 31

⁷⁹ Tuan, Op. Cit., p. 133

mind, we feel dejected and depressed”⁸⁰ can be interpreted to suggest enjoyment of, and interest in, the lookout is limited due to the fact that it provides shallow experience. In other words, catering almost exclusively to visual perception, the lookout fails to engage or challenge the other senses, or indeed, the mind. Another explanation can be found with Mitchell who claims that landscape, being an exchange between the human and the natural, is exhausted and no longer capable of emotional or conceptual engagement. He states, in regards to how conditioned people have become to this visual custom, that, “...landscape is boring.”⁸¹

The above observations by Tuan, Borgmann and Mitchell all have relevance to the lookout experience. It seems that no matter how magnificent the scenery is, interest and pleasure, “However intense... is fleeting unless one’s eyes are kept to it for some other reason.”⁸² Lookouts, by design, foster intense yet fleeting emotion. Be it mere aesthetic appreciation or spiritual epiphany, such pleasure is made possible only through temporarily ignoring immediate surroundings. This fact exposes the insufficiency of visual perception alone to inform sound ideas and attitudes about environment. For sight, digesting (visual) information rapidly, lacks the endurance required to gradually develop strong relationship to place.

Reflecting on the discussion thus far, the concept of the frame can be suggested as a metaphor for the lookout. Andrews argues that organization is an essential characteristic of all landscape, and that the frame gives definition through boundaries.⁸³ Indeed, a range of physical, visual and social boundaries associated with the lookout experience have been discussed above. In terms of looking at landscape, the lookout frames the view physically and visually via the built structure and ‘natural’ border of the vista (e.g. shrubs, grasses, rocks, over-hanging foliage etc.). This framing is executed in a manner determined by ideas about the picturesque and photogenic, which can in turn easily be captured by the most amateur photographer.

This aesthetic framing of landscape by the lookout may initially seem benign and perhaps even superficial. But if human beings rely on sight, more than any other

⁸⁰ Borgmann, *Op. Cit.*, p. 106

⁸¹ Mitchell, *Op. Cit.*, p. 5

⁸² Tuan, *Op. Cit.*, p. 93

⁸³ Andrews (1999), *Op. Cit.*, p. 5

sense, to formulate ideas and values about the world around them, the lookout also *conceptually* frames the natural environment. If lookouts select and display scenery deemed 'most beautiful' at the expense of spaces deemed 'less valuable' by some undisclosed system of aesthetic and ethic judgement, how 'truthful' or objective is the information they provide? By processing natural space, lookouts mediate the perception of the viewer. It is a fine line between mediation and *manipulation*, one that can only be maintained by disclosure of the conceptual mechanisms behind creation of the spectacle.

Can it be presumed that the concept of landscape is so clear and universal, and people so accustomed to viewing landscape, that the mediation need not be identified? The ambiguity in the very concept of landscape, manifested in the blurring of site/scene in the concept of lookout, suggests otherwise. And for an urban population that struggles to develop relationships to place, and have only occasional and brief contact with the natural environment, yet yearns for some connection with natural place, how influential is this mediation of their experience?

These rhetorical questions ought not be misunderstood as attempting to attribute blame or imply intentional deception by the national park services. Lookouts, found in numerous public settings, reflect more than anything else the recreational and spiritual desires of sightseers. In the national park this is a desire for accessibility to natural environment and convenience in obtaining the 'wilderness' experience, in both physical and emotional terms. Few of the ideas or considerations discussed in this paper are likely to occur to the lookout visitor. From the inane conversations held between the car and the lookout platform it often seems that sightseers are imperceptive until standing before the scenic view.

The freedom from politics that Andrews identifies as an important characteristic of the *locus amoenus*, and the freedom from concern inherent in the notion of recreation, manifests itself at the lookout in a dogged commitment by viewers to mindless consumption of pleasurable scenery. Lookouts cater to this desire by subjugating the immediate site physically, ensuring the structure is visually uninteresting, familiar and safe, and by heavily guiding viewers through their experience via path, platform and 'frame'. These factors make easier the visitor's experience of spiritual and recreational escapism, in which it is often fancied that a genuine connection to Nature

is achieved. Mitchell warns against such an unguarded and unanalysed attitude to landscape viewing, stating:

...appreciation of landscape as an aesthetic object, cannot be an occasion for complacency or untroubled contemplation; rather it must be the focus of a historical, political and (yes) aesthetic alertness to the violence and evil written on the land, projected there by the gazing eye.⁸⁴

Knowledge of place, be it 'lived' or 'learned', certainly entails more than just aesthetic appreciation. The visitor's experience of natural environment, achieved through national park lookouts, is almost exclusively a visual one in which multi-dimensional, sprawling space is reduced to a cropped picturesque scene. In regards to understanding lookouts, to the knowledge that the 'gazing eye' subjectively interprets landscape must be added the awareness that the 'gazing eye' can be positioned and directed. This mediation undoubtedly affects perception, and therefore ideas and attitudes towards natural environment.

It has been asserted in this discussion that the immediate environment of the lookout site is sacrificed in order to glorify the vista. The fact is that, "Landscape...[is] a 'natural scene mediated by culture'."⁸⁵ However, the *degree* of mediation cannot be measured or assessed. That the visitor has no established method of judging whether the landscape of the lookout is more natural or cultural product is problematic for knowledge of natural place. Such is the paradox of administrated natural environment and of contemporary expectations of convenience in meaningful contact with natural environment. Particularly within a national park, a realm of preservation, the common occurrence of lookouts represents a contradiction in environmental values that is fuelled by humankind's obsession with visual perception.

⁸⁴ Mitchell, Op. Cit., p. 29

⁸⁵ Andrews (1999), Op. Cit., p.15

CONCLUSION

Jussim and Lindquist-Cock argue that interpretation of landscape photography requires analysis of 'extrinsic context' through such questions as: Who is responsible for this image? By what process and for what purpose was it made? Who is it intended for? Under what circumstances is it viewed?⁸⁶ This line of enquiry would assist in understanding any cultural product. Such enquiry is *especially* important with landscape however, where degrees of mediation are often unclear.

On the basis of such investigation viewers become capable of positioning themselves in relation to what they see, politically and culturally, and can form opinions of more than just aesthetic taste. Such analysis recognises visual perception as a mode of gathering information, of which not all can be deemed fact by virtue of having been *seen*. If sight is one of the greatest influences upon human understandings of the world, as has been argued previously, an analytical approach to mediated visual experience is capable of empowering individuals through providing tools to uncover, identify and interpret the forces that influence their ideas and philosophies.

But, viewers do not approach the lookout in the same way they approach a work of art. Leaving their analytical tool kit behind, many users of national parks suspend their deconstructive tendencies for the duration of their visit. Indeed, this act of perceptual surrender to the natural constitutes the possibility of relaxation itself. Relinquishment of conscious interpretation, it has been argued, opens the possibility of a transcendental 'wilderness' experience. In national parks this constitutes something akin to self-delusion for as Schama states,

...the very act of identifying (not to mention photographing) the place presupposes our presence, and along with us all the heavy cultural backpacks we lug with us on the trail.⁸⁷

The lookout has an author and is designed upon subjective principles of beauty with the intention of provoking certain emotions and sentiments in viewers. For these reasons the national park lookout and the landscape it frames are as much a cultural product as is fine art.

