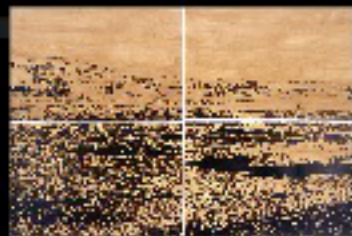


PARCHED



Meg Buchanan *Elemental 1*, 2003,
H 122 cm X W 194 cm, lino cut on
earth-pigmented paper (four panels)

Many artists working in Australia today are concerned with charting representations of individual imaginative responses to place. Through the visual depiction of place artists situate themselves in that place and each representation impels and informs that positioning. Multiple images resulting from the imaginative and actual revisiting of places do not (and are not meant to) perfectly construct a landscape but rather are agents for the slow revelation of truth, for making sense of both the individual's and the broader community's involvement with and understanding of the land and their relationship to it. These may not necessarily be consoling visions but they are living human responses to the imaginative apprehension of our country and means by which we might better comprehend our interaction between what we confront and what we as individuals, bring to that confrontation. The strikingly individual and highly seductive works of Meg Buchanan and Wendy Teakel exemplify the preceding in ways which speak of the ongoing power of the land to engage the creative imagination.



Meg Buchanan *Hill End 18*, 2006,
H 38 cm X W 56 cm, pastel and earth
pigment on paper

The earliest work by Meg Buchanan in the current exhibition, *Elemental 1* (2003) depicts a landscape exemplary of the central west of New South Wales. It is a landscape alluded to, not a landscape described. By this I mean that while each of the elements present is a part of a landscape from the region cited, their totality is not a specific place. Rather it is an imaginative recreation of place based on real experience of a number of places.

Formally *Elemental 1* is marked by the powerful efficacy of the use of stark and spare contrasts and a minimal palette. Compositionally the work is divided into two horizontal panels. The top encompasses a swathe of sky whose unlettered edges suggest the seemingly infinite space of the Australian landscape. The lateral dispersion of brush-like gestures (clouds) also intimate that the viewer, like the artist, is a traveller in this space and moves through it, becoming a participant in a spatial and cultural narrative.



Meg Buchanan *Hill End 11*, 2006,
H 38 cm X W 56 cm, pastel and earth
pigment on paper

The lower section of the top panel is populated with a series of gently curving hills (the highest being at the left-hand edge of the paper) which diminishes as we proceed across the print until we reach the flat, featureless plains at the "eastern" limits of the work. This depiction is reminiscent of the topographical sketches of the 19th-C explorer in which the outlines of the chief geographic features of a particular area

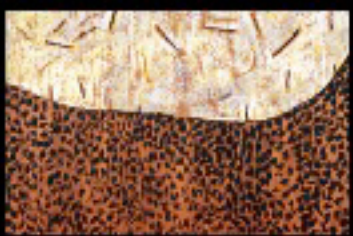


Meg Buchanan *Hill End 14*, 2006,
H 38 cm X W 56 cm, pastel and earth
pigment on paper

are clearly visible whilst the details are left to later description. Here, the vegetation on the hills is produced with minimal almost schematic marks that indicate presence but not substance.

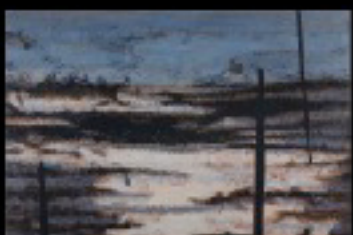
The bottom half of *Elemental 1* is dense and visually rich and provides a marvellous visual ploy to the openness of the top. Simple contrasts underlie the complexity of the networks of marks that run across and through the picture plane in a compelling interplay of space, mark and form that symbolises the complexities of the relationship between the natural world and the environmental and cultural values of its human users.

In 2006 Buchanan was awarded a residency at Hill End, near Bathurst. This gave her the opportunity to work for a concentrated period in a different (but related) environment to her own (outside Canberra). Hill End and its environs were integral to the mid-19thC discovery of gold in Australia. The area is full of ruins and remains of man's activity which are not only reminders of those days but have become palimpsests on the landscape, like handprints in prehistoric caves. They are however, not only on the landscape, but also of it. They are living archaeology, providing for the artist an ongoing nexus between land-landscape-object-man-nature.



Meg Buchanan *Turndale 6*, 2006,
H 38 cm X W 56 cm, pastel and earth
pigment on paper

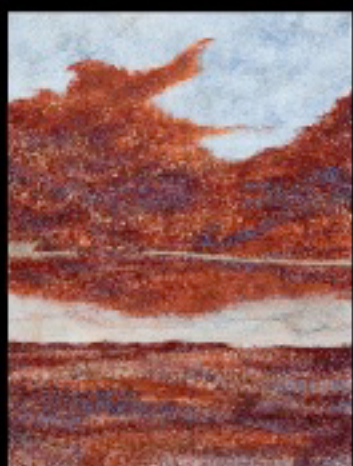
In the *Hill End* (2006) series Buchanan elects for a limited palette in which to present the landscape. The latter is presented almost as abstract patterns, but patterns which clearly refer to the landscape in the disposition of the horizontals and verticals which constitute them. Buchanan's experience of the land is real and her choice of the corrugated iron fragment as a central motif allows her to combine abstraction and realism in striking visual compositions.



