

THE WILSONS RIVER: PERSONAL AND PUBLIC REFLECTIONS

INVESTIGATIONS OF 'PLACE' WITH VISUAL ARTS AND COMMUNITY ARTS OUTCOMES

Leonie Lane

Southern Cross University

Abstract:

Investigations of 'place' can be a focus for creative arts projects while applying rich content to teaching practice. My focus is a local river - the Wilsons – where I am currently involved in two very different projects. I also teach digital art and design in the School of Arts at Southern Cross University in Lismore. Lismore is situated on the banks of the Wilsons River in the subtropical Northern Rivers region of NSW. This beautiful and curious place, with its own particular history, culture and ecology, encourages numerous case studies of 'place' in many areas of cultural practice. My current arts practice is informed by a re-engagement with 'place', coupled with a fascination with water.

My MA project is a reinvention of a reflexive journey downstream along a section of the Wilsons River via a canoe. The capturing and recording process (observation, memory recall, ephemera collection and digital manipulation) describe and present a sense of belonging. This study starts near where I now live and ends where I once lived as a child. Involvement in a larger scale public art project based in Lismore – the Wilson River Experience Walk (WREW) – as designer and consultant, has deepened my focus on the river. It involves local history research, community liaison and the design of six different sites positioned along a five-kilometre walkway along the banks of the Wilsons River. Consultation has been with Lismore City Council, Widjabal (local indigenous) elders, an historic reference group and the Wilsons River Landcare Group. This close community involvement has been a mutually rich and challenging experience across all groups but particularly with the Widjabal people. The challenge of imaging Widjabal lore questioned preconceptions of image representation and a 'white fellas' design process. Both projects have developed through referencing contemporary art practice and new media. The WREW project prioritises community response and historic interpretation but takes many references and design strategies developed in my MA project. This, in turn, is given extra veracity to its narrative via a deepened knowledge of the regions people and landscape. Both projects recall previous valuable experiences as community artist and graphic designer working with a wide range of cultural groups and outcomes in Sydney, Melbourne and Wollongong.

The engagement with community, technology and various design strategies on both these projects provides a wealth of experience for my teaching practice. Not only does it build course content, enhance delivery but it also provides opportunities for students to participate in very real local projects about 'place'.

OVERVIEW

'Place' and 'reinventions of place' are recognised as contemporary developments in visual arts practice in the traditional genre of 'landscape' art-making. Ideas about the development of personal and cultural identity are tied into notions of 'place'. Simon Schama writes about personal and social histories as powerful signifiers of 'place' and social identity. (Schama 1995) Erica Carter encapsulates this notion. "Place is space to which meaning has been ascribed." (Carter 1993)

I am investigating a site that is common to both my childhood and my present: the Wilsons River - a major tributary in the Richmond River Catchment area on the Northern Rivers of NSW. This investigation is represented in two very different projects. One is a large-scale community art project while the other describes a more personal response to 'place'. The latter is also subject of my MA. Both investigations describe a place of familiarity and 'ordinariness' as discussed in *'Heritage Landscapes: Understanding Place and Communities'* (Cotter, Boyd and Gardiner 2001). Both projects acknowledge other 'belongings' and prior ownership. They employ a qualitative process where layers of acquired information are processed and reproduced via digital media.

Rivers are evocative places, powerful metaphors - a stage for action as well as reverie. They provide both a parallel to narrative flow and reveal a 'place' beyond civic control at the same time as a space that promotes settlement and social engagement. A river can evoke multi-layered investigations.

Our river systems, more than any other aspect of our landscape, display the interplay between people and the environment. Not only do they describe the state of health of our environment, they display the culture,

identity and histories of our communities. The river's identity is a composite of shifting environmental influences and cultural associations. As they carve their way through various terrains, they inscribe both subtle and sudden change to place at specific moments in time. Simultaneously, a river can convey a sense of timelessness. (Bachelard 1942)

Such investigations of 'place' can have many outcomes. They can be a focus for visual arts practice and community-based projects. Both provide rich content and real experience to teaching practice. A local focus can advantage teaching material where real, achievable outcomes can gain from direct input and feedback from community and contemporaries.