⁸⁶ Jussim & Lindquist-Cock, Op. Cit., p.41

⁸⁷ Schama, Op. Cit., p. 7

That human beings often seek convenience and recreation in their relationships to natural environment is not in itself worrisome. However, it has been shown that the lookout, as, "...a way of seeing from a distance is incompatible with this heightened sense of our relationship to Nature as living (or dying) *environment*."⁸⁸ Recognition of this fact, through greater scepticism and analysis of circumstances that support idealised notions of 'wilderness' and 'the natural', may grant individuals greater power to enrich their experience of natural environment. It may even lead them to step off the duckboard path and to choose to explore the magnificent places beyond the lookout railing from *within*, in multi-sensory interaction, rather than being satisfied to look out at them from above.

⁸⁸ Andrews (1999), Op. Cit., p.22

APPENDIX ONE

Revisiting Experience:

The 'Great Struggle' of Artist in Place

The places...artists visit demand much of them...the best of their work represents the beginnings of a great struggle. It is a labour that wills to find a place for humans in relation to the natural world; and to see what of lasting significance can be attached to human existence.⁸⁹

This statement by Peter Grant cuts straight to the problematic heart of experience-based art-making. Implicit in his comment is recognition of the highly personal, and indeed emotional, journey an artist embarks on in entering place, which is not home, to produce work. The very position of Human in place emerges as the first and necessary intangibility for the visitor to grapple with. Within that particular challenge lies the second necessary stage of questioning, regarding the Artist in place. This paper is an investigation of this secondary level challenge to orientation and the various ways in which artists can situate themselves in place.

Why are we here? What are we here to do? How do we attempt to achieve these objectives? Are we entitled to do so? These questions are the result of displacement. Leaving home. Searching for *other* senses of space. Without seriously contemplating such issues as these, the visitor-artist is condemned to produce nothing more than a superficial representation of the visit, like those meaningless, ill-considered tourist snapshots we have all taken at one time - that could be anyone, anywhere, anything.

These questions are one aspect of the 'great struggle' that exists beyond the temporality of 'the stay'. It follows the artist home causing them to undergo a series of mental and emotional revisitations through memory, imagination and association. Ben Richardson's spiral analogy of the field trip experience is relevant to this concept in the notion of returning to (connected) points repeatedly on different levels, as one becomes physically distant from the place itself.⁹⁰ If we can visualize the spiral as a spring, the ends of which represent place and the artwork produced, the conceptual, creative and physical journey is contained in the coils that are potentially flattened into 'development'. The compression reflects the common attempt of artists to retrospectively unite their creations with the places and experiences that inspired them, an act wrought with tension as the layers of return are pushed in against one another and held in perilous suspense. Such is the power of place-based art.

At this point it seems necessary to acknowledge and address the possible assertion that every endeavour of art can ultimately be related to the influence of place and experience. To some extent perhaps this is true, however place-based art is not simply art made in place. Rather, I assert that it is art which in some sense attempts to touch on the unique character of a specific place. This requires commitment to immersion in (strange) place (entering the 'great struggle') as a source of inspiration, subject matter

⁸⁹ Grant, Peter. *Wild Art: at the world's end*, in *Artlink Vol 21*, p.16.

⁹⁰ Richardson, Ben. *WARP – Western Art Research Project*, 3/2/04.

and method of working. Evidence that this approach is somewhat outside the contemporary artistic mainstream (in an institutional sense at least), is to be found within *Masters of Art, Design and Environment* itself. Offered for the first time ever and possibly the only course of its kind in Australia, it is a genuine alternative to the established status quo of fine art education. Perhaps this indicates a possible third level of questioning regarding the position of contemporary experience/place-based artists amongst the greater spectrum of art movements.

Being an interesting, but highly complex task, I will not attempt to provide satisfactory investigation of the place-based artist within the context of art history and contemporary artistic streams. However, at this point it is essential to acknowledge the existence of a dense history to place-based art, one extremely influential element of which is the western tradition of plain air landscape painting.

The recent exhibition *John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque* at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery establishes this heritage in the purely Tasmanian experience. This exhibition identifies Glover's 'formula' for landscape depiction, developed from European notions of the picturesque. Jay Appelton in his book *The Experience of Landscape* provides various analytical techniques to decipher such formulas including the geometric approach (concerned with two-dimensional interpretation of compositional balance and flow) and the environmental approach (concerned with three-dimensional interpretation of compositional relationships between symbols and imagery)⁹¹. These examples demonstrate the possibility of deconstructing depictions of place in order to expose how the artist can interpret or manipulate the character of place (through their work) in order to create works that communicate on levels beyond the metonymic. I assert that in order to do this effectively, the artist must first orient themselves as artist in place.

The question of an artist's orientation in place can be understood as the question of how an artist can access the character of place. After all, it has been established previously that understanding strange place is the experiential objective of venturing beyond 'home'. Peter Hay paraphrases nature writer Barry Lopez's opinion on genuine experience of place thusly, "Seek to know place with all the senses, and beware too great an emphasis on the partial knowledge provided by interrogative processes."⁹² This comment highlights the limitations to experience that occur when an individual approaches place with a one-dimensional attitude to their own perception. Peter Grant reinforces this point in his comment on the role of Science in understanding natural place, "there has to be another side to the...story. We need to be aware of not only the science but also the art of place."⁹³

Thus, to be successful in the search for the complex character of a space, the visitor-artist must approach place openly. The artist will inevitably bring a multifaceted array of skills and knowledge to bear on the experience. However, the artist has the potential to differ from the biologist, the geologist or the social historian in the sense that their experience will not be to the same extent mediated, and indeed censored, by the preconceived limitations of the theories belonging to those disciplines. Recall Greg Blake the ecologist expounding the insufficiency of his discipline in

⁹¹ Appelton, Jay. *The Experience of Landscape*. Hull University Press, 1986, p.204.

⁹² Hay, Peter. *Main Currents in Western Environmental Thought*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2002, p.154.

⁹³ Grant, Op. Cit. p.16.

comprehending the Queenstown landscape, trying to gauge and provoke our perceptions as artists in the hope of producing an alternate view. He was perhaps trying to urge us, as Lopez also does, to “cultivate a sense of complexity, the sense that another landscape exists beyond the one you can subject to analysis.”⁹⁴ Thus, Blake’s scientific exercises (pH testing and quadrates) were a demonstration of both the usefulness and uselessness of science in discovering the essential character of place, which is more than just the sum of recordable parts.

