PART 4

The development of the project

Introduction

In this part of the exegesis I will describe the development of my project. To begin I will refer to a series of past works that I consider relevant to its inception. I will then outline the phases of the project in chronological order from phase one to phase three. Each phase will begin with an excerpt from my field trip notes. The discussion of each phase will be divided into the objectives, the explorations, the outcomes and an evaluation.

Relevant past work

I can detect several issues that in various forms have pervaded my image-making since 1990: a fascination with natural and cultural life cycles; looking close and representing detail; negotiating the peculiarities of the photographic medium; and concerns surrounding the presentation of images.

I will refer here to three major projects I undertook between 1990 and 1997, which were shown as post-graduate submission and solo exhibitions. Other smaller groups of works will be mentioned where they have had a linking function.

In my MFA studies from 1990 to 1992 an exploration of elemental forces as observable in flower, fruit and seed was the core motivation for my project. While the material presence of objects was important, indeed it provided the subjects and the moments that I photographed, the changes from flower to fruit and seed and states of decay were vital issues. What and how I photographed questioned the definition of distinct life forms. Although the resulting images were ‘truthful’, unaltered, they were ambiguous, and acted as metaphors for the relentlessness of time passing, for the inevitability of death as well as the tenacity and the raw power of life forces.

26. Polymorphosis, individual image and installation view

45
The images were sensual and emotionally charged. The project resulted in three groups of work: *Polymorphosis* consisted of a room with 12 large-scale unframed b&w photographic prints that aimed at confronting and enfolding the viewer by their size and the rawness of depicted polymorphous organic matter. *Untitled Sequence* consisted of another space with 13 very small framed images which invited close scrutiny and consideration of the notion that life consists of eating and being eaten. The third work was a 7-minute projection piece, *Two Lines from a Poem*, that drew the viewer into what might be a passage of elemental processes.

Following my MFA submission I further explored issues touched on during my MFA project, through small groups of works and experimentation towards a new major project. A return to Germany, my country of origin, and a six-month stay there during 1993, provided me with research time and source material. I eventually produced *Traces*, an installation of photographs and text, which was shown in Tasmania in 1995 and in Melbourne in 1996.  

In *Traces* I acknowledged aspects of my cultural heritage and tried to deal with the ghosts that had haunted me as a German of the post-war era. The power of the veracity of the photographic image, with which I had worked in my MFA work, gave way to manipulations that allowed me to communicate my sense of blending of past and present, fact and memory. The manner of arrangement of the work in the gallery was very important. *Traces* consisted of

90 *Traces* was shown in Tasmania in 1995 at University Gallery A in Launceston. The installation of the work made use of the long walk-through gallery space. In 1996 I installed *Traces* in the almost square front exhibition room at the CCP in Melbourne. Using this space required a re-thinking of the grouping of images and text in relation to its architectural characteristics and the viewer's physical interaction with the work.
9 images and 6 blocks of text. I suspended the large images of figures in the space, inviting the viewer to mingle with them. The blocks of text were stuck to walls and floor and aimed at stimulating imaginings of events that extended beyond the space and time of the gallery. I believe that the trip back to Germany and working through experiences via *Traces* enabled me to finally arrive in Tasmania, years after I had physically come here.

In 1997 I created an exhibition with the title *A Postcolonial Florilegium – Rosacea* which consisted of 15 digitally-made colour images. This body of work signified for me a departure from the emotionally laden projects of the past. It allowed me to explore ways of working with Photoshop software, to entertain flights of fantasy, speculate on hybridisation and gene manipulation and ponder the place of scientific illustration and naming in Western culture. I played with the rose as a universal symbol of love and of globalisation. I drew on my story of migration from Germany to India to Tasmania to design the roses on the computer. While these works subverted the veracity of the photographic image they nevertheless played with the believability of realistic-looking objects with scientific names. The exhibition installation sought to suggest a natural history display. However, my choice of materials and negotiation of a difficult gallery space resulted in a not fully convincing exhibition.

Small groups of images followed, extending digital manipulations and botanical investigations. In late 1998 I applied for a Wilderness Residency on Maria Island. The Residency was granted and I spent two memorable months, July and August of 1999, on the island.

I wanted to deal with my relationship to the landscape and the history of Maria Island. The residency allowed me to think and ponder and to experiment with new ideas for images. My old passion for analogue black and white photography was re-kindled. I took a great number of photographs on 35 mm and 120 film during the two months of the residency. I accumulated notes and doodles, played tentatively with photograms and considered ways to continue my relationship with the island beyond the period of the

---

91 *A Postcolonial Florilegium – Rosacea* was shown in 1997 at the University Gallery B in Launceston.

92 A conventionally framed presentation of the images for the Art Bank Collection seemed to suit the work better.
residency. The question as to how I could visually represent my physical and emotional experience of being in a landscape, and of an awareness of being in time and place was nurtured by the residency and led to this PhD project.