THE SITE

The Wilsons River is a major tributary of the Richmond River, which, along with the Tweed and the Clarence Rivers, irrigates, nourishes and occasionally floods the lush sub-tropical Northern Rivers region of NSW.

I grew up on the banks of the Wilsons River in a small village called Eltham. I left in 1973 and spent a couple of decades living in cities. I returned in 1993 to live on an ex dairy farm near Booyong, a few kilometres upstream from Eltham. This relocation and re-engagement informs my recent art practice.

The Northern Rivers of NSW is an unusual and beautiful place where idealism rubs up against traditional attitudes in curious ways. It contains the site of the original Big Scrub, a large tract of sub-topical rainforest situated within the caldera of the volcano whose core is now the iconic Wollumbin or Mt Warning. It is the traditional home of the Widjabal people of the Bundjalung nation whose language Wiyabal is recorded and still spoken in some parts today. As with other indigenous cultures, language keeps ancient cultures alive and acts as the repository for history and knowledge. (Van Tingellton 2005)

1973 - the year of my HSC – saw significant changes. A rural recession meant the end of dairy farming as the major local industry and the power-base of the conservative Country Party. 1973 also saw the Nimbin-based Aquarius Festival signal a huge shift in the regions demographic makeup. It was the heady days of the early Whitlam era and nationally, social change was not just a possibility.

Like so many other white Australians, my upbringing taught me little about Aboriginal culture. Stumbling over stone axes in corn paddocks aroused a curiosity that received few answers outside the display cases at the local Historical Society. It wasn't until I was at art school (1975 -1977 PIT, Melbourne), when issues of belonging and identity were raised and explored, that I really started to appreciate the importance of knowing about indigenous culture. In a theory class, with the ever-inspiring Ann Stephan, our complex and shared histories were discussed. We were to use a holiday period to return 'home' and find out about local Aboriginal people. In a long and distracted way, I feel like I am still doing that project.

The Wilsons River – the site of my research - flows through Lismore not far from the main campus of Southern Cross University where I now teach. This beautiful and curious part of Australia, with its own particular history, culture and ecology, encourages numerous case studies of 'place' in many areas of cultural practice. Research of this nature is encouraged through Southern Cross University Graduate Research College via the Sustainable Narrative, Sound and Vision DOARS title.

MY (PRE)OCCUPATIONS

I teach the Digital Art and Design units in the School of Arts at Southern Cross University. My students are a combination of local, regional, city-born and international people of various ages. Discussions of our different experiences of 'place', is manifest in project work within our course material. Regional engagement is encouraged in many course related projects. Two examples are the Café and Culture Trail postcards - a project initiated by both Southern Cross University Regional Gateway and Lismore City Council and also 'place' - a 1st year Design reinvention and installation project.

My research area involves an active engagement with this landscape looking at notions of identity and belonging. My MA project is a reinvention of a reflexive journey downstream along a section of the Wilsons River via a canoe. This study starts near where I now live and ends where I spent my childhood. This is also prompted by a fascination with water.

This personal research project sits alongside and informs a local council and university driven public art project in Lismore called the Wilson River Experience Walk (WREW). Here both white and indigenous histories are retold at six different Story Sites along the section of the Wilson River that flows through Lismore.

A physical re-engagement with the area meant retracing old paths and discovering new ones. Conversations with elderly relatives and new friends, walking and paddling through the landscape, finding more stone axes while crawling through thick scrub, collecting discarded porcelain along creek beds and watching the waters surface, being amazed at formations of colour, light and movement, I found myself more and more focussing on the river. This area is prone to the extremes of flood and drought, like so much of Australia. It is hard to ignore the presence and need for water. The river is a persistent feature of our experience and an essential funnel of memory.

My studio practice is a blend of graphic design, digital imaging and community arts. Theoretical, creative and technological information gained in these areas inform my current art-making as well as teaching practice in the design and digital arenas. I enjoy the way digital technology has dissolved a traditional delineation between graphic design and visual arts practice. By its very nature and the interface with industry, broader outcomes become possible.