Sean Kelly romanticizes, and indeed simplifies, the artist in place when he states,

The artist comes to this land, steeped in mythology, accepts at all as given, judges not and is open to awe... holding to the initial vision, the shock, entering through the eye.⁹⁵

Firstly, while the artist who visits place with a genuine interest in the unique character of that environment is potentially free of the rules of interpretation imposed by such frameworks as science, they ought not to be misunderstood as being blank slates upon which place can leave its unmediated mark. It is an inescapable fact that experience (in the spiral sense⁹⁶) itself can only be understood, can only exist, in the context of personal history, culture, emotion and self awareness to list just a few items of human baggage. Thus, every artist confronts their own judgmental nature, defensiveness and selective interest in the very act of immersing themselves in an alien space. The personal reflections of students on field trips to the West Coast illustrates this fact poignantly,

We are all questioning ourselves. The energy transmitted by those impending orange hills may be working like Solaris and our worst fears, worries or misgivings are thrown squarely back at us. I begin to get a bit depressed...⁹⁷

It is a shocking contrast to my usual preferred surroundings, the initial impact stilled the wind in my sails...In attempt to verbalise difficulties of place experienced...I entered a convoluted debate fuelled by fermented conjecture...⁹⁸

Secondly, I wish to challenge the assertion that the artist can remain within some unworldly suspended state of experience that allows them to ‘hold to the initial vision’. In fact, revisitation draws the artist physically, conceptually, emotionally past the singular initial vision of place into the three-dimensional spiral experience that complicates the first impression, tainting it with the personal perceptions which fuel the art-making to come. Again, the personal accounts of students on field trips to the West Coast provide evidence against the claim that the ‘initial vision, the shock’ is perpetuated, and indicates that one aspect of the ‘great struggle’ of place-based art is dealing with the disillusioning loss of first impressions;

⁹⁴ Hay, Op. Cit. P.154.

⁹⁵ Kelly, Sean. *The Western Edge*, Exhibition Catalogue, (publication details not known.)

⁹⁶ Mere sensual perception at a basic level, as with babies, can not be applied to the complex spiral analogy of experience utilized in this paper.

⁹⁷ Ellmoos, Niels. *Westward Ho*, 22/01/04

⁹⁸ Webster, Sam. 22/01/04

Strangely I have no real feelings about [this place]. I think I am becoming used to this sort of landscape...It's losing its orientalism factor.⁹⁹

I ought not to have worried. It seems the lack of shock I felt on my fourth trip to Queenstown was not nothingness, insensitivity or ambivalence – it was the start of a genuine relationship.¹⁰⁰

Kelly's portrayal of the 'initial vision' as an enlightened state of inspiration through shock, relates strongly to the concept of the sublime which for Immanuel Kant is "a function of the extreme tension experienced by the mind in apprehending the immensity or boundlessness of the grandest conceptions."¹⁰¹ The experience of the sublime is often linked to a sense of individual insignificance, a power that Grant attributes to the natural environment, "wild places can overwhelm us by their seeming indifference to our existence."¹⁰² The power of sublime experience is thus immense, however its nature is such that it can never be revisited exactly. This, I assert, is the disappointment of losing the initial vision.

Topophilia, in Hay's *Main Currents in Western Environmental Thought*, is described as "a homeward directed sentiment, one that is comfortable, detailed, diverse and ambiguous without confusion" whilst topophobia is defined as "ties with place that are distasteful in some way, or induce anxiety and depression."¹⁰³ These wonderful concepts perhaps delineate the possible relationship an artist may develop with place post-sublime. I assert that neither position constitutes a better or easier one from which to produce work. However, it does seem that in its positive incorporation of place into home, topophilia is an inwardly spiraling experience whilst topophobia seems the continuation of outward spiraling.

Both directions are evident in the responses of students who visit the West Coast of Tasmania as part of these Art and Wilderness courses. It seems though that with considerable revisitation there is a tendency towards the topophilic, perhaps reflecting the underlying human urge to bring all experience ultimately into the realm of home, via the desire to understand all. If this be the case, the search for new experiences of place increase our zone of comfort, causing us to explore wider and wider for that power of the initial vision and the exhilaration of the great struggle.

I would have liked, in this essay to continue discussion into an exploration of the notion of artist as 'interpreter' of space. In particular, public art and artwork incorporated into information centres such as those at Strahan and Lake St Claire, would have provided an insightful (if obvious) vehicle for that discussion. This would give support to the assumption that art has the power to affect concepts, attitudes and understandings of place while presenting an alternate path to the purely personal, emotional and private one that results from the 'great struggle'. As such, the potentially important role of art in environmentalism would emerge and my interest in

⁹⁹ Ellmoos, Op. Cit.

¹⁰⁰ Tudor, Rebecca. *Collingwood River*, 26/01/04.

¹⁰¹ Wilton, Andrew. *The Sublime in the Old World and the New*, in *American Sublime: Landscape Painting in the United States 1820-1880*, TATE Publishing, 2002, p.13.

¹⁰² Grant, Op. Cit., p. 16.

¹⁰³ Hay, Op. Cit., p.157.

the landscapes left to future generations could be introduced. However, these issues were beyond the scope of this essay and remain potential investigations for the year ahead.

Bec Tudor, February 2004

APPENDIX TWO

What can it mean to talk of a 'sense of place'? What significance should be attached to such talk and what role does such a sense of place play in human life and society?

Explain and illustrate your answer with reference to at least one specific poem, book, film or other work drawn from your studies in this unit.

Seamus Heaney, in his 1977 lecture entitled 'The Sense of Place', states that it is the "equable marriage between the geographical country and the country of the mind...that constitutes the sense of place in its richest possible manifestation."¹⁰⁴ Geoffrey R. Lilburne, speaking of the theories of Gaston Bachelard, can be seen to build on this statement when he claims, "in poetic images we express both ourselves and our environment."¹⁰⁵ Poetic images, it would seem, are a product of the human process of experiencing the world and are thus created in the same way as our sense of place.

Poetic images are the essence of creative expression readily found in linguistic forms such as poetry, literature, song, theatre and film. Kent Ryden reminds us however, that such expressions can also be found in the everyday dialogue of individuals who register their feelings of place through exchanges of 'personal experience stories'.¹⁰⁶

Deborah Bird Rose illustrates an indigenous communication with land through the following statement of a Rembarrnga man of Arnhem Land, "early in the morning we'd get up and sing out and look at the country carefully... You can't just travel quiet, no! Otherwise you might get lost."¹⁰⁷ In stark contrast to this account stands the theory of Tasmanian Philosophy Professor Jeff Malpas who argues that we only understand space through exchange of language with other human beings, which then allows us to conceive of ourselves.¹⁰⁸ These two contemporary Australian examples bare testament to the immense importance of language in the human connection with place across culture.

Poetic imagery of a visual form is at least equally powerful. Theatre and film can operate in a purely visual sense (that is, without the use of written or spoken language). However, in so far as they do they are often considered works of (visual) art. 'Material folklife', of which arts and crafts are an important element, provide "an indication of the deep understanding and intimate knowledge that people have of their

¹⁰⁴ Heaney, Seamus. *The Sense of Place*, in *Preoccupations: Prose 1908-1978*, London, Faber & Faber, 1980, p. 132

¹⁰⁵ Lilburne, Geoffrey R. *A Sense of Place*, Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1989, p.83

¹⁰⁶ Ryden, Kent. *Mapping the Invisible Landscape*, Iowa, University of Iowa Press, 1993, p. 86

¹⁰⁷ Rose, Deborah Bird. *Nourishing Terrains*, Canberra, Australian heritage Commission, 1996, p.14

¹⁰⁸ Malpas, Jeff. *Space and Sociality* in *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, Number 5, 1997, p.74

physical environs”¹⁰⁹ and thus Kent Ryden claims they also bring meaning and significance to geography.¹¹⁰

Furthermore, the ancient Greek art of memory (otherwise known as *mnemonics*) rests on the very belief that the sense of “sight is the strongest of all the senses.”¹¹¹ Thus, through literally giving the viewer a new way of seeing place, visual art can also give them a new way of seeing place conceptually.

