

## What is a Park?

A park is a gift to the people, a living environment that provides a place to play, relax and gather together socially. A park is a living environmental experience: David Seamon a social geographer suggests that there is three overarching themes that are important to peoples' well being: movement, rest and encounter. These seemingly everyday experiences are central to people's wellbeing regardless of their social standing. A park provides the necessary elements and facilitates homeness which then filters into the community illustrating the importance of the lived experience creating a sense of place.

The term **sense of place**<sup>1</sup> has been defined and used in different ways by different people. To some, it is a characteristic that some geographic places have and some do not, while to others it is a feeling or perception held by people (not by the place itself). It is often used in relation to those characteristics that make a place special or unique, as well as to those that foster a sense of authentic human attachment and belonging. As Heidegger suggests it is simply about being **IN** the openness of a place that thoughts originate from. This park embraces and facilitates the viewer experience by providing an experience that allows for individual thought and reading to occur, this simple human requirement allows the audience/individual to make up their own ways and variations on how they will interact with place.

Heidegger's work on '*Place and Experience*' emphasizes that thought is not an intuitive position but originates simply from being in the openness of place. Movement within a space is a basic human requirement, humans require a sense of place to understand themselves Merleau-Ponty suggests that movement is learned when the body has understood it, essentially what Ponty is suggesting is that humans do not learn effectively until the body has experienced, hence to understand fully we need to experience a place through movement, we need to participate. This park enhances the individual viewing and participative experience (present and past) and with this opportunity presented to the audience (the users of the park) the experience of place, park and people will be indivisible from the work. This will result in a truly lived social experience; keeping in mind that place is not secondary to space.

In summary a sense of place is a social phenomenon that exists independently of any one individual's perceptions or experiences, yet is dependent on human engagement for its existence.

---

<sup>1</sup> investigation of the way in which the concept of place relates to certain core philosophical issues such as the nature of ground, of the transcendental, and of concepts of unity, limit, and bound

## Methodology

To create the two Sculptures for this park “pines for you” and “wave away” I have considered the theories I have employed in the past and other works that have incorporated strategies that have pushed the boundaries of experiences. This current work stretches and teases out the possibilities of a contemporary engagement with place. Through utilising Heidegger's 'Sense of Place', Seamons' suggestion of movement, rest and encounters as primary human needs, and Ponty's phenomenology of perception focusing on “Body-subject”<sup>2</sup> and “Consciousness,<sup>3</sup>” I believe that these sculptures describe the intentional, but taken for granted intelligence of the body and how our movements through place can define who we are.

What I have been seeking to realize with my practice for the past 20 years is to incorporate ‘participation/interaction’ as a sculptural strategy; a method that directly engages people with my work. I have achieved this to date by encouraging audiences or visitors in the gallery/park and/or site to challenge their definition of the landscape.

Through the commissioning of the works for the Q150 Park at Kangaroo Point, I intend to take participants on a journey through a space that re-connects them to the land. This will be done by using a limited palette of colour, shape, size (scale) and through the site-specific selection of plantings. A symbolic reference to our cultural identity has been incorporated along with a contemporizing of old-fashioned ideas and the reasoning behind the planting of trees and plants. For example to plant a pine is to symbolize creativity, life, longevity and immortality. A new planting signifies a new beginning. This sculpture intends to re-establish displaced plants and with this you begin to create a place of significance.

Tim Morrell<sup>4</sup> suggests that my work achieves these goals in public places because it is a combination of the familiar and the incongruous that recurs in much of my work. It causes viewers to do a double take, and experience a changed perception of something they might otherwise have assumed was not worth a second look. As well as providing an element of humour, the playful surprise makes people look more closely at their surroundings, and by seeing their environment differently, they

---

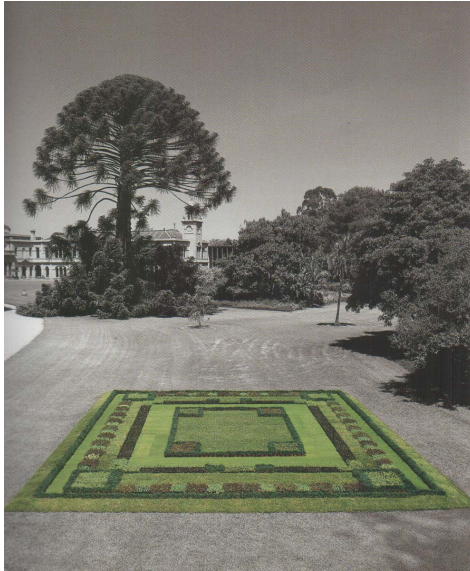
<sup>2</sup> is the term that Merleau-Ponty used in his Phenomenology of Perception to describe the intentional but taken-for-granted intelligence of the body.