MY BACKGROUND

The two projects mentioned above, are informed by local knowledge and recall my previous experiences as a community artist and graphic designer working with a wide range of cultural groups and outcomes in Sydney, Melbourne and Wollongong.

Graphic design experience gained in Sydney at the Antart studio, enjoyed a client base of film and radio producers, theatre companies and government departments. We revelled in typographic, photographic and photomontage fun with our client-based projects and made artist books for our group exhibitions. Ideas were stimulated by and coincided with a return to teaching and an engagement with contemporary design theory. I taught Graphic Design at both University of Western Sydney (Nepean) in the Department of Design Studies and also at the Tin Sheds at Sydney University.

Prior to Antart, I worked with Redback Graphix (1984 – 1990). Originally based in Wollongong, Redback designed and screen-printed posters and produced publications for a local and national audience. This client base included many aboriginal community media groups, trade union organisations, filmmakers and theatre groups.

At Redback, collaboration with indigenous groups was carried out in various ways. Generally speaking a designer/client relationship informed the work through various communities or government agencies. Ideas were discussed and filtered by the time a brief was taken to the initial design stage. The Beat the Grog campaign was a successful example of this. This public awareness campaign was initiated through the Department of Health, it used references to early colonial non-verbal pictograms to describe the impact of alcohol on indigenous communities. It proved extremely popular across various remote communities where English was not the first language and where original language was spoken but not always written.

We also worked directly with communities. In 1987, I visited the Pitjantjatjara Lands of Central Australia to research and produce nutrition posters for the Nganampa Health Council. Liaison was with the community women, nurses, school and the Health Council. The work described the nutritional needs of the children of the remote communities who survive on both traditional and store supplied food. Its message 'Eat Good Food' was in both Pitjantjatjara and English. It worked in tandem with a series of Redback posters dealing with other health issues such as AIDS awareness, alcoholism and petrol sniffing.

In the early 1980s I screen-printed posters at the Tin Sheds for various groups and needs as a part of Lucifol Poster Collective. In the 1970s and 1980s screen-printing posters was a strong interest influenced by Earthworks Poster Collective (Tin Sheds - early 1970s). These posters were produced to promote an alternative lifestyles and to protest social injustices. It was an idealistic, energetic and extraordinary place.

In Australia, at that time, tertiary institutions fostered places like the Tin Sheds, which in a very rudimentary way acted as alternative media centres. The traditional view of the artist, the preciousness of the product,

distribution and audience reception were all challenged. Galleries were not necessarily the destination for all artworks. Prints, in this case, posters were multiples and conveyed information delivered at street level. Screen-printing, with its immediacy, bright colours was at that stage a very exciting, versatile and attractive low technology medium.

My current art practice contrasts with and references some of these experiences. It displays a hybridisation of the personal and the political via new technologies and a rare perspective on this 'place'.

MY MASTERS PROJECT

My MA project investigates a small section of the Wilsons River via a canoe. This project employs an adult perspective through the lens of experience gained elsewhere, to describe a site from my childhood. The capturing and recording process (observation, memory recall, ephemera collection and digital manipulation) gathers impressions and narratives. This experience is documented obsessively and will be reinvented in an installation of works, supporting my MA document. This mapping and reinvention of the journey represents a personal investigation. Simultaneously it is one of interpretation and an expression of place, culture and history. The reverie describes notions of belonging within this particular landscape.

The site of this investigation is a thirteen-kilometre stretch of river. It begins near where I now live – Booyong - at the rapids (an old ford from early settlement days) below a frighteningly dilapidated wooden road bridge on the edge of a nature reserve (a remnant of the Big Scrub). It meanders through expired dairy farming pastures, past small gully entrances, recently cultivated eucalypt forest plantations, sporadic herds of grazing beef cattle and a disused railway line. It is lined with native and introduced vegetation (in and out of the water) and all manner of visiting and resident fauna. Denuded earth banks interrupt fledgling rainforest regrowth and persistent camphor laurels. The colours are rich and intense – red, green and blue – like the additive colour mode, which drives most digital imagery. The thirteen kilometres ends where I spent my childhood and adolescence – Eltham. At Eltham the river features two bridges. The sadly now disused rusted railway bridge crosses the river next to a brand new concrete road bridge – an installation in itself describing the changing nature of transport and communities. Sifting through these images of human habitation recalls a narrative of 'place'. Through this, the site is elaborately mapped and recorded.