Returning to Bachelard’s ‘poetics of space’ we find further confirmation of the particular potential of visual arts as a vehicle for poetic images. The power of images, it is asserted, lies in the fact that they are nonexclusive, allowing multiple views to coexist, accumulating to reveal a matrix of truths.¹¹² If this is the case, then surely a medium that affords the viewer maximum freedom of interpretation is optimal in this process of breaking away from “the formulated ideas of our philosophical tradition.”¹¹³ Through the freedom to experience poetic images in their own way, viewers of visual art can correlate multiple views of place in an arrangement that is deeply meaningful to them, in their particular locality.

Thus, no further justification ought to be required in introducing the paintings of German painter Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840) to this discussion of place and its importance in human life and society. Friedrich most commonly painted landscapes, however he did so in the opinion that “The artist should not only paint what he sees before him, but also what he sees within him.”¹¹⁴ Friedrich was one of the fore runners of Romanticism in Europe, and this statement illustrates the ideas that came to be synonymous with this movement including the affinity between nature and the human mind and reverence of subjective experience.¹¹⁵

Joseph Leo Koerner asserts that Friedrich’s work emerged from the subjectivist aesthetic developed from the *Critique of Judgement* (1790) by German philosopher Immanuel Kant. This aesthetic took its lead from Kant’s assertion in that “ ‘genius’ engenders a ‘freedom without which there can be no fine art, indeed not even a correct taste of one’s own by which to judge art.’ ”¹¹⁶ Whether or not Kant would have approved of the Romanticist’s expansion of this argument into a universal aesthetic principle is unclear.

It is extremely relevant to note Edward S. Casey’s observation that Kant “has no room for place in his conception of the human subject...the phenomenal self, the only self we can know, is radically unemplaced.”¹¹⁷ Thus, the influence of Kant is as

¹⁰⁹ Ryden, Op. Cit. p.73

¹¹⁰ Ryden, Ibid. p. 57

¹¹¹ Yates, Frances. *The Art of Memory*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1972, p. 4

¹¹² Lilburne, Op. Cit. p. 82

¹¹³ Lilburne, Ibid. p. 82

¹¹⁴ Friedrich, Caspar David. in Vaughan et al, *Caspar David Friedrich 1774-1840: Romantic Landscape Painting in Dresden*, The Tate Gallery, 1972, p. 103.

¹¹⁵ Koerner, Joseph Leo. *Caspar David Friedrich and the Subject of Landscape*, London, Reaktion Press, 1990, p.23.

¹¹⁶ Koerner, Op. Cit., p. 62

¹¹⁷ Casey, Edward S. *Smooth Spaces and Rough-Edged Places* in *Review of Metaphysics*, Number 51, 1997, p.292

responsible for Friedrich's reputation as "Europe's first truly modern artist"¹¹⁸ as it is for the conception of the modern subject as placeless subject in western philosophy.¹¹⁹ How an artist, influenced by such a philosopher as Kant, might create 'poetic images' that enhance our understanding of place is the subject of this very paper.

The three paintings by Caspar David Friedrich that will be discussed in this paper are; *Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog* (c.1818), *Woman at the Window* (1822) and *Woman Before the Setting Sun* (c.1818) (see attached images). What these works have in common, beside their author, is the fact that each presents a lone human figure, pictured from behind, positioned in the centre of their composition. These figures each look out into a view; misty mountain valley, harbour and dusk-lit hillscape respectively. These figures are known as *Ruckenfiguren* and are an effective, if seemingly explicit, artistic mechanism for creating a sense of experiential space in a two-dimensional work.

Friedrich was not the first artist to use the device of the *Ruckenfigur*. For centuries previous, figures with back turned to the viewer, or looking out of the picture at the viewer, were to be found in classically painted compositions. In these cases the figures were included in order to draw attention to areas of activity, give scale or even represent the artist themselves documenting the scene.¹²⁰

Friedrich's *Ruckenfiguren* however are almost exclusively "reflective foils of both artist and viewer, figures, that is, of the subject *in* the landscape."¹²¹ These visual portrayals of the act of experiencing place thus provide a rich set of examples against which to hold up various philosophical, historical, sociological, political, aesthetic, artistic and cultural theories regarding our sense of place. In order to do so however, we must first identify contemporary understandings of place in order to recognise the position from which we view Friedrich's art.

Talking about place today theorists from diverse disciplines often depict the period of modernity as one in which issues of place were subordinated to those of space. In making this case, a philosophical history of these concepts is often traced from Plato and Aristotle through Rene Descartes, John Locke, Isaac Newton, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Immanuel Kant, Martin Heidegger and into (post)modernism where we are presented with a description of ourselves as "radically dislocated, someone who does not know the difference between place and space."¹²²

The concept of unlimited, homogeneous spatiality that emerged from the Renaissance was a seductively powerful and inspiring one. However, the consequence of this conceptual shift was that "the concept of space as extension is steadily refined, but in the course of which refinement the idea of location is gradually lost."¹²³ The 'modern

¹¹⁸ Misel, Victor H. in Koerner Op. Cit. inside front dust jacket.

¹¹⁹ Casey, Op. Cit. p. 292

¹²⁰ Koerner, Op. Cit., p.162

¹²¹ Koerner, Ibid. p.163

¹²² Casey, Op. Cit., p.293

¹²³ Malpas, Jeff. *Finding Place: Spaciality, locality and Subjectivity* in Light, A. & Smith, J. (eds) *Philosophies of Place*, Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield, 1998, p. 31

subject' was consequently cast adrift in the expanse between the extremes of the universe and self.¹²⁴

Today this 'problem of place', to borrow a term from Malpas, is worsened by our sense of 'global nomadism', the sense that we can go any place.¹²⁵ This attitude accompanies the process of globalisation and the related advances in technology in areas of communication and travel particularly. Doreen Massey reminds us, in her book *Space, Place and Gender* though, that these processes often advantage an elite group through exploitation of others who do not have the same access to the benefits of their toil.¹²⁶ Hence Massey claims mobility, and the control of mobility, reflect and reinforce power.¹²⁷

So those whose gender, nationality, culture and socio-economic position do enable them to experience this 'time-space compression', have the greatest difficulty in understanding and relating to place for "to be able to go anywhere is to be located nowhere."¹²⁸ Stressing the seriousness of this problem, Malpas writes,

The problem of place is not a marginal problem concerning merely the way in which spatiality alone is to be understood, but is fundamental to epistemological, anthropological and psychological inquiry – even, indeed, to problems of ethics and politics.¹²⁹

Thus, to talk of place today, is to talk about the very fabric of society and the theories that underlie our understandings of ourselves and others. First world western capitalist societies, in particular, experience a deep insecurity due to their 'problem of place' that compels theorists to strive towards ever 'better' definitions of place appropriate to their contemporary setting. One such example can be found in the writing of Massey who reconceptualises 'place' as "articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings... which includes a consciousness of its links with the wider world."¹³⁰

An important distinction must be made at this point. Just as Malpas goes to great pains to distinguish between a creature's grasp of space and their grasp of the *concept* of space,¹³¹ I shall emphasise the distinction between the having of a concept of place, and the having of a *sense* of place. This distinction is one of intellectual thought versus bodily and/or spiritual experience. I assert that while Massey's reconceptualisation is interesting, and useful in pinpointing our *ideas* of space, it has little potential for enhancing an individual's actual experience of the environment in which they dwell, that is, their sense of place.