I consider my art-making process over the past 12 years as leading from a self-absorbed reflection on life cycles that relied on no particular location, via dealing with my cultural German heritage, to the engagement with a representative part of the physical environment I am living in now.

In the following section I will address the different stages of my PhD project, how issues have shifted and clarified and how methodologies have adjusted and developed during the progression of the project.

**Phase One**

16 Nov 2000 – Walk from Darlington towards Painted Cliffs. The first few hours here are always especially intense. Flesh and heart quiver with the wind and the excitement of musty smells. In the casuarina grove, old scattered bones, a shrivelled wallaby carcass. A whole line of dead birds along Hopground Beach, shearwaters.

**Objectives**

I started my candidature in March 2000 on a part-time basis while working in a full-time lecturing position in Launceston. Phase One lasted until the middle of 2001 when I took leave from my full-time teaching position in Launceston, moved to Hobart, and changed my PhD candidature from part-time to full-time. This initial phase of the project was typically marked by the attempt to clarify the project proposal through a series of visual explorations and by reading in, what I broadly projected to be, my field of research.

I submitted my initial proposal in October 2000. The first two sentences in my Research Proposition have provided the key question and central impetus for my investigation throughout the duration of the project: Most historical and contemporary landscape photography employs a perspectival, distancing view of the landscape. I propose to investigate means to photographically represent the landscape, which communicate the experience of an intimate reciprocal relationship with a natural environment.

I had applied for a solo exhibition to be held in 2000 at the University Gallery in Launceston with the intention of producing a body of work that would reflect on my 1999 residency on Maria Island and prompt me to start the visual investigation of my PhD project. I expected that I would be scheduled to present my initial proposal and visual explorations at a group critique session in the middle of the year.

I arranged to travel to Hobart on a weekly to fortnightly basis during semester time to attend postgraduate seminars and meet with my supervisor.
**Explorations**

My wilderness residency during July and August of 1999 on Maria Island had provided me with ideas and some source material for the start of my project. At the beginning of the project I thought that Maria Island could be one of a number of locations for my research. During this first phase I conducted 5 field trips on Maria Island.

I had been offered two related solo exhibitions, to be held during 2000. Both were to deal with work that had arisen from the residency on Maria Island. The exhibitions were a small compact touring exhibition for Regional Arts Tasmania and a comprehensive show for the large gallery space at the University of Tasmania Launceston Campus. For early 2001 I was also invited to contribute work to a comprehensive group exhibition, *Between Phenomena*, as part of the Ten Days On the Island festival. The exhibition’s curatorial emphasis was the panorama within the representation of landscape.

I used these exhibition commitments and the group critique session to work through ideas and material and come up with presentable bodies of images. The question as to how I could photographically communicate the *experience* of an environment was of pivotal importance from the start of the project.

I worked with a variety of photographic approaches and text. Working with photography after a series of explorations with computer imaging in past projects prompted me to return to my earlier attraction to black and white photography and its implicit abstracting quality. I pointed the camera to the ground, perpendicular from a height of about 80 cm and recorded sections of ground. I thought of the resulting images as evidence of having been there. On a purely visual level they contained a degree of ambiguity in regard to what the subject matter was, in some cases suggesting aerial photography.

Another idea that I pursued at the time was the photographic representation of encounters. I tried to capture moments in the environment when something occurred that intercepted my sense of contained presence, and which deeply challenged my notion of familiarity and jolted me into response. This I sensed mostly with other-than-human life forms such as kangaroo, bird or snake.

I started to experiment with photograms, considering in particular the indexical quality of the photogram, its record of the material trace. During this first phase of the project I made my photogram exposures on Maria Island and processed them in the studio in Launceston.

Reading about the island in compiled histories, Parks and Wildlife notes and management plans, as well as journals by the explorers of the Baudin expedition prompted me to consider including text in these early works. I felt that text, lists of species, references to the various social and entrepreneurial phases that had taken place on the island and extracts from my subjective notes could bring the different visual elements together while enriching my communicative potential.
My wider readings were rather eclectic, searching for a structure for the context of my project. I perused texts on postcolonial theory, art history, books on nature and philosophy and novels that addressed earlier periods of settlement.

**Outcomes**

I met my commitments and my explorations resulted in a regional touring exhibition that was titled *Perceptions of Nature: Experiencing Maria Island*. It comprised a grid of sixteen 30 x 30 cm black and white photographic prints combining images of ground and photograms. This set of work could be arranged as a block or in smaller groupings depending on exhibition space. With this group of images I started to acknowledge the importance the ground of Maria Island would have for my project. I also included 3 of my encounter images.

![Perceptions of Nature, grid](image)

I called the solo show at the University Gallery in Launceston *Reciprocity*. The title resulted from my early readings into phenomenology and seemed an appropriately descriptive word for my sense of growing engagement with Maria Island. The exhibition proved to be a testing arena for work at an early stage of development rather than a resolved body of work. It combined four components – a set of 4 images of *encounters*, a large photogram of animal remnants found on Maria Island, titled *relics*, a suite of 12 b & w photographs of sections of ground, and text relating to the history of the island written directly onto the gallery wall.