Mapping is a cultural mechanism describing habitation and ourselves via marks and symbols. This personal sense of being a part of a place and the place being a part of ones self, recognises indigenous culture and references colonialism. In this instance, the creek is the same space in which the Widjabal clan of the Bundjalung people used to hunt, fish and travel. In this area initial white contact with an unexplored land mass was made via the river systems. The river as such is a carrier of displaced knowledge and values as well as a site of nurturing and communication.

My research methodology for this project is qualitative employing observation, experimentation, documentation and image creation.

Physical engagement with the site via a canoe begins with the sheer joy of being on water and enjoying its reflective, transparent, mobile and nurturing qualities. This viewpoint allows a multifaceted contemplation. Languid repetitive paddling with occasional drifting can be mesmeric. To be on the river is to be suspended literally and metaphorically skimming the surface above a moving current. This investigation has largely been a solo experience but sometimes it has involved a fellow paddler. Both experiences have had rewarding outcomes – monologues can produce detail that a dialogue prevents and vice versa.

The canoe trip is documented by recording sound and image on digital video and still digital cameras. The creeks were, and in some places still are, used as garbage dumps. Ephemera are collected from the river bottom and banks. This collection is recorded on my visual 'map'. This is a twofold collection of data and rubbish removal from the site.

Images are downloaded, scanned and processed. The tapes are annotated and saved as word maps for future manipulation.

In the project's early stages, folded images and paper forms were used. The metaphorical and physical use of the fold in this text offers an array of random and fixed connections. Origami also recalls childhood memory and whimsey, time spent in Japan and paper engineering associated with graphic design –

different stages of my life. The recurring metaphor of the 'fold' becomes evident within the presence of themes, rhythms and activities prevalent in this work – the leaving and returning, the folding and un-folding – the repetitive action of the canoe's paddles and the lapping of the water at the canoe's side.

Gilles Deleuze encapsulates 'the fold' as that, which *"affects all materials that it thus becomes expressive matter, with different scales, speeds, and different vectors (mountains and waters, papers, fabrics, living tissues, the brain) but especially because it determines and materializes Form."* (Deleuze 1993) Folding has expressive capabilities describing a physicality and more complex aspects of landscape and culture. Folded forms as well as layered and folded imagery, sounds and movement, investigate and encapsulate memory, observation and landscape.

The (un)fold reveals the process while referencing terrain, memory, mapping or an examined landscape.

Folding and packaging is a part of my upbringing and my practice. My grandfather and my father ran general stores where packaging unfolding/folding, wrapping and presentation of bulk commodities into saleable quantities was a daily activity. My mother worked and made clothes in a corner of the shop, creating patterns and clothes from images in magazines for family and neighbours. Another grandfather had an endless supply of Tally-Ho cigarette papers tucked neatly into a Log Cabin tin box with a supply of impeccably made rollies for the day's work on the farm. My grandmother created Palm Sunday crosses out of all manner of material from the garden.

The metaphor of the canoe is a powerful one. It is a vehicle of communication between the colonial and landscape interfaces and narratives. Its curvilinear path traces those connections. Paul Carter in 'About Canoes', from his book 'The Lie of the Land' describes 'curvilinear' and anti-Cartesian strategies as a possible way to understand the nature of our place in time, history and landscape. (Carter 1996).

Carter describes a need to disengage with grid-like structure and linear narratives, to physically engage with the irregularities of our terrain and let that information guide our retelling of place. He ventures into the watery world of seventeenth century Venetian painters, like Giorgione, whose concavity of picture-space was informed by the emotional, textural and cultural effects of water at the time. These influences include the external effects of trade, commerce, sea exploration and imperialism.