Evidence that theoretical, reductive conceptualization results in a 'knowledge' of place rather than a *sense* of place comes from philosopher Gary Comstock. Presenting 'places of little sense' and 'places of big sense', he makes a distinction between the

¹²⁴ Casey, Op. Cit., p.290

¹²⁵ Casey, Ibid. p.293

¹²⁶ Massey, Doreen. *Space, Place and Gender*, Polity Press, 1994, p. 149

¹²⁷ Massey, Ibid. p.150

¹²⁸ Casey, Op. Cit., p. 293

¹²⁹ Malpas, 1998 Op. Cit., p.35

¹³⁰ Massey, Ibid. p. 154-155

¹³¹ Malpas, Jeff. *Place and Experience*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 46

“modest, local” practical wisdom and the “grand absolute theories” regarding place.¹³² Comstock argues that these are incompatible approaches, meaning that it is impossible to create theory about ‘places of little sense.’¹³³

Seamus Heaney makes this distinction when he identifies two ways of knowing and appreciating place. The first way is “lived, illiterate and unconscious”, being an unanalysed relationship which sprouts from an absolute immersion in the life of a place.¹³⁴ This way of relating to place seems simple and at times involuntary. He counters this position with the “learned, literate and conscious”¹³⁵ way of knowing and appreciating place that assumes an outside standpoint and a self-aware attempt at developing this relationship.

Using the Irish poets Patrick Kavanagh and John Montague as examples in point, Heaney states “Kavanagh’s eye has been used to bending over the ground before it ever bent over a book but we feel with Montague that the case is vice versa.”¹³⁶ In this sense, the ‘learned, literate and conscious’ way of relating to place could be understood as an analytical one, angled towards the theoretical. Heaney suggests that this second approach is one in which places function as demarcations of a personal landscape, one persons experience, isolated from the history and heritage associated with a ‘lived’ knowledge of place.¹³⁷

The ‘lived, illiterate and unconscious’ or ‘places of little sense’ way of relating to place, epitomised by the “farmers in orange feed caps discussing whether the girls’ basketball team hadn’t oughta switched to five-player rules”¹³⁸, is a secure one. So immersed in their local sense of place they do not question it, and are perhaps unable to articulate the relationship, one gets the sense that these farmers have as little need for Massey’s reconceptualisation of place as they would have empathy for the modern subject’s disorientation in the void between self and universe.

We seem to be left in a predicament of being unable to gain access to the one way of relating to place that appears strongest and most genuine. However, if our quest for reconnection with place is in reaction to the *feeling* of alienation discussed in this paper previously, surely obtaining a *conceptual understanding* of place is a task of an entirely different order. Instead, our quest ought to be a personal and emotional one - coming to know ones self in order find place. So perhaps a solution lies in Heaney’s ‘learned, literate, conscious’ way of knowing place that utilizes landscapes as a personal topography after all.

I do not suggest we develop ‘a global sense of the local’ as Doreen Massey asserts, nor construct ‘rough-edged places’ as Edward S. Casey claims, nor investigate the structure and possibility of place as Malpas argues. For I recoil at the idea, with its

¹³² Ryden, Op. Cit., p. 61-62

¹³³ Ryden, Ibid. p. 62

¹³⁴ Heaney, Op. Cit., p.131

¹³⁵ Heaney, Ibid. p. 131

¹³⁶ Heaney, Op. Cit., p. 140

¹³⁷ Heaney, Ibid. p.140

¹³⁸ Ryden, Op. Cit., p. 61

anthropocentric overtones and embodiment of the very assumptions at the root of our difficulties, that “there is never a world for us except the one we...make.”¹³⁹

Rather than undertaking a ‘development’, ‘construction’ or ‘investigation’, I am drawn to Bachelard’s theology of poetic images as methodology (rather than imposed action). As a theology, the attention to, and ‘collection’ of, nonexclusive images (of linguistic, visual and other forms), allows for a freedom of individual practice for people of all ways of knowing place, that the formulation of ever-improved concepts and definitions of place can never achieve.

The extent of the potential for Bachelard’s ‘theology of images’ to accommodate diverse viewpoints, to assist in recovering a sense of place for ourselves, will be tested most rigorously by my very choice of imagery in this paper. Caspar David Friedrich’s *Rückenfigur* paintings, which emerged in the wake of Kant, are rooted in the seduction of the infinite that lured us into this postmodern disorientation of subject. Thus, we will discover whether, even in the case of Friedrich, “if we give attention to the poetic images coined of various places, we will be able to cease seeing places as featureless ‘things’ and begin to notice their qualities.”¹⁴⁰ My examination of these qualities will return to select theories of place in discussing the role that a sense of place may play in human life and society.

Wanderer above the Sea of Fog (c.1818) depicts a gentleman in green suit and cane, standing on a rocky peak looking over a mist-filled abyss to the mountain-horizon. The site of the scene is undisclosed, possibly even fictitious. The obscurity of the valley shrouded in mist, and the open sky above evokes a sense of the spiritual, while the centrality of the figure, with landscape converging to a point at chest-level, indicates that this work is as much about the human as it is about the landscape.

The landscape of this image evokes Malpas’ depiction of ‘objective space’ as a realm of extension, independent of any particular agent, location or feature.¹⁴¹ Indeed, “contemporary viewers wondered at the disorientating barrenness of Friedrich’s landscapes”¹⁴² and occasionally mistook them for seascapes or viewed them upside down in an attempt to comprehend the scene. The nonspecific landscape of *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*, obscured under mist, stretching out beyond the horizon line without particular focus for attention is an apt representation of such a concept.

Malpas explains that the only location objective space provides is that of a single point without directionality.¹⁴³ In relation to *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* this singular point takes the form of the *Rückenfigur* whose position atop the peak is without grounding or context, “The foreground pyramid rises abruptly from the lower framing edge without any clear connectives between our and the picture’s space.”¹⁴⁴ Thus it is appropriate that this figure gives the impression of having simply stepped out onto this peak, rather than traveled through the landscape as an outdoorsman or adventurer would.

¹³⁹ Ryden, *Ibid.* p. 58

¹⁴⁰ Lilburne, *Op. Cit.*, p. 81

¹⁴¹ Malpas, 1999, *Op. Cit.*, p. 54

¹⁴² Koerner, *Op. Cit.*, p. 15

¹⁴³ Malpas, *Op. Cit.*, 1999, p. 65

¹⁴⁴ Koerner, *Op. Cit.*, p. 181

His casual posture of contemplation emanates a sense of ease and confidence that embodies human domination of nature, and an intellectual sublimity resulting from the experience of that moment. We are reminded of the conceptual liberation that the realisation of space as infinite void in the Renaissance provided, and the consequent separation of human beings from nature in the theory of Rene Descartes.¹⁴⁵

Woman at the Window (1822), in contrast, depicts the *Ruckenfigur* in the defined spatiality of a room. The female figure looks out the window onto a harbour indicated by the tops of masts, their appearance indicating (like in *Wanderer*) that the viewpoint is an elevated one. This *Ruckenfigur* is not surrounded by the natural elements like the wanderer with his hair blowing in the wind. Rather, she peers out at it through the window from the protection of the dwelling, her view being one of human activity and nature combined.