The *encounter* images were intended to set the scene. They were presented in three different sizes, 90 x 65 cm, 56 x 80 and 37 x 50 cm, individually mounted behind perspex.
The sections of ground each measured 65 x 90 cm and were pinned and arranged on the wall to imitate fragments of a map. In these images very small subject matter was enlarged to a substantial degree, resulting in a confusion of scale.

The photogram measured 6.5 x 1 meters and was suspended from the ceiling at one end in order to flow into the gallery floor. The white to grey traces of fragments of animal bodies formed a kind of pictogram or sign language within the black field of the photographic paper. I titled this work relics.

I wrote text with a soft pencil onto one of the gallery walls. The words were extracts from various published reports on Maria Island. They comprised lists.
of plant and animal species and references to historical events and developmental eras on the island. These snippets of information and reflections were intended to emphasise the context of the show and provide a linking element between the various visual components.

For my group critique presentation in mid 2000 I showed work in progress for Reciprocity, in particular relics and some of the photographs of ground, and discussed my project proposal to date.
For the group exhibition, *Between Phenomena* my reflection on the overall theme of the panorama within the representation of landscape resulted in three horizontal photograms of different sizes. The panorama in this case was referred to in format only with traces of remnants of flora collected from the ground suggesting passages, rather than the view towards the horizon. I called the works *remnants 1, 2, 3*. *Remnants 1* was the central piece, measuring 1 x 4 metres, and consisted of a deliberate arrangement of groupings of plant matter. The reference to pictogram and calligraphy was even stronger here than in *relics*. At the same time, individual elements within the piece drew attention to the wealth of forms and formal associations that could be evoked by debris collected from the ground. In this piece I was concerned to represent plant matter that was indigenous to the island as well as fragments from introduced European plants.

*Remnants 2* and *3* measured 30 cm x 3 meters and 40 cm x 2.5 meters. These two images concentrated on playing with limited indigenous plant components, starting to break up the deliberate order of groupings and suggesting a more random scatter of matter and movement.

In April 2001 I took *relics* to Mildura to be shown at *Palimpsest #4*, where it was hung as a 6.5 meter drop. It was good to show this piece in another setting on its own and in such a dramatic manner.

In early 2001 I conducted a series of small photogram tests, using a variety of papers and exposures, including colour paper, sun exposures and night time exposures in the field with electronic flash. I also experimented with making enlargements of fragments of matter by placing these into the negative carrier of an enlarger. The purpose of these experiments was to explore extended possibilities of the technique and how these could influence the reading of an image.

![Photograms and enlargements of matter](image)

**Evaluation**

Making and installing the work for these exhibitions as well as presenting work in progress at the group critique session in July allowed for my own analysis and gave me valuable feedback from supervisors and colleagues: I needed to clarify my issues and focus on relevant methodologies.
The exhibition *Reciprocity* in particular showed that I had been employing too many image-making strategies and that a better understanding of my central concern in relation to a theoretical and visual field would provide a clearer direction for the next phase of the project.

I decided to stop using a camera. Both the *encounter* images and the photographs of sections of ground adhered to a form of distancing observation that I wanted to abandon. The technique of the photogram and its implied need to touch and place objects seemed so far to be the most appropriate means to pursue my proposed project. I enjoyed using long stretches of photographic paper and the connection this format made with walking over land as well as the challenge of the process.

So far I had made several contained individual photogram works that intuitively explored the possibilities of the technique as well as the more considered group of 3 images for *Between Phenomena*. While working on *remnants* 1,2,3 I had started to consciously experiment with different methods of placing objects onto the photographic paper as well as multiple exposures. The small tests that I conducted after completing *remnants* gave me additional clues but I felt that the technique needed to be further developed in regard to the overall concept of my project. The scale of the images, their manner of presentation and the possibilities of series of images were to be considered more extensively.

![Photogram](image-url)

37. photogram, testing placement of objects and multiple exposures

By March 2001 I seemed to have made a good start on my project. However, the following months until the end of my part-time candidature in June were intensely busy with full-time lecturing commitments and preparations to hand over my position to the person who would replace me for 2.5 years. Progress on my PhD project during this period was minimal. I had adhered to my schedule of regular meetings in Hobart but had grown weary of spending precious research time in my car on the highway between Launceston and Hobart.

**Phase Two**

26/9/01 Late afternoon. Rambling. Sky overcast, cool breeze. Long silences between the sound of bird wings cutting the air. I love this valley. I like to call it garden. A proliferation of flowering bushes. Small flowers, antipodean spring flowers.
Objectives

This second phase of the project extended from July 2001, when I started my full time candidature, to September 2002. I conducted 8 field trips during this period.