Numerous artists involved in land or environmental art have been sources of inspiration. In terms of wishing the 'primacy of physical experience' to be at this project's core, I have taken a cue from Hamish Fulton's 'Walking Journeys'. (Tufnell and Wilson 2002)

Bea Maddock's work *'TERRA SPIRITUS ... with a darker shade of pale'* (1993–98 40m, 51 sheet panoramic drawing) uses an extended panorama travelling throughout the entire exhibition space. It is an ochre-coloured coastal profile of the entire outward edge of her native island Tasmania which acknowledges pre-settler presence. Large rows of aboriginal place names float like smoke from the islands interior to greet the European fleets. (Thomas 2002)

John Wolseley's delicate, obsessive land representations observe all manner of experience on location. His work is ecological, concerned with systems, relationships and change from minute insect and plant life to the largest geological processes of continental drift that relate Australian nature to Indonesia, South America and Antarctica. The 1995 installation of drawings, photographs and plant specimens is extravagantly titled *'The great tectonic arc: concerning the moving apart of Gondwana and the present position of Australia and Patagonia and how the great tree families Araucaria and Nothofagus evolved and were named and celebrated followed by their radical depletion.'* (Thomas 2002)

My MA project – still untitled – an installation of digital prints, projection and found objects, is due for completion at the end of this year. It is to be installed in the large boat like rooms of an old school site (recently reappointed as a village common or community space) in Clunes near where I live.

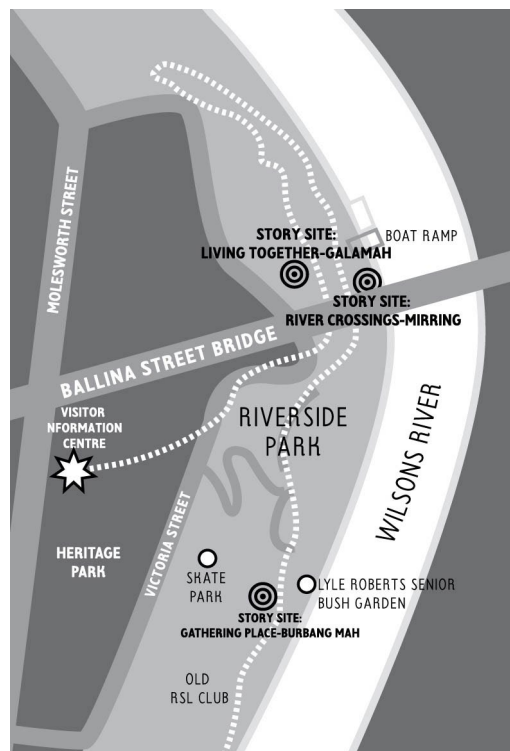




WILSON RIVER EXPERIENCE WALK (WREW)

'Who is telling whose story? This is the question which must be asked of most colonial and noncolonial representation.' (Langton, 1996)

This Wilson River Experience Walk project is the other investigation of the Wilsons River as a spatial location where settlement has occurred. It acknowledges the various histories and occupations along the river that flows through a diverse community.



The WREW project is an ongoing large-scale public art project based in Lismore where I am engaged as designer and consultant. It involves local history research, community liaison and the design of six different sites positioned along a five-kilometre walkway along the banks of the Wilsons River. With funding from the Heritage Incentives Program and the Department of Transport and Regional Services, production of the first stage began in November/ December 2004. Southern Cross University Office of Regional Engagement was commissioned by Lismore City Council to deliver the first site, 'Gathering Place – Burbang Mah' and its completed panels. I worked closely with writer/historian, Jo Kijas to produce the text, visual content and overall design of the site. We have followed each other's process – words needing images, imagery suggesting more words...

Consultation has been with Lismore City Council, Widjabal elders, an historic reference group (based at the Richmond River Historical Society) and the Wilsons River Landcare Group. Even though from the outset there were differences in priorities between these reference groups, there was a basic accord that the overall idea was to produce a visually stunning, multi-layered representation of Lismore's social history inclusive of the many perspectives of such a diverse place.

Valuable experience has been gained through listening and negotiating with the interest groups, who came to the table with their own needs, baggage and, in some cases, grudges. Trust in some cases was hard earned through much listening, patience and persistence. Despite all, strong relationships with community members have developed over the past nine months, ensuring a positive momentum for future work.