Ed Casey claims that rooms are the smallest units of inhabited enclosure, and thus serve as modules for memory that have strong connection to place.¹⁴⁶ Despite both being anonymous faceless figures, the two *Ruckenfigur* (due to context, gender, dress and posture) bring entirely different emotional elements to the works in which they appear. While the wanderer embodies human empowerment, possibility and the experience of the sublime, the woman at the window is a calm, nostalgic presence.

The sense of enclosure provided by a room, Casey argues, is linked to notions of inside and outside marked by boundaries of various kinds.¹⁴⁷ Windows are particularly significant in this sense for they “literally ‘bring the outside world into the house and let the inside of the house go outside.’”¹⁴⁸ Thus, *Woman at the Window* can be viewed as imagery about the concentric spheres of place in the human experience represented by the physical boundaries of; horizon line, water, window, room, house and body.

Woman before the Setting Sun (c.1818) is an undoubtedly spiritual, and particularly romantic image. The female *Ruckenfigur* stands before a setting sun, arms open as the orange rays radiate from the horizon at chest-level as though they come from her heart. In this sense, this imagery relates to ‘subjective space’ which Malpas defines as “a space that is tied to some feature of the creature’s own awareness or experience.”¹⁴⁹

In contrast to the obscure abyss of *The Wanderer* and the domestic enclosure of *Woman at the Window*, this setting is an open and uninterrupted landscape. One can easily suppose this woman to have stopped during a stroll to revere this spectacular moment, and can imagine just as easily how she might travel through the scene, possibly to the church subtly indicated by the silhouette of a spire in the left

¹⁴⁵ Lilburne, Op. Cit., p. 74

¹⁴⁶ Casey, Ed. *The Memorability of Inhabited Space*, in *Spirit and Soul*, Dallas, Spring Publications, 1991, p. 236

¹⁴⁷ Casey, 1991, Op. Cit., p. 236

¹⁴⁸ Casey, Ibid. p. 245

¹⁴⁹ Malpas, 1999, Op. Cit., p. 50

midground. This is indeed a subjective space in the sense that, “the perspective...is not merely a passive ‘point of view’, but a perspective of *active engagement*.”¹⁵⁰

Woman before the Setting Sun could be seen as a mere depiction of a sublime experience of a somewhat tamed natural landscape, however the symbolism of the imagery indicates something far more personal. The figure seems to almost communicate with the land, her hands touching the mountains, her vision (we imagine) filled with the light of the setting sun. Her posture is one of welcoming nature in. Perhaps Ryden illustrates such emotional involvement with place when he states, “when we feel morally buffeted, emotionally strained, cut loose from any source or centre of value, sometimes the best thing we can do is dig down into place.”¹⁵¹ Rose could be speaking of Friedrich’s sunset landscape when she describes ‘country’ as “nourishing terrain...a place that gives and receives life.”¹⁵²

Through this very limited discussion of three paintings by Caspar David Friedrich, we can begin to understand how Bachelard’s theology of images might operate. The very act of my choosing these works, the fact that my discussion of their relation to theory regarding place has been directed by my interpretation and influenced by my memories of experience of place, indicate the potential of this methodology for collecting poetic images in order to understand place in a subjective, emotional and meaningful way. While a ‘lived, illiterate and unconscious’ sense of place might be ideal, I have shown that by its very nature such a relationship cannot be acquired in any intentional sense. Thus, for a society apparently displaced by its own fascination with notions of space and place, Bachelard’s ideas offer a way to redevelop connections between self and place through a ‘learned, literate and conscious’ method of viewing poetic images of all forms.

Bec Tudor, May 2004

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¹⁵⁰ Malpas, Ibid.

p. 51

¹⁵¹ Ryden, Op. Cit., p. 96

¹⁵² Rose, Op. Cit., p. 7

APPENDIX THREE

Looking out: an investigation of the visitor's experience of natural environment Research Methods Paper

This paper addresses the content, form and context of the Installation created for the project *Looking out: an investigation of the visitor's experience of natural environment*. The discussion that follows gives particular attention to the viewer as participant in the artwork, subjectively interpreting experience. For example, this discussion will draw a parallel between the sightseer at the lookout and the viewer in the art gallery in order to interrogate the nature of visual experience. The importance of this approach to considerations raised by the phenomena of lookouts will be demonstrated and reinforced throughout the content, form and context discussions.

The motivation behind this project stems in part from the academic journey I have undertaken through various approaches to environmental issues. From the perspectives of geography, natural science, history, political science, science and technology and philosophy I have experienced the disillusionment brought by the perpetual conceptualisation of the tangible environmental dilemmas existent. Paul Bryant poignantly states,

If we turn our regard for nature more and more into clever philosophical word games, if we begin to think that we are intellectually creating nature rather than physically participating in it, we are in danger of losing sight of the real wolves being shot by real bullets from real aeroplanes, of real trees being clearcut, of real streams being polluted by real factories.¹⁵³

Thus, *Looking out* focuses on a topic (i.e. lookouts) that gives access to an extensive range of relevant issues through examination of a structure which is essentially real.

Unravelling the project title above clarifies the conceptual dimensions of this proposal. 'Looking out' is a statement of action that also connotes the lookout site. While a lookout is a static site, a construction useful only in so far as it facilitates visual access to something beyond itself, looking out (from that site) is a dynamic and involving act. This act completes and justifies the lookout itself for, attempting to 'look out' in wilderness areas would be problematic and disillusioning without such a pre-established structure, supporting Kent Ryden's argument that 'artefacts of human intelligence' are essential in giving meaning to human surroundings through imposing order.¹⁵⁴ 'Looking out' assumes a human subject, which John Berger defines as subjectively experiential, "when we 'see' a landscape, we situate ourselves in it."¹⁵⁵ 'Looking out' also implies the reciprocal action 'taking in' and the private level of individual contact with nature.

The experiential subject defined as 'visitor' remains anonymous in this investigation of public function and common usage of lookout sites. Lookouts are public facilities

¹⁵³ Hay, P. 2002, *Main Currents in Western Environmental Thought*. Sydney, UNSW Press, p. 24-25

¹⁵⁴ Ryden, K. 1993, *Mapping the Invisible Landscape*. Iowa, University of Iowa Press, p. 53

¹⁵⁵ Berger, J. 1972, *Ways of Seeing*. London, Penguin Books, p. 11

within recreational areas, designed for brief periods of usage, managed by governing authorities. As such, lookouts are sites of visitation. For most people the lookout is not part of everyday existence, and since it is unfeasible to stay at a lookout, users can only ever be visitors. Thus 'visitor' ought not be understood merely in the sense of tourist.

This project focuses on lookouts situated within 'natural environments', particularly National Parks. The phrase 'natural environment' is used with a consciousness of the observation Simon Schama makes regarding wilderness sentiment,

Though the parking is almost as big as the park and there are bears rooting among the McDonald's cartons, we still imagine Yosemite ... with no trace of human presence. But of course the very act of identifying (not to mention photographing) the place presupposes our presence, and along with us all the heavy cultural backpacks that we lug with us on the trail.¹⁵⁶

Contradictory ideas about conservation and human activity are explored through this project and inform the assertion that public appreciation of lookouts operate on a collective exercise of selective awareness where path, platform and railings are ignored (visually), when partaking in the scenic viewing experience. A sense of immersion in landscape at the lookout thus requires denial of the scene immediately behind the sightseer and at their feet.