A few practical issues had to be dealt with quickly. I needed to settle in Hobart and find a darkroom for the processing of my large photograms. The National Parks management on Maria Island had changed during the earlier part of the year and my working access on the island had to be re-negotiated. I also wanted to decide whether Maria Island would be the sole location for my project. And, the type of photographic paper I had been using had become unavailable and I had to find another product to replace it.

I intended to extend my experiments with photograms and produce a test exhibition for the Fine Arts Gallery at the University’s Sandy Bay Campus in early 2002. A group exhibition at the Plimsoll gallery was planned for the end of 2001, allowing for another testing of work in a public space, and I was to present work in progress at a group critique session in October 2001. I also wanted to explore and develop the digital imaging that I had tentatively started within the overall tenor of my project.

Connected to these extended visual explorations, more substantial theoretical research was to be done. I was scheduled to give a first seminar paper in late August 2001 and a second paper by mid 2002.

Explorations

I found a house near Hobart with an adjoining shed that I set up as darkroom to continue processing my large photograms on the floor using mops.

The new staff on Maria Island welcomed my work involvement with the island and, following a few camping trips to other parts of Southern Tasmania, I decided that Maria Island would be the sole location for my project. I felt that Maria Island had far more to offer than I could possibly exhaust with one research project.

I had been using a heavyweight fibre-based semi-matt-surface photographic roll paper, which I had very much liked for its strong paper, warm-tone base, lack of surface reflectiveness, deep charcoal blacks and beautiful range of grey tones. This paper became unavailable in early 2001 and I searched for another source of similar paper without success. After a series of tests with other papers and a period of procrastination, I settled, still with a degree of reluctance, for resin coated (RC) semi-matt paper.

I started to work with both available widths of this paper, 60cm and 106 cm. The narrower paper made me think more in terms of passages, the width of a trek or path, the width that allowed two human feet to stand and move. A 2
meter length in relation to a 60 cm width seemed longer than in relation to a 106 cm width.

I decided to make new exposures on Maria Island. The chapel\textsuperscript{93} again became my field trip darkroom with a single electric bulb and, where appropriate, a fill-in camera flash for exposure. Besides photographic roll paper, I took basic safelight equipment and materials to process small test prints. The tall ceiling of the building and lack of reflective surfaces in the space produced sharp outlines of the traces of the objects. Fill-in flashing from a 45\(^\circ\) angle on either end of the stretch of paper resulted in light reaching under the objects where they did not fully touch the paper. This could achieve interesting shapes and produce wanted mid-tones or eliminate the visible trace of the object altogether depending on its size, solidity and contact surface. The fill-in flash was useful for very long sheets of paper as the one light bulb produced a gradual fall-out effect towards the ends of the paper.

38. bones (detail), using fill-in flash to produce mid-tones

In order not to be totally dependent on field trips for my experimentations I started to bring objects from Maria Island back to my studio. From August to November 2001 I made photogram exposures on Maria Island as well as in my home darkroom.

At that time I accepted the offer of plastic troughs for the processing of the images. Several trials followed and I eventually found a manner of using this roll-through-troughs-processing method without getting streaky or unevenly developed images. This manner of processing has turned out to be less messy and fume intensive than using mops on the floor. I found that it could be adopted well for RC paper.

For the show at the University Fine Arts Gallery I wanted to create a continuous wall of photograms that would draw the viewer into a mostly dark space and indicate a journey. I took on the suggestion made during my

\textsuperscript{93} The chapel was built on Maria Island during the convict era with local sandstone. It is now used as a storeroom for artefacts and is one of the few buildings on the island with an electric power connection. I acquired permission in early 2000 to use this building as darkroom to make exposures.
earlier group critique to work with vertical images. This would suit the RC paper better and make me work across the borders of the individual images.

The making of images for the exhibition required careful designing. I found it necessary to make all exposures in my darkroom at home in order to construct the suite of works, with every new image linking to an existing one. However, exposures made in my darkroom produced much softer outlines of traces than had resulted from exposures in the chapel on Maria Island. This was due to the low ceiling and some reflective surfaces in the room. I progressed through a series of tests with different light sources and various ways of reducing reflection to arrive at a solution with which I felt happy. The tests also included contact printing from existing photograms to reverse the tones, another set of sun exposures and some experimentation with bleaching and toning to incorporate tones in addition to the white to black scale. I also explored the idea of making photogram scroll books to mirror the act of looking at the ground while walking.

39. photogram tests (details): bleaching, sun-exposure, contact print

The lack of evidence of my presence in the photograms was considered to be an omission by some viewers. I tried more or less subtle ways of including a trace of myself by placing myself partly into the photogram during exposure and by making finger, hand or foot imprints during the chemical process. I eventually decided not to pursue this issue for visual and conceptual reasons. The visual results looked forced and clumsy. I felt that the technique of the photogram spoke implicitly of the maker and I saw no need to underline my presence.