The experience gained has been a mutually rich and challenging experience across all of these groups but no more so than with the Widjabal people. The process involved and the outcome has given me an extremely rewarding yet demanding, artistic experience. For me, the challenge of imaging Widjabal lore has caused me to question my own preconceptions of image representation and a 'white fellas' design process. My role as designer became one of translator when engaging with these themes. (Langton, 1996)

Looking back at the experience of screen-printing posters demanding Land Rights, working at Redback Graphix on aboriginal nutrition posters or other community based work, they seem in hindsight, remote, easy and arms-length outcomes. The WREW collaboration required an extra commitment to process as well as issues of identity and notions of belonging – that of the Widjabal people as well as that of my own.

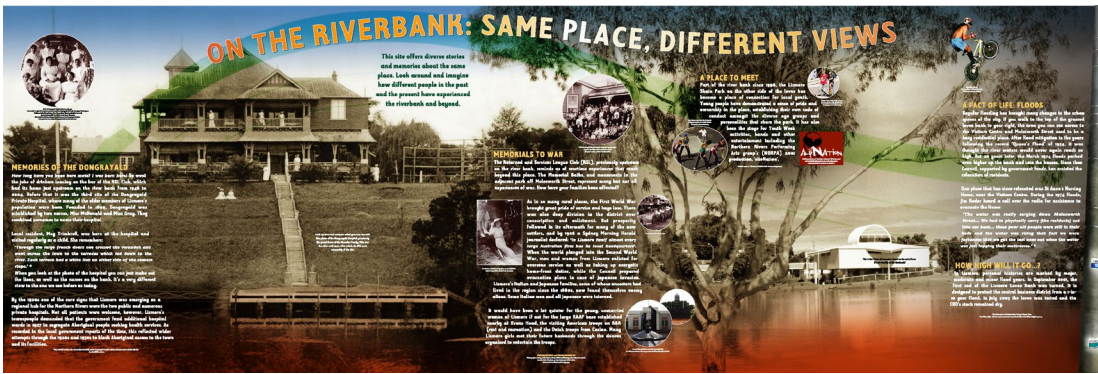
The initial visual concept for the first site, 'Gathering Place – Burbang Mah', tried to encapsulate the broad aims of the project. Jo and I worked on five panels covering a broad social history of Lismore, while Roy Gordon Jr (Widjabal historian and linguist), Sheldon Harrington (Widjabal artist) and I worked in collaboration on the 'Gudjam Na - Bush Food' panel. Roy was to work with concepts and the words while Sheldon drew the featured animals. This panel was about the Widjabal use of bush food and its relationship to the river via cautionary tales and seasonal connections. The river is very important to the Widjabal people (Gordon 2005). Traditionally, the information presented was learned through daily living and family connections, from generation to generation. It was Roy's priority that Widjabal understanding, history and knowledge were communicated clearly to the general public and more particularly to the local indigenous youth.

With this in mind, I embarked on a draft design for all the panels for the first site. I waited for the text that the images would follow, while Roy struggled to find an appropriate means to convey indigenous ideas to an audience lacking any Widjabal cultural understanding. To Roy and the elders, Widjabal 'literature' is oral and includes stories, art, music, song, dance and the landscape. Describing this tradition on a static panel was going to be difficult. The use of early white contact photos carried the weight of indigenous stereotype while white interpretations of language area maps described static boundaries that didn't necessarily equate with how Widjabal people saw their boundaries. It became apparent that the photomontage strategy employed in the design of the other panels was not appropriate to the Widjabal panel. Maintaining a stylistic theme however was essential to the project as whole to impress the inclusive theme.

Roy mapped his ideas as systematic diagrams of seasonal flow and climactic change and its relation to the river and its animals. Appropriate totemic plants and animals were selected and drawn by Sheldon. I reworked these in Illustrator very conscious of how different they were from any indigenous drawing I had seen in other parts of Australia. Roy and I discussed issues of spatial representation and how a Widjabal narrative could look. Paramount to the success of this story telling was in the use of language and drawing styles. It was imperative to describe their world as it was and as it is. Many drafts were created with much consultation, questioning and reworking... During this whole process I was amazed at how much I had learnt and embarrassed at how little I had known about Bundjalung culture let alone Widjabal culture having grown up in this area.