When referring to a lookout, it is often the view rather than the site that is considered. Designed for utility, lookouts are unremarkable, ugly sites of concrete, treated pine and steel. Yet common speech reveals a conceptual collapse in which the lookout has become synonymous with the scenery it displays. In reality, the site of the constructed lookout has been deemed dispensable, even within 'protected' environments, and sacrificed for the glorification of an idealised vista. This sacrifice, and the ongoing oppression of the natural processes ('maintenance'), is invisible to the public. Removal of tree stumps is essential to support the experience of conventional sightseers, who would struggle to connect with nature while such blatant marks of human action were visible. Figure 1 demonstrates this point, depicting an unpopular and unappealing lookout at the Mount Nelson Signal Station where the environmental sacrifices made to provide the view are evident.

Visitor's paradoxical appreciation of 'nature' through utilizing, yet denying, the artificial construct of the lookout, is sustained by a set of promises and expectations. Lookouts promise the sightseer easy access via a well-defined path, adequate signage, information via interpretation boards, proximity to roads, picnic sites and other public facilities and an easily identifiable feature worthy of our visual attention. Commonly, a successful lookout is one that provides an excellent photo opportunity as the sign in Figure 2 indicates.

The Tahune Forest Airwalk (Figure 3) of Southern Tasmania is an exception to the common lookout. Built and managed by Forestry Tasmania, this 620 metre steel structure, 20 metres above ground level, allows visitors to experience forest at canopy level and to view the Huon River. The success of the Airwalk is due primarily to the novelty of the structure itself, the scenery being secondary and unlikely to warrant the

¹⁵⁶ Schama, S. 1995, *Landscape and Memory*. London, Fontana Press, p. 7

current \$11.00 per person. The Tahune Airwalk is an atypical lookout because it intentionally draws attention to the structure itself while providing the view arbitrarily. Analysis of this anomaly provokes a politicised discussion regarding the possible agenda of Forestry Tasmania. Without entering that debate, the Airwalk is worth noting as an inversion of the typical expectations and experiences of lookouts discussed in this paper.

The Installation for this project has been created for Seminar Room 3, level one, Tasmanian School of Art, of dimensions approximately 5.5 metres long by 4.7 metres wide by 3 metres high. The space has no windows to outdoors and is entered from a back corridor and exited out into an open area, operating in a 'flow-through' sense leading viewers from 'behind the scenes', through the work, out into a public area. This space constitutes the possibility of the Installation in two ways. It allowed a breadth of experimentation and development in form, impossible if the Installation were designed for, and imported into, a display space. The work grew within the space maintaining a direct conceptual and physical connection between components and site. Secondly, the decision not to display in a gallery setting activates an opportunity to engage viewers in reflection on constructed viewing experiences, including that of the esoteric art gallery.

Before entering the Installation, viewers may pause to peer into the space through small openings in the flanking windows. Rather than a reassuring preview of what is inside, viewers are presented with four 'peepshow' experiences unified by their play on optical distortion and the motif of the viewer's own reflected eye. Merleau-Ponty states, "That which looks at all things can also look at itself and recognise, in what it sees, the "other side" of its power of looking."¹⁵⁷ Thus the peepshows begin to question the effect of the mediating aids used to enhance visual experience of nature, such as the coin slot telescope, binoculars, magnifying glass and the camera lens. The peepshows are warmly lit inner worlds featuring the eye of the viewer, which allow Narcissistic tendencies to be comfortably indulged in private. This self-fascination is baited inside the Installation space under circumstances requiring public exposure. The limited human ability to sustain interest in even the most picturesque landscape is thus juxtaposed with the infinite fascination with one's own image.

On entering the darkened Installation space, the viewer encounters a data projector suspended from the ceiling by a steel arm over a laptop computer. These elements possess an eerie technological authority as their blue light and electronic hum 'conduct' the space. An arrow-like graphic path compels the viewer toward the centre of a (4.7 metre by 1.5 metre) panoramic screen on which is projected a photographic image of a lookout site. By following the path the viewer intercepts the projected light, their silhouette crisply cutting into the imagery. Stepping up onto a circular platform bearing a footprint symbol lit by an overhead spotlight, the visitor adopts the designated viewpoint for 'looking out'. Above, a convex mirror (600mm diameter) is angled downwards to reflect the viewer and anyone else present. The distorted reflections framed within the 'fish-eye' of the convex mirror, curls space into a captivating aerial perspective.

¹⁵⁷ Merleau-Ponty, M. *Eye and Mind* in Johnson, G.A. (ed) 1993, [The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting](#). USA, Northwestern University Press, p.124.

Being directly above the screen, the convex mirror reflects viewers and the digital infrastructure against the back wall but not the projected image. While it is understood that ourselves, others and technical support are all necessary components of shared visual experience at the art gallery, like the planks and rails disregarded at the lookout, these constitutive elements are generally dismissed. The convex mirror however gives full recognition to this 'other side' of visual phenomena as not only a legitimate, but also aesthetically and conceptually captivating subject. This level of the Installation experience reflects the static yet active phrase 'looking out' and corresponds to considerations of objective and subjective, as well as private and public, experience.

The still projected image is not cinematic and holds the viewer's attention for a limited period of time. This relates to lookouts as sites of visitation and as Yi-fu Tuan states "What Kenneth Clarke says of art appreciation is equally true in the appreciation of scenery. However intense, it is fleeting unless one's eyes are kept to it for some other reason."¹⁵⁸ As the imagery of the projection remains constant the eye searches for such a point of interest that ultimately becomes the viewer's own image and movement. This play on human narcissism consequently emphasises the role of subjective interpretation in imbuing visual experience with meaning, that so often operates via selective awareness.

When presented with their own silhouette within the projected image, and reflection in the convex mirror, some viewers will feel frustrated by the fact that their physical (and more importantly, cognitive) presence hinders 'objective' visual experience. Self-consciousness may also arise within the viewer who stands on an elevated platform, under a spotlight, with projected imagery on their back and others watching them watching themselves. A distinction in viewing attitudes between looking at one's own image in private (which is acceptable), as in the peepshows, and in public (which is not), as in the shared Installation space, is demonstrated. The ambiguous nature of the Installation context, and the discomfort caused, exposes the conventions that exist regarding viewing behaviour and reliance on them when acting in public.

Both the lookout and the gallery encourage delusions of solipsism through their design as spaces intended to unobtrusively facilitate visual stimuli. In solipsistic moments viewers of scenery and art forget themselves, tune out from their surroundings and consequently experience a heightened immersion in, and sense of connection with, the visual spectacle. The form of this Installation intentionally disrupts this tendency in a variety of overt ways while drawing attention to the act of viewing itself.

In seeking to address notions of site, structure, context and temporality through visual art, Installation is an appropriate approach for "the condition of Installation reveals that the eye is never innocent, the place is never neutral and the object never hermetic."¹⁵⁹ The historical development of Installation practice has been described as "a shift from art as object to art as process, from art as 'thing' to be addressed, to art as something which occurs in the encounter between the onlooker and a set of

¹⁵⁸ Tuan, Y. 1974, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values*. USA, Prentice-Hall, p. 94

¹⁵⁹ Geczy, A. & Genocchio, B. 2001, *What is Installation? An Anthology of Writings on Australian Installation Art*. Sydney, Power Publications, p. 2

stimuli.”¹⁶⁰ The decision to work within Installation is not merely a choice about how the work is executed. Installation, rather than being understood as style, medium, movement or ideology, can be defined as “an awareness of the contexts which give value to, or constitute, art as art, and generate meaning.”¹⁶¹

Of particular relevance to this project is the established potential of Installation to “question precisely what it is we are required to focus on when looking at art”¹⁶² and to legitimise the mundane and familiar in order to blur the boundaries between life and art. For this reason Perth-based Rodney Glick (b. 1961), an artist whose multi-disciplinary practice includes installation, is a significant point of reference.

