

An insistent place of undercurrents and absences, of magnetism and invisible forces; a place of presence, of electricity and shattering conductivity; of water, of fire and of deep ground.

The first thing on arrival is the sinking downwards and the slowing down. And then the overwhelming scents, the body being made heavily porous whilst any humidity is ripped immediately from and out of the body through the pores.

exerting an incessant pull
driving need
of the body to meet the outside
and go deep inside
to survive?

I have to grin at the sight of the overview description of Triple Alice - I haven't looked at it now for more than a couple of years. And the statement was ambitious, wildly so. This last one, version 9.1, was written in October '00 just prior to the second lab. These descriptions started back in January '98, partly to clarify where I felt we were going and what we were trying to do and partly to address the funding bodies with a tight project description. Interestingly enough, the descriptions have grown and modulated to accommodate the changes that were happening, but have nevertheless remained surprisingly constant in their format and aim - 3 strands of discipline (body, visual arts and the word) investigating the place as instruments of reciprocity and coagency. And this all built out of my simply wanting to do a Body Weather workshop in the Centre which was followed by conversations with poet Martin Harrison who was interested in working simultaneous to the workshop with visual artist Kim Mahood, an artist from the Tanami far northwest of Alice. And this provided the template of 3 disciplines within a continuity of 3 years, embracing an inherent pointer to a decade of relationship. It was also only with the ongoing support of local artists, particularly Pam Lofts and Anne Mosey through the auspices of Watch This Space collaborative artists gallery that the project has come to fruition in a full sense.

And meantime, referring to the 9.1 description, what has actually happened so far? There have been three labs involving varying and vast numbers of people, generating a tremendous amount of work both on site and after each event. The fiendish suggestion of live interstate linkups with art venues in the major cities has not yet eventuated for technical, coordinative and financial reasons. And there is now an ongoing fold-over, an insistent massage that appears to point, sometimes overwhelmingly so, to continue this relationship to the Centre in whichever way it unfolds in the years to come. There are many who have said they feel themselves inhabited by the Centre now. The being 'out there' and the periods of digestion and work that go on between this are less easy to formalise and coordinate but clearly something is happening. The website has currently taken on the function of documentation whilst aspects of more live and interactive webwork reside with the individual artists websites. The idea of an ongoing Forum has in effect continued in various extremely diverse and loose forms whilst Gay McAuley's Place and Performance Seminars bring together many of the concerns touched upon in the labs.

What was and is it all? One could also cook it down to a diverse mob trying to get on together - after all, we have to live together, in varying ways, tempi and expectations - shaped to varying extents by the site and the place. Certainly the mixture of scientists with the artists created a strong buzz and it's clearly the interdisciplinarity that often pitched loads of excitement. But it's also the differences in understanding that can at times be the hardest to bridge, mainly as far as I can see because one can be just totally unaware of the value of something, sometimes very small - be it an object or a word or a method or a lifting eyebrow - which for another person has massive import. Interdisciplinary collaborations and finding ways and methods to meet fascinate me. It's the unnoticed that often blocks and creates difficulties. But it's the unnoticed that also raises questions. And we can be unendingly unaware it would seem. Lucidity and openness to find another doorway. Treading into an unknown path and an unknown territory flips an underbelly of fear and a void, the screaming wobble of vulnerability. The Bodyweather practice of slow movement, for example walking at 1mm per second, throws open a universe of scale on a deeply experiential level and channels attention to a vast world - in the space of one step. A step which meets in the outer realm beyond the skin constant shatterings of change alongside searing accounts of present and past, posing vast questions for a future.