40. photogram test: hand imprint

The summer period of 2001/2002 was taken up with making the work for the exhibition at the University Fine Arts Gallery. Besides working on the suite of vertical images I re-visited the idea of text and experimented with text directly applied to the photograms, a separate concertina-type book and shadow text.
The two scheduled theory seminars prompted me to read and think in a more focused manner and to start writing. I still searched for a manageable theoretical and visual context.

From April 2002 onwards I explored the potential digital component of my project more seriously. I had scanned objects by placing them directly on the scanner bed in the past and thought that this would be an especially apt manner of producing images for this project. As with photograms, the physical contact of the actual object with the surface that would record the trace of the object was essential. Equally, my physical encounter with the object was integral to the process. However, the trace achievable via the scanner bed was very different from that left on photographic paper. In the case of the photogram, light is directed from above and is either blocked out completely by the opacity of an object or blocked partly where there is translucency. The scanner illuminates the object from below. The laser beams record surface detail from the object, which, via the digital language system of zero and one, becomes accessible as image and transferable into print.

41. digital scan

I wanted to achieve monochromatic images, akin to scientific drawings. Advice by a digital imaging expert at the Art School and a series of experiments that I conducted eliminated what had seemed to be an unavoidable effect of scanning objects: shadow casts around the objects. I had in the past dealt with this problem by laboriously cutting away the shadow casts with the resulting trace of the object often still looking like a cut-out shape. Leaving the scanner lid open and illuminating the object from above (as well as below), through a diffusing screen, eliminated the shadow cast problem totally in most cases.

A key consideration was the relationship of the digital images to the photograms in the context of my overall project. What would the role of the digital index be in comparison to the photogram as index? Could each address a distinct aspect of my attempt to communicate the experience of being in the land, and could the two components eventually complement each other?

While pondering those conceptual issues I worked between April and September 2002 through a number of ideas and possible image outcomes. These included experimentation with different printers and papers, printing sizes and image numbers.

During this second phase a few other, more tangential ideas stirred. I started to use a pedometer on my walks on Maria Island to record the number of

58
steps I took and the kilometres I walked. These subjective data, I thought, could form a comparative link to objective distances indicated on maps. And there was the wish to record sound. The soundscape of Maria Island had been a major element in my experience of the island. I soon realised that it would require a good deal of learning and equipment to achieve any acceptable standard in a new field of working.

**Outcomes**

I presented several photograms in horizontal format as well as some digital prints at my group critique in October. The placement of objects on the photograms was guided by observations I had noted on my walks as well as my experiential response.

Comments were made in regard to the considerable amount of black in the photogram images, and the containment of the images within the borders of the photographic paper. The horizontal format was questioned in regard to my attempt to achieve an immersive field of images. The digital prints consisted of one image printed in several sizes on different surfaces provoking the query as to what my intention was with these images in relationship to the photogram work.

For the postgraduate group show in December 2001 I made three passages, each measuring approximately 220 x 60 cm. These passages referred to what had become for me three regular walks on the island: through a particular valley, along one of the beaches and through a casuarina grove. I installed the three photograms in a diagonal formation on the gallery wall, wanting to suggest a dynamic spatial engagement.

42. passages

In March 2002 I mounted my exhibition with the title *White Shadows* at the University Fine Arts Gallery. The exhibition was tailored to the narrow long
format of the gallery. On the ten-metre-long right sidewall I pinned the suite of 11 vertical photograms. The equally long left sidewall held a horizontal line of text at eye level. The text consisted of a list of data from the island as well a personal reflection on the potency of ground. The text was made legible by the shadows of the words.

By the time I installed the photograms, I had become uncertain about whether I wanted to pursue the initial idea of a continuous wall of images. Accordingly I mounted the pieces with gaps of wall showing between them in three groupings. This format to me still suggested a continuous narrative, reminiscent of musical notation. I had continued with pure black and white images, disregarding earlier toning experiments. I considered this unaltered stark simplicity most powerful.

The title White Shadows addressed what was obvious, shadows of objects in white on black, traces of a past presence as absence, as holes burnt into the density (black) of matter. The grey shadows of the text however were produced from white lettering on transparent film, which, without light casting the shadow, would not have been visible against the white wall. My group critique session was held to coincide with the exhibition.

94 Text: where do the days and nights and moons and storms and lives and deaths and thoughts and needs and calls go they settle on the ground can you see and hear them sometimes a little – 148° East 42° 9700 hectares jurassic dolerite devonian granite permian rocks triassic sandstone .... Maria's Eylandt Ile Maria Maria Island Toarra Marra Monah
Before taking down the show I moved the images to slightly overlap with each other. This eliminated the white vertical gaps between them and produced a more coherent image field.