A final design was realised with great relief and delight. We all express pride in having the opportunity to have shared cultures and certainly have learnt a lot about how to approach some of the issues described for the future sites.

All six panels - each measuring 3.6 metres by 1.2 metres are now complete and installed at the Gathering Place in Riverside Park. The sheer magnitude of the task has been far greater than anyone had first anticipated and has turned into a labour of love for many. Jo Kijas and I have long ago stopped counting the hours of research, community consultation, writing and merging images.



The story concepts and text for the remaining five sites have been written. In all the sites, there is a constant reminder that we are always making history, highlighting the importance of listening, recording and collecting stories and visual information.

MUTUAL OUTCOMES

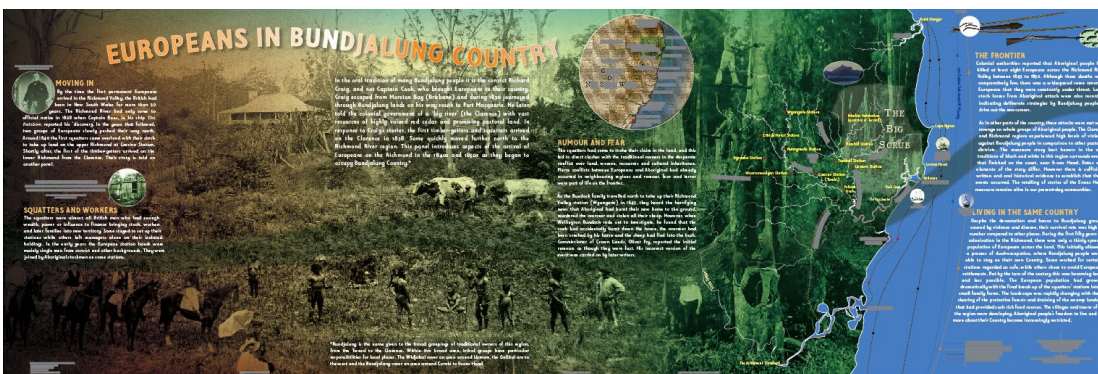
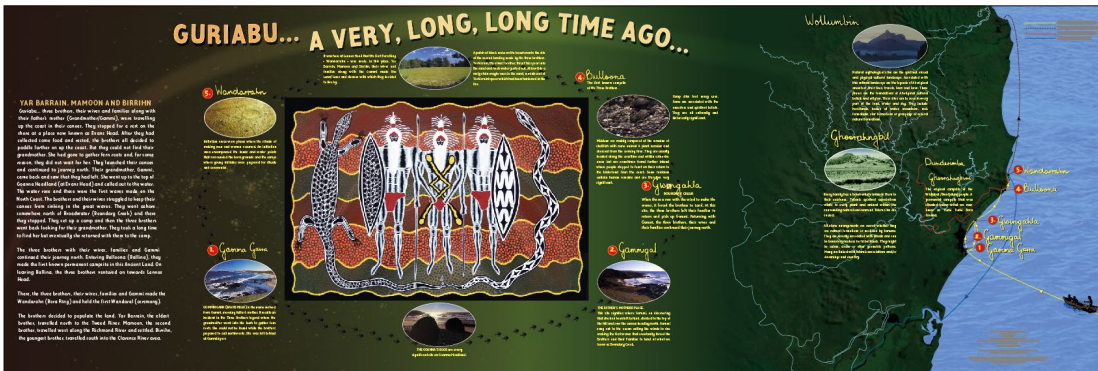
The two projects described work in tandem, providing rich textual information for each other. Both have developed through referencing the region and contemporary art practice and new media. The WREW project prioritises community response and historic interpretation but takes many references and design strategies developed in my MA project. This, in turn, is given extra veracity to its narrative via knowledge of the regions people and landscape.

The engagement with community, technology and various design strategies on both these projects provides a wealth of experience for my teaching practice. Not only does it build course content, enhance delivery but it also, with community trust in place, provides opportunities for students to participate in very real local projects about 'place'.

POSTSCRIPT

I wrote this paper in 2005 for the ACUADS Conference. In 2007 we completed 2 of the other story sites.