It strikes me that an underlying question to and from all the labs is how we map value. Ian Maxwell mentioned a group of Pacific Islanders who navigate through the complex waters of their many islands via an intricate mesh of knots in a string netting. This enables them to map their area in a handful of fibre stored in the pocket. I have yet to find out more about these people and their method. But it seems to me they point to an extraordinary simplicity in the efficacy of

storing and accessing a massive knowledge. And given that knowledge of place is highly explicit, survival and celebration are relative and specific to it, even still now in a globalised context. Yet to some extent patterns correspond and underlying principles appear as parallels in disciplines, in peoples and in geographies - be they geological, emotional, academic or another category. Anchoring and an empathetic dialogue. Are there principles which reflect the mobility of knowledge of place and the reflective peaks of value as it meanders through generations, but also across continents? Knowledge, as value, has legs; it walks, swims and flies. And the body is the link in a continuity of endless ever evolving relationships and stewardship of knowledge and value relative to a common survival and celebration.

Dorothy Napangardi's participation in two labs alongside her aunties from Nyirripi introduced us to a massive feeling, an Aboriginal Australia that is seemingly untouchable on the coast. As the ladies wandered together up the hill, their arthritic drift was like beholding aeons of time slowly and painfully rolling on in particles. And they introduced us to their dreaming which is anchored in the country of Mina Mina, some days away from Nyirripi. They introduced us to their paintings, the paintings of country which map the significances and realities - as they also introduced us to 'singing country' and 'dancing country'. These may not be understood knowledges, alongside the codes which channel and restrict information to those who are authorised and invested in responsibility - but they are to be powerfully felt. Massive entities, deep swarms of comprehension.

Seeing Dorothy's aunties dance, I was reminded of an empty holster - they are taken over by the dance, by the form, by the timing, by the relationships engendered. As I understand it, the responsibility is to pass down the definitions and distinctions that are the crux of the relationship to country. The fundamental reason and rationale for the act here seems to revolve in the passing on of tradition to enable survival, both on a pragmatic level and on a deeply spiritual level. The singing kept popping up between things, emerging in a way that seemed to hold Mina Mina alive between us all, weaving a mesh of constant relation.

What is performance in this context? I'm immediately struck by the juxtaposition and layering of ritualised action and thinking meeting nebulous shifts. Formality folds over into a loose informality which responds immediately to the moment with a shrugging functionality of need - real, blatant and irreverent. Archaic space coexists with everyday time. The drift that is responsive. The unsharp line. A blurring and a jiggling between form and non-form. And then the question of the frame. Is it the frame that creates everything, the portal of perception?

With Skyhammer, a group performance made after Triple Alice 1, I found myself writing in the program notes that I was looking for the breath of the continent. And the Body Weather bodies, like hollow stems are one aspect of the winds and currents that we found and still find ourselves taken up by. The ruptures and the comparative rates of flow, multiple speeds and viscosities relative to the determining elements of water and fire. The breathing maintains its fundamental position in our map of questions which have manifested themselves in the winding of our paths.

We are now working on DIGITAL COUNTRY, as a fold-back into the experiences of the three different labs over the three years - and as a fold-over to perspectives engendered by the questions. It is projected as a 72-hour performance installation, an event which takes place in the riverbed at Alice Springs in September/October 2004. The invitation to audiences to 'inhabit' alongside the performers is pivotal to the nature of the experience. We have written:

An interdisciplinary team of artists inhabit a space to create a shifting performance environment. An information environment tracking a dictionary of atmospheres, tracing underground water courses and pursuing the pointers of genocide. A dynamic and responsive environment peopled by performers, audiences, visual artists, poets, sound artists, writers and theorists engaged in a series of actions and dialogues which uncover paradoxes and collisions between the globalised and local environment.

the particles, the dots, the atoms. a dance of the molecular
constant exchange between sensitivity and form
raw bones of necessity dictate a point of being wrought by an instinctive relation
hollow
at times tremulous
deep and wild coexistence
what are the models of our being?

Again it's the dots that swarm in multiple directions at varying speeds and in a moment of fluctuation form is perceptible. Multiple realities sift between each other, in momentary progressions. And it's in the Centre that 'meander' and 'drift' start to have a real meaning for me.