![Image 45. white shadows, installation view without gaps](image)

The digital experiments had resulted by September 2002 in a series of close to 100 detailed images of objects collected on Maria Island. At the time I was planning to print the images on tracing paper by laser printer. The visual fragility of the material, combined with the precise, frugal printing marks of the laser printer appealed to me and seemed to resonate with the photogram work. A trial set-up of test prints coincided with my annual review and I received valuable feedback from a number of people.

For my first theory seminar in 2001 I worked on an overview of what the written research might include. For my second seminar in 2002 I researched what I gradually identified as the most appropriate theoretical context for my project: a comparison between the impact of Cartesian perspectivalism on visual representation and a phenomenological approach to visual expression. The second seminar paper constituted a relevant beginning for the writing of my exegesis.
Evaluation

At the end of phase two I reflected on an accumulation of experimentation and test set-ups of work. However, I knew that I had not yet arrived at a blueprint for a resolution of my project. Extracting what I needed from comments and feedback by supervisors and colleagues and from my own reflection and analysis, I drew up a position plan to facilitate progression towards the next phase of the project.

I definitely wanted to achieve the combining of two bodies of work in my final submission. I envisaged two separate but communicating spaces. One would be dark, immersive, suggesting passage, movement, time, searching, getting lost, hinting at events beyond the borders of the photographic paper of the photograms. The other space would be light and contain a kind of personalised taxonomy of Maria Island, established over the duration of the project. I wanted to produce a large number of digital images of collected objects. These images would invite scrutiny and form a language different from that of the photograms. The light room would act in a complementary mode to the dark room of the photograms.

I had found the production of the suite of photograms for White Shadows at times stifling. The emphasis on imbuing the images with the sense of material trace and personal experience had shifted too much towards the designing of connecting images. The white wall spaces between the images were too stark. The photographic paper curled and the reflectivity of the blacks countered the possibility of immersion. There was still too much of the indexical present in
white shadows, which competed with the clearly indexical purpose of the
digital images. The photograms needed to move more towards
communicating pre-conceptual experiencing.

The test set-up of digital images proved to be very helpful although
disappointing at the time. The systematic grid structure I had used seemed
counterproductive to a desire to engage with individual images. The laser
printing on tracing paper looked too harsh. I would have to return to more
experiments with printing, with the scale of individual images as well their
grouping and arranging.

**Phase Three**

31 December 2002 near Edwina Point – The air bristles, switching between hot sun
and drizzle. It’s the last day of the year, threshold, celebration, anticipation. I am
walking where I have not been before. A young kangaroo moves into my field of vision,
some distance away. I see its profile, open mouth, and hear what has no semblance, an
ejected sound, a searching loud breath.

**Objectives**

The third and last phase of the project extended from October 2002 to
December 2003. I conducted 6 field trips to Maria Island during this period.

The objectives for this phase loomed large and demanding: I had to find a
format for the photogram work that would communicate my pre-conceptual
experiencing of Maria Island within an immersive gallery space. More
focussed exploration and rapid evaluation was needed. The digital image
work required clarification, in order to arrive at a complex and detail-rich
body of images that would fill the exhibition space with a sense of wondrous
obsessiveness, tactile evocation and delight in looking. The dark photogram
room and the light digital image room would have to read as different but
complementary visual language systems.

I wanted to re-visit the idea of including text as an additional component to
evoke non-visual sensory experiences in the land.

The exegesis had to be written and a theoretical seminar presentation in the
early part of the year would provide a useful deadline and feedback.

Work in progress would need to be trialed in a group critique session, limited
exhibition commitments and other tests where necessary and possible.
Explorations

I embarked on making new photograms. As usual, I needed to visualise the direction the new images would take. Doodling, sketching, planning, re-connecting to matter by handling some of my Maria Island remnants preceded the actual making of images.

I made more tests with different lights to determine how many exposures I could make on one image and achieve sufficiently distinct tones from each exposure. My aim was, with a number of successive exposures, adding or moving objects with each exposure, to arrive at a layering that would reflect the complexity of sensing and experiencing and also suggest movement in time. On an aesthetic level, I wanted to accomplish maximum tonal variation. I planned to create a long horizontal frieze, approximately 15 metres long and 1 metre wide, in 1.5 to 1.8 metre-long sections that could be individually mounted.

The continuity from section to section was an issue to consider, similar to when I produced the suite of photograms for *White Shadows*. I did not want to fall again into the trap of overemphasising the design element. The images needed to have energy and reflect experience. I thought that a small gap between the individual sections, similar to the gaps between film frames, could indicate each section as valid segment and as part of a sequence. I imagined an extended field of happening around my stretch of photographic paper while making each image. This proved to be a useful and enjoyable aid.

With the digital work I entered into another phase of testing as well. I adjusted the paper size of images to the size of the represented objects and experimented with different groupings of images. My taxonomy was not of a scientific nature, I did not intend to name each image as scientific evidence.
My ordering would be based on the experience of collecting and on aesthetic associations which, as artist, I was intuitively making at all times of the process. I wanted each image to reflect my spontaneous response at the time of finding the object. The full arrangement of images would, I hoped, be delicious as well as powerful and cause a lingering resonance.