<sup>3</sup> (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 138-39) “is being toward the thing through the intermediary of the body. A movement is learned when the body has understood it, that is, when it has incorporated it into its ‘world’, and to move one's body is to aim at things through touch.

<sup>4</sup> essay ‘Living Art’ from ‘Shaped by Behaviour’ monograph, 2007

also think about it differently. An example of this is expressed in Morrell's critique of RUG a site specific work made for the Helen Lempriere award in 2003,

*"The formal geometric design of Voevodin-Cash's carpet 'RUG' for example provides a subtle commentary on the way humans re-shape nature and by implication also alluded to the way European settlement has changed Australia".<sup>4</sup> ' RUG' image<sup>5</sup>*



The two proposed sculptures 'pines for you' and 'waving a way' are testaments to this ideal.

### **Sculpture one**

**"Afforest"** incorporates three Pine tree species : The Hoop, Wollemi and Kauri all indigenous to Australia.

Grandly sitting beside the park is St Mary's Church, hand hewn from the porphyry granite found on the site nestled in a garden surrounded by a number of mature trees including three Jacarandas and Pocianna's. From these trees a path carves its way southward softened by a ribbon of flowering purple Petrea and ending at a woven grouping of RED "Flame Trees"



<sup>5</sup> 'RUG' Helen Lempriere Sculpture Award 2003, plants, irrigation and soil

The sculpture "afforest" utilises Ponty's theories of perception and illustrates the importance of the bodily experience. Through this sculpture I will encourage participants to stroll along the pathways that lace around the site like large free flowing ribbons, in time the participant will find themselves at the entry of a large planting, a forest. On entering the participant will immediately discover two different pine species tightly planted along the eastern side of the park.<sup>6</sup> Hoop Pine will dominate until the ancient Wollemi Pine grows, and eventually replicates our land before white settlement, this simple yet symbolic act will then reconnect the place with its custodial owners and indigenous people. These large trees will create a triangular form or solid prism reaching heights the size of buildings at maturity (14-20m and even 20-40m). This area of 'pines for you' will be allowed to grow naturally as they would in our ancient forests of the past, with little to no intrusive gardening procedures except for general maintenance.

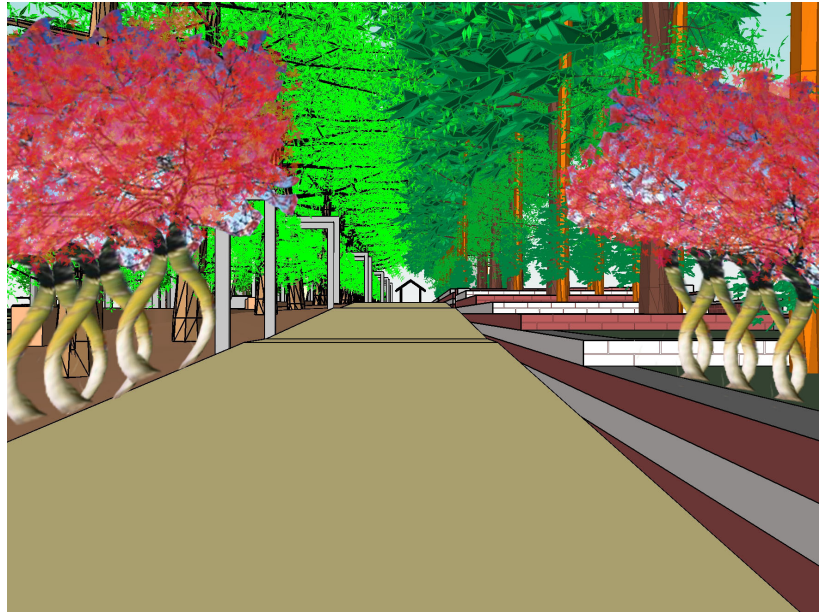
On the opposite side of the path a natural planting of an alternating rows of indigenous Kauri Pines will grow following the path from north to south. On the ground plain the trees will be cultivated to grow with a high clear trunk, opening up the space underneath to the activity that will occur within. This also allows for easy movement from the forest, to the open grass plane and a vista of the city skyline. This area of 'pines for you' will be tamed and manicured to give a contemporary formalist feel to the planting. A situation of nature/uncultivated verses man made/cultivated.

On the outside of the Kauri plantings the sculptural appearance of this planting is forming. A rugged green skyline will emerge mirroring the man-made geometric prisms, metaphorically reflecting the opposite side of the river, the city. A dialogue will be created, a discourse evoked, suggesting an unsung poetry with the city, encouraging the green majestic skyline to grow and become one to another and encourage interaction between city and nature.