'Living Together – GALAMAH'



LISMORE STATION

THE WILSONS OF LISMORE STATION

The Wilsons were the first to settle in the area. They arrived in 1841 and built a station on the banks of the river. The station was named after the family name. The Wilsons were a prominent family in the area and their station was one of the largest and most successful.

WHO NAMED LISMORE?

The name Lismore was given to the station by the Wilsons. It was named after the town of Lismore in Scotland. The Wilsons were proud of their Scottish heritage and wanted to name their station after a town in their homeland.

NEIGHBOURS

The Wilsons were not alone in the area. They had many neighbours, both on the river and inland. Some of these neighbours were other prominent families, while others were smaller settlers. The Wilsons maintained good relations with their neighbours and their station was a central part of the community.

LAND TO THE SCOTCHMAN ON LISMORE

The Wilsons were known for their generosity. They gave land to the Scottish community in the area. This land was used for various purposes, including agriculture and housing. The Wilsons' generosity helped to establish a strong Scottish presence in the area.

WOMEN AND CHILDREN ON THE RICHMOND

WOMEN AND CHILDREN ON THE RICHMOND

Women and children played a vital role in the settlement of the Richmond area. They were responsible for many of the tasks that were necessary for the survival of the settlement. Women were often in charge of the household and the children were responsible for many of the daily tasks.

ARRIVALS IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY

Arriving in a foreign country was a challenging experience for women and children. They had to leave their homes and families behind and start a new life in a new country. The journey was often long and difficult, and the conditions were often harsh.

CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES

Children's experiences in the Richmond area were often difficult. They had to learn to survive in a new environment and often faced many challenges. However, many children also found a sense of community and belonging in the Richmond area.

AN ETHNIC MIX FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

AN ETHNIC MIX FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

The settlement of the Richmond area was a mix of people from different ethnic backgrounds. This mix of people helped to create a unique and diverse community. The people from different ethnic backgrounds brought with them different skills and experiences, which helped to build the settlement.

NEW ITALY

The Italian community in the Richmond area was one of the largest and most successful. The Italians brought with them many skills and experiences, which helped to build the settlement. The Italian community was known for its hard work and its ability to adapt to a new environment.

EARLY EUROPEAN DIVERSE ETHNICITIES

The early European community in the Richmond area was diverse. It included people from many different ethnic backgrounds, including the British, the Irish, and the Chinese. This diversity helped to create a unique and vibrant community.

DOWNSTREAM: TIMBER, VILLAGES AND THE RIVER

THE ARRIVAL OF THE LADAR-GESTIERS

The Ladar-gestiers were a group of people who arrived in the Richmond area. They were known for their skills in timber and their ability to adapt to a new environment. The Ladar-gestiers played a vital role in the settlement of the Richmond area.

CABBAGE TREE ISLAND

Cabbage Tree Island was a small island in the Richmond area. It was known for its cabbage trees and its unique landscape. The island was a popular destination for people who wanted to enjoy the natural beauty of the Richmond area.

RIVER PORTS

The river ports in the Richmond area were important for the settlement. They provided a means of transport for people and goods. The river ports were also a source of income for the people who lived in the Richmond area.

'River Crossings - MIRRING'

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Leonie Lane is a graphic designer/visual artist who teaches the Digital Art and Design units in the Visual Arts Program at Southern Cross University. Her research interests and current art practice deals with notions of 'place', personal narrative and social identity via digital imaging and installation. These themes are evident in her MA research project, '(un)folding landscape and identity' as well as the large community art project, 'Wilson's River Experience Walk' in Lismore. Her work references her upbringing in this area seen through experience and technologies gained elsewhere. In Sydney, she was an active partner in Redback Graphix and worked as a freelance designer and with the Antart studio, Sydney. Commissions have ranged from public awareness campaigns (Literacy, Amnesty International, Aboriginal Health, Occupational Health and Safety) to music, film and theatre promotions.

Leonie Lane

114 Stewarts Road
Clunes NSW 2480

www.booyongdesign.com
booyongd@bigpond.net.au
0423733569 / 02 6629 1327