I made more tests with printing, printing surfaces, potential display systems and lighting and found it difficult to decide on one option. Thinking of the submission as a whole, the relationship between the dark room of the photograms and the light room of the digital work determined my final choice. The mounting and hanging of each image on the wall had to be resolved. I progressed through a number of experiments in order to arrive at a satisfying solution.

I felt the need to make a plan for the eventual spatial arrangement of the large number of digital images in the gallery. The walls in my studio became my testing space for three consecutive set-ups to accommodate 140 images. I used a pack of mock-up prints and placed them in small groupings along the walls, according to aesthetic associations and my memories of collecting. The frieze that eventuated was reminiscent of sign language and musical notation. I documented each set-up and arrived at a total running wall space of approximately 30 metres.

My idea to create two distinct and corresponding spaces in the gallery prompted me to make a to scale maquette of the gallery space. This required the consideration of available moveable walls within the existing structure of the Plimsoll Gallery. I made several adjustments to my maquette, explored various spatial possibilities for the two bodies of images and the inclusion of a line of text.
Work on the exegesis progressed slowly. Researching the visual context of my project was inspiring and educational. However, I found the writing extremely arduous, being reminded that English was not my first language.

**Outcomes**

In mid December 2002 I made use of a large open studio space in the art school to test my new photogram work in connection with the digital work. I pinned stretches of photogram images at a low viewing level on the walls of a u-shaped area and set up a grouping of digital images nearby. The photograms had become more chaotic, matter pushing in and out from the borders of the photographic paper. Layers of stuff accumulated in patches and swirls. These images started to reflect the experiences of venturing into unknown territory, of dissipating into the jumble of nature. They spoke little of looking at individual objects but more of moving and getting ensnared. Scattered grass started to resemble gestural marks. The digital image samples, descriptive of their object source, were in definite contrast to this development in the photogram work.

Between February and May 2003 I contributed work to four group exhibitions. Of particular interest in regard to my PhD project was the opportunity to see two of my photogram images integrated into two larger exhibitions. One image was hung in an exhibition on still life at the Academy Gallery in Launceston. The other piece was shown in the exhibition *First Impressions*, contemporary Australian photograms at the Ian Potter Centre at Federation Square, Melbourne. Both images, I thought, occupied their place well within the particular curatorial context. I felt free to pursue less contained formats with the photograms. For the Hobart City Art prize I contributed a framed arrangement of 6 digital images and decided that I would not proceed with this mode of presentation.

In early July I installed a selection of 11 photograms at the arts@work office rooms in Hobart. These works had been made at various stages of the development of my project. I knew that they would not be part of my final PhD submission and appreciated the opportunity to expose them to an audience.
At my theory seminar in May I presented part of my visual context section. For the group critique in June I showed and explained my intended gallery set-up with the use of my maquette. I presented samples of what I considered to be final solutions for the photogram and digital images as well as a first version of my abstract.

Following the critique session I tested a denser grouping of the digital images on a wall in the gallery. To my surprise, this did not distract from the value of the individual images and lent the larger group a more vibrant quality.

By July I had made 14 new photogram images of between 1.5 and 1.8 meter length with the aim of having a selection of these, and other images still to be made, mounted on aluminium, leaning against the gallery wall. Six images were mounted successfully.
The digital work had arrived at a printing and mounting result with which I felt happy. The images were printed on heavy matt archival paper in duo or tritone, on an inkjet printer. I had started to mount them individually on archival board, backed with a smaller piece of foam core. This gave each print the appearance of floating on the wall.

I adjusted my maquette to accommodate the altered arrangement of the digital work. My exhibition plan now comprised a four-walled space with entrance opening and 18.7 meters running wall for the photogram frieze, and a U-shaped space with 13.5 metres internal running wall for the digital images. The passage space on either side of the digital room could hold a continuous line of text.

A discussion with my supervisor in August prompted me to re-think and newly organise my projected exhibition set-up in the maquette yet again. I followed the suggestion of making the two spaces less confined and leading the viewer through the dark immersive photograms before entering the light space containing the digital work. This prompted me to also re-consider my earlier test set-up with text made legible via the shadows it cast.

Evaluation

By August I felt confident with the visual work in regard to my projected submission date in December. The 6 mounted photograms had a presence they had not had as paper images. The even, flat surfaces of the pieces allowed unencumbered engagement with what the image represented and suggested. The blacks were smooth and inviting. The simple leaning of the pieces against the wall seemed convincing. There was enough continuity
between the photograms and I felt positive about the various expressive modes I had created in the individual images. I selected 4 more images from my store of photograms to be mounted for the final installation and started to plan for the remaining images to be made.

The final printing and mounting of the digital work was in progress. Both processes required patience and attention to detail.