As an entry focus a number of 'Flame Trees' or Brachichyton Acerfilious will be interwoven together forming an avenue of RED leading into 'Afforest'. In the past this trees bark was used by indigenous people to make fishing baskets and fishing lines, to weave it today into a basket weave is a reminder of the trees past use. Though this weaving also is reminiscent of white settlers gardening practices brought from their homeland of 'grafting' and 'pleaching'. A contemporary version of both traditions.

---

<sup>6</sup> This will help to combat noise from Main Road but more importantly to begin the replanting of the dry rainforest that was present and dominated this landscape prior to white settlement.



As mentioned next to this site is a meeting place, an existing church and three Jacaranda trees, the juxtapositioning of the historic church along with the ruggedness and authenticity of the plantings will be drawn together by a natural ribbon of purple hue. A visual connection with the church's purple flowering Jacaranda north, a formalised line of purple Petrea<sup>7</sup> grown over a covered pathway meanders whimsically along the western boundary of the Pines, southward.

As the pines grow and form a strong angular skyline, I have taken this shape and inverted it to create a triangular prism. Which becomes a trellis to grow the richly scented Chinese Jasmine at the entry and exiting nodes from the forest into the open spaces. The triangular prism trellis will act as formal markers of access providing the often forgotten olfactory interaction.

The triangular prism shapes found visually throughout the forest<sup>8</sup>, provide the inspiration to produce under the Kauri canopy a number of mirrored or highly polished triangular prisms to reflect the forest and the people within, ensuring that people will see themselves within the context of this landscape.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Petrea(a subtropical version of Wisteria, flowering 4 times a year

<sup>8</sup> over time the shade produced in the forest will not support growth due the lack of sunlight for the Jasmine covered triangular prisms

<sup>9</sup> This form of the triangular prism references (in a contemporary format) English gardens with their traditional topiary, paths and formalist patterning, so too does the covered walkway of growing Petrea.

Although the pines have a prominence over the site: shade has been provided by the inter-planting of Silver Ash,<sup>10</sup> as it provided further interactivity within the site. The Ash a smaller but still triangular tree (10m) will also be clear trunked leaving only the upper most canopy to create shade as it hugs the edge of the pine planting and flows along the purple Petrea covered path from the north to the south trickling westward beside the second sculpture 'The Green Room' forming its southern boundary. As we meander along, this ribbon it connects us to the second sculptural work within the landscape.



## Second Sculpture

### “The Green Room”

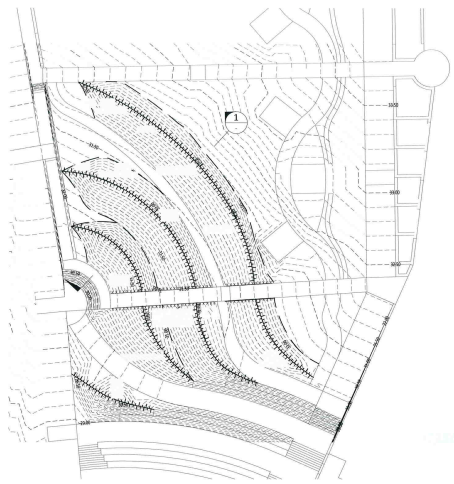
This work utilizes the natural contours to create a number of waves across the length and breath of the south western green areas flowing in to the constructed amphitheatre. ‘the green room’ is organically formed from the lands geomorphology.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> A dry rainforest tree, this like the pine are all cabinet trees and are a homage to our early settlers timber use and the Ash is named after Matthew Flinders whom discovered Moreton Bay.

<sup>11</sup> Geomorphology definition -Morphology: the appearance, shape, etc. of the landscape.  
Morphometry: the measurements, dimensions, and slope values of landforms.  
Morphogenesis: the origin of each landform.  
Morphochronology: the age of each landform.  
Morphodynamics: the land-forming processes presently active on the landscape or those that may become active in the future.





As it was in the past in the formation of this land these organic forms rise and fall from the earth as though they have been there forever. 'The Green Room' addresses the geologic phenomena of place, by conveying the complex and poetic ideal of a landscape or environment offering an immersive experience for visitor and audience by literally rolling in and out of the organic forms to seat, curl, stand, picnic and sleep within. "The Green Room" has a series of usages and places itself firmly in the arena of the importance of geography and the social as espoused by Seamon this work incorporates movement, provides rest, and encourages encounters.