Glick's artistic philosophy has developed in response to Perth's geographical and cultural isolation.¹⁶³ His practice of intentionally positioning himself and his work at odds with contemporary expectations of the competitive international art world, in regards to economic success and authorship, are particularly interesting. Glick has continually produced work that is essentially unmarketable. *Office Painting 2003* (Figure 4), produced in response to the request by his dealer to have ‘something to sell’, consisted of seven canvases combined within a twelve metre frame. Impractical in scale for most non-gallery settings, such a work demonstrates Glick's sense of humour in refusing to allow commercial forces to shape his making. Russell Storer states “the laughs here are a form of resistance: to the expectations that art be serious, that it conform to a recognisable style, that it can sell, that it relay a coherent ‘statement’.”¹⁶⁴ Installation, as non-object-orientated art clearly challenges the assumed conceptual, creative and logistical constraints associated with conventional art forms.

Glick's positive attitude to collaboration has led to the contribution of specialist professionals, other artists, friends and family in many of his works (eg. *Residential Project – Industrial House 1997-1998* [Figure 5])¹⁶⁵. These partnerships bring into question the precious attitudes held towards the authorship of fine art. Russell Storer, Curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney states, “Art increasingly requires collaboration, drawing on a range of skills beyond traditional art training, including specialized fabrication, digital imaging, or structural engineering”¹⁶⁶ implying that there is a need to reassess traditional notions of the autonomous artist. Installation in particular requires expert advice, assistance and support to be successful and thus provides the opportunity for artists to abandon affectations of complete self-sufficiency in preference for a methodology which prioritises the quality of the completed work and develops new skills through gleaning the knowledge of experts.

Glick's use of work-man-like materials such as tarpaulins, domestic lights, cardboard, paint and glue activate familiar visual associations that at once convey a sense of the

¹⁶⁰ de Oliveira, N. Oxley, N. & Petry, M. 1994, *Installation Art*, London, Thames & Hudson, p. 26

¹⁶¹ Geczy, A. & Genocchio, B. 2001, *What is Installation? An Anthology of Writings on Australian Installation Art*, Sydney, Power Publications, p.1

¹⁶² de Oliveira Op. Cit., p. 21

¹⁶³ Macgregor, E. A. in exhibition catalogue, 2004, *Ambitious? Who, Me? Newish Works by Rodney Glick*, Sydney, Museum of Contemporary Art, p. 5

¹⁶⁴ Storer, Op. Cit., p. 19

¹⁶⁵ Marcon, M. in *Ambitious? Who, Me? Newish Work by Rodney Glick*, Op. Cit., p.23

¹⁶⁶ Storer, Op. Cit., p. 11

mundane, while affronting the aesthetic tenets of the gallery space (eg. *Ocean Deep* 2003 [Figure 6]). Through utilizing such materials of “rough-and-ready, working class aesthetics one associates with the quotidian of tradesmen, artisans and other manual workers”¹⁶⁷ Glick imbues his conceptually complex work with a humble egalitarianism. Stylistically, the influence of Glick’s work has informed the visually clean-cut, minimal and practically driven design of the Installation work of the project *Looking out*.

French landscape architect and artist Bernard Lassus (b. 1929) constructs real spaces with the intention of directly influencing concepts about, and attitudes towards, and values of the environment. Like Glick, Lassus is not distracted by concerns regarding specialisation, arguing, “we’re the opposite of craftsmen because we do things which we aren’t actually able to do. A craftsman knows his trade... what I do is try to realise ideas without knowing at the beginning what form this will take.”¹⁶⁸ Having unequivocally stated, “Art and landscape architecture are the same thing,”¹⁶⁹ Lassus has dedicated himself to the theoretical study of landscape design history since the 1960’s in order to understand landscape perception.

Of particular relevance to this project, is Lassus’ design for the rest area of Nimes-Caissargues on the A54 motorway between Arles and Nimes in France, implemented in the years 1989 to 1990 (Figures 7 & 8). In his design, a 700 metre long avenue of trees intersects the motorway, with the colonnade of the old theatre of Nimes at one end. The rest area features two metal belvederes that reflect the profile of the historic Tour Magne in their form and provide a view of the city Nimes for travellers wanting to stretch their legs. With this design Lassus confronts the city-country dichotomy with its implications for travel and transport, by creating a recreational countryside structure that embraces the city and motorway. Malcolm Andrews claims that with this design “a motorway amenity has become a postmodern *locus amoenus*”¹⁷⁰ thus noting the fact that contemporary sightseeing practices still display a deeply ingrained prejudice against viewing the human-made when seeking relaxation and beauty – a point that is clearly of relevance to the arguments outlined within this paper previously.

Research into the compositional and emotive device of the *Ruckenfigur*, has informed the intentional engagement of participants in this Installation in order to maximise the impact of the viewer’s silhouette. *Ruckenfiguren* are human figures within a depicted scene that at once project a viewer’s sense of awareness into the depicted landscape while simultaneously interrupting the view. *Ruckenfiguren* function as “reflective foils of both artist and viewer, figures, that is, of the subject *in the landscape*”¹⁷¹ and are a powerful visual device used to manipulate, and bring awareness to, both two-dimensional and three-dimensional visual experience.

¹⁶⁷ Marcon, Op. Cit., p.23

¹⁶⁸ Lassus Op. Cit., p. 116

¹⁶⁹ Lassus, B. in Weilacher, U. 1996, *Between Landscape Architecture and Land Art*, Germany, Birkhauder, p. 109

¹⁷⁰ Andrews, M. 1999, *Landscape and Western Art*. New York, Oxford University Press, p.75

¹⁷¹ Koerner, J.L. 1990, *Caspar David Friedrich and the Subject of Landscape*. London, Reaktion Press, p. 163

This research has covered an eclectic range of painters and photographers including Caspar David Friedrich (*Woman at the Window*, 1822), Marcia Resnick (*See* series, c. 1980), Roger Minick (*Sightseer* series, c. 1980) and Mani Swanichpoom (*Pink Man in Paradise* series, 2003) to mention a select few (Figures 9, 10, 11 & 12). Through examination of the way various artists have used *Ruckenfiguren*-like devices, a technical appreciation has developed in regards to the potential of visual art to question, through employing, visual perception.

This paper has discussed the work of art produced for *Looking out: an investigation of the visitor's experience of natural environment* through the general themes of content, form and context. An Installation that takes the phenomena of lookouts as a conceptual focus, this work has been described as seeking to engage viewers in active reflection on the mediated nature of visual experience. In particular this work questions whether facilities providing access to visual phenomena can ever present objective information, or indeed the genuine connection with natural environment sought by an urban society utilizing National Parks to enrich their quality of life. Such an objective has been approached through the practice of Installation in order to inhibit the viewing habits typically exercised within the art gallery setting itself and to directly access attitudes towards space, environment and human action therein.

Bec Tudor, November 2004

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APPENDIX FOUR

APPENDIX FIVE

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