The rationale behind the ordering of the digital images had been questioned during my group critique session. I had been dealing with this question and had reached the conclusion that my ordering relied on a number of considerations. Overall it reflected the subjective and intuitive manner of my collecting. Aesthetic associations between images played a part in their arrangement, as would have been the case when I assembled my finds at the end of a day or a field trip. The exhibition space would become the semantic field in which an endless game of ordering could take place on the basis of two rules – that all images were generated by objects found on Maria Island and that they were listed simply as a number of finds.

I decided to incorporate a sense of passage in the arrangement, from the foreshore, the edge of the island to the land and back to the foreshore. I would follow this general structure by ordering the images according to where I had found the objects.

In regard to the exegesis I had adjusted Part 1 and 2, endeavoured to re-write a better flowing and more cohesive 'Visual context' section and had reached an up-to-date stage with Part 4, 'The development of the project'. I handed a draft of the exegesis to my supervisor for comments in early August. From late August to late September I worked on corrections and wrote Part 5.

**Conclusion**

A key strategy of my project has been to utilise my specific experience of physically being on Maria Island. Accordingly field trips have been of major importance. All trips comprised the activities of walking, observing, touching, collecting and note-taking. The other significant locations for the project have been the studio and the darkroom. The activities in the studio and darkroom were centred on translating the experiences of the field trips into two-dimensional images and on finding an appropriately evocative way of arranging and presenting the images in a gallery space. In the course of the project's development the concepts of detail and fragment, of the awareness of time, of the trace and of the format of the frieze evolved into key methodologies. The research into the theoretical and visual context has been an integral component in the progression of my project.

I will summarise the role of the field trips and the studio as they applied to the project throughout its duration in the following paragraphs.
The field trips

To be physically present in the place, the land that generates my art-making, has been of key importance to this project. Without the field trips to Maria Island, no work would have been made. While the residency in 1999 initiated working on and about the island, the times spent on the island from the beginning of this project in 2000 to today have influenced me in a variety of ways. They have unfailingly renewed my enthusiasm for the project. Each trip has provided me with added layers of observation and understanding, a growing appreciation for the history and stories of the place and the actual materials for my image-making. And, I have been permeated by a deepening psychological connection to Maria Island.

Walking has been a key activity on the fieldtrips. 'I draw in the salt air and the warmth of sunlight on my face ... I feel the wealth to be had in life in an aimless walk like this, through woods or over a prairie or down a beach.' \(^5\) Although my walking has taken place on a different continent from where Barry Lopez wrote this line, I understand the sentiment he expressed.

My walks have taken me over substantial parts of the terrain of Maria Island. There are some areas that I have walked in and over many times and this re­visiting has provided me with a sense of continuity. In those areas I became most poignantly aware of the effects of seasonal changes and the behaviour patterns of plants and animals. I have found the rhythm of walking useful for clearing my mind, for making me aware of the present as well as the transitory nature of being. Walking has included observing, stopping, sitting, being still, dwelling.

Observing has encompassed sensing; looking, seeing, hearing, smelling and feeling. Sensing led to touching. 'Instead of the distance between subject and object congenial to sight, touch restores the proximity of self and other ... entails a more intimate relation to the world.' \(^6\) I have extended the intimacy restored by touch to the collecting of objects.

From every field trip I have returned with a little bag of objects – leaves, blades of grass, a feather, a shell, a few bones and notes. \(^7\) Note-taking has supported all the above activities. It has helped to provide the initial context for a collected object. It has nurtured better awareness during a field trip, has triggered memories later on and has provided me with the material for the text component of my work. My notes have assisted me in the process of translating experience into visual artwork.

\(^6\) Martin Jay, op. cit., p. 557.
\(^7\) Collecting is usually not allowed in National Parks, including Maria Island. I was given permission to collect remnants of flora and fauna, using general guidelines and my own sense of respect for the environment.
The studio and dark room

The translating and transpicturing of the experience of being in the land, on Maria Island, has taken place in the studio and in the dark room.

Past initial explorations with the photographic camera, objects from Maria Island, remnants of flora and fauna, became the material substances for my image-making. These remnants speak to me of their own history and the larger history of the land, its physical properties, its past and present inhabitants and its seasonal cycles. I have turned the remnants into ciphers for my language of interpretation.

Through my working processes on Maria Island, in the studio and through research into the theoretical and visual context of my project, I have gradually arrived at using the technique of the photogram and the digital scanner as exclusive tools for my image-making. Both processes rely on touch and exposure to light. The traces the objects leave on the surfaces of my image carriers attest to their reality, their presence as well as their absence. In turn, the images of traces and the text component I have constructed relate back to my walks and my experiencing of the island.

Throughout the development of the project questions about the materiality of the images and their objecthood have occurred. Equally, a range of potential spatial arrangements in a gallery situation have been considered and tested. At the core of the various experiments remained the intention to communicate my approach to engaging with the land and to evoke reflection.