This is a work inextricably linked to the landscape and its geomorphology, the lineal line of tuff as it traces the highest curves of this landform helps to emphasize this. Drawing it out of the landscape and literally, drawing these forms. The site is the catalyst as it provides the vista for a cinematic experience: city as the stage and the park as the theatre. Shade and weather protection will be provided by the ephemerality of a series of purpose made purple outdoor umbrellas that will emulate the purple hues of the Jacaranda and the flowering Petrea. Though the positioning of these is strategically placed within these forms, through people's use and engagement these will pop up at any given time and in any given season, like blooming flowers in a garden. From a city vantage point this will be an exciting spectacle to see<sup>12</sup>.

The functional adaptation of the umbrella for the provision of shade is not its only use. And not unlike Christo and Jeanne-Claude 'The Umbrellas' Project Japan – USA 1975-85 my intention is to use the umbrellas to reflect the land and its form and 'create an invitational inner space, as houses without walls, or temporary settlements and relate to the ephemeral

---

<sup>12</sup> It will be encouraged for the café to use the same umbrella on their outdoor eating areas.

character'<sup>13</sup> of the people and their engagement in place, a perfect demonstration to the phenomenology of place.

'Aforest and 'The Green Room' are testaments to this ideal of a Cartesian experience<sup>14</sup>.

## Conclusion

To be able to physically move through a place, to find attachment or at-homeness of place and environments is the way in which people make multifaceted attentive contact with their surroundings and in turn, their community. Therefore how people move, rest and encounter this park will be heightened through their human environmental experience; their participation. I regard this work as an experiential artwork, to be integrated into the life of the city, an on going experience that will act to bridge the gap between old and the new ensuring that the PRESENT is the strongest force this place has.

## References

'Avant Gardeners, 50 Visionaries of the Contemporary Landscape' Tim Richardson, forwarded by Martha Schwartz. Thames and Hudson, 2008.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude 'The Umbrellas' <http://www.christojeanneclaude.net/um.shtml>

'Conversations at the Castle, Changing Audiences and Contemporary Art' Edited by Mary Jane Jacob with Michael Brenson. The MIT Press. 1998.

Duncan, Steven M. (2008). *The Proof of the External World: Cartesian Theism and the Possibility of Knowledge*. Cambridge: James Clarke & Co.

'Green Belt, Modern Landscape Design' Page One 2006

Malpas, Jeff 2007. *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World*, MIT Press.

---

<sup>13</sup> At sunrise, on October 9th, 1991, Christo and Jeanne-Claude's 1,880 workers began to open the 3,100 umbrellas in Ibaraki and California, in the presence of the artists. This Japan-USA temporary work of art reflected the similarities and differences in the ways of life and the use of the land in two inland valleys, one 19 kilometers (12 miles) long in Japan, and the other 29 kilometers (18 miles) long in the USA.

<sup>14</sup> A 'Cartesian experience' is a mind and body understanding, the two working together not in isolation of one another. A form of dualism where the mind controls the body, but that the body can also influence the otherwise rational mind, such as when people act out of passion from French Philosopher René Descartes.



Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, 1962. *Phenomenology of Perception*, Colin Smith, trans. NY: Humanities Press [originally 1945].

'Living Systems, Innovative materials and technologies for landscape architecture' Liat Margolis and Alexander Robinson. Birkhauser. 2007

Relph, E. C. 1976. *Place and Placelessness*, Pion.

Seamon, David, 2000. A Way of Seeing People and Place: Phenomenology in Environment-Behavior Research. In S. Wapner, J. Demick, T. Yamamoto, and H Minami, eds., *Theoretical Perspectives in Environment-Behavior Research* (pp. 157-78). New York: Plenum.

Seamon, David, 2004. Grasping the Dynamism of Urban Place: Contributions from the Work of Christopher Alexander, Bill Hillier, and Daniel Kemmis. In Tom Mels, ed., *Reanimating Place* (pp. 123-45). Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate.

Seamon, David, 2007. Interconnections, Relationships, and Environmental Wholes: A Phenomenological Ecology of Natural and Built Worlds. In Daniel J. Martino, ed., *Renew the Face of the Earth: Phenomenology and Ecology*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, forthcoming.

Seamon, David & Buttimer, Anne, 1980. *The Human Experience of Space and Place*. London: Croom Helm.

Seamon, David & Mugerauer, Robert, eds., 1985. *Dwelling, Place and Environment: Towards a Phenomenology of Person and World*. New York: Columbia University Press.

'The Garden Book' Phaidon Press LTD, 2000

'The Interventionalists, Users' manual for the creative disruption of everyday life' MASS MoCA. 2005

'The Vanguard Landscapes and Gardens of Martha Schwartz' Edited by Tim Richardson. Thames and Hudson 2004.