Meg Buchanan *Hargraves 1*, 2007,
H 152 cm X W 213 cm, synthetic
polymer on canvas

The deteriorated and scarred surfaces of the iron become the landscape in both a metaphorical and a real sense. The jagged edges, patches of rust, etcetera, are the traces of memories of the land, of place. One's reading of the landscape is contingent on one's own experience, but by making the (detailed) part stand for the whole, the artist allows for a range of simultaneously valid interpretations to come into play.

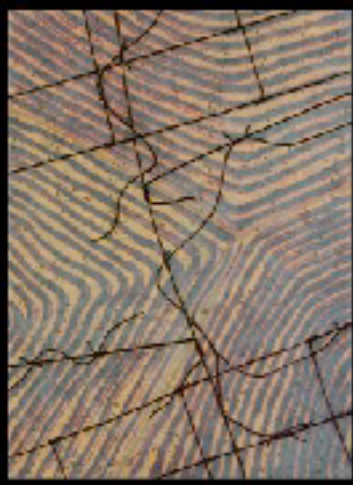
Buchanan's Hill End experience was an important one for her and the



Meg Buchanan *Dust Storm*, 2007,
H 122 cm X W 92 cm, synthetic
polymer on canvas

later work in this exhibition attests to this. *Hargraves 1* (2007) is an extraordinary and powerful image. The landscape is desolate and empty, a landscape destroyed. Spare formal means (essentially three horizontal planes intersected with stark black verticals) belie the conceptual richness of the work in which the cyclical and transformative possibilities of nature are alluded to. The signature corrugated iron becomes the land as (ab)used by man. The deep space beyond the horizon holds optimistic promise of the change that is inevitable in all landscape.

Dust Storm (2007) is a striking work. Buchanan beautifully captures the enveloping redness of the dust storms that leave clear reminders of the presence of nature in all of man's activities. The surface (as in much of the artist's work) is visually active, and the contrasts between the textured areas of red and blue and the quietly insistent presence of white, are pointed and direct metaphors of man in nature. The tension between the ambiguities of abstraction and realism is carefully delineated. The continued use of the corrugated iron motif as both being itself and as standing for something else is expertly and subtly done.

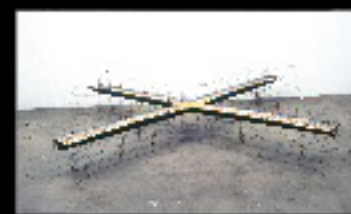


Wendy Teakel *Paddock, Waiting for Rain*,
2006, H 120 cm X W 88 cm, synthetic
polymer paint and pointerwork on plywood

Landscape has provided Meg Buchanan with a rich vein for conceptual and aesthetic exploration. Landscape is also the starting-point for the art of Wendy Teakel.

Teakel spent her formative years living in farming country near Wagga Wagga. The impact of this on her art practice is not just significant, it is integral, and something that has been manifest, incipiently or expressed, in all her art. Allied to this is the notion of the journey. For Teakel the journey is about self and self-discovery. It has emerged in her work, particularly from the mid-1990s, as the journey through the land/landscape as a means of concurrently determining and expressing self, but self as a part of a natural continuum, self as reflective of nature and man's impact on the natural world and vice versa. Her journey has been concerned with placing the individual in the world.

Hence, her moves between painting and sculpture. These are purposeful exercises to maintain an active intellectual, conceptual and aesthetic dialogue with two- and three-dimensional space. Each of



Wendy Teakel *Cross Trough*, 2004
H 72 cm X W 400 cm X W 400 cm,
galvanised iron, wire, oats and salt

these informs the other and in the comprehending of the relationships within, between and outside the two, the expressive articulation of space can be used as a means to give form to each individual's sense of place. The explorations which Teakel undertakes have resulted in a highly individual and vehemently personal pictorial vocabulary and alphabet of forms which are not only dynamic but which allow for variation and shading allusive of the permanent variabilities of nature.



Wendy Teakel *Wind II*, 2005,
H 130 cm X W 180 cm X D 30 cm,
wire, synthetic polymer paint, earth and
grasses (wall mounted)

Cross Trough (2004) exemplifies the above. Made of galvanised iron, wire, oats and salt, each material redolent of the textures of rural life, the work is at once monumental and intimate. The cruciform trough is both container and contained. It holds nutrients (oats, salt), yet is itself "fenced in" by the wire tree guards, fragile but still a barrier. The salt is spread over the oats in a neat configuration reminiscent of a primitive script, an esoteric language of an undisclosed ritual. Whilst each element would be familiar to those living and working on the land, it is the unique combination that imbues it with distinction and mystery.

Wind II (2005) is a clever and seductive piece. Through the use of wire and grasses, Teakel evokes the simultaneous complexity and simplicity of a rural environment. In a starkly contrasted union of opposites the fragility and strength of nature are lyrically combined. The folds and twists of the wire are marked foils to the wispy grace of the grasses, yet in combination the evocation of the moods of nature is beautifully expressed.



Wendy Teakel *Weed Trough*, 2005,
H 159 cm X W 25 cm X D 240 cm
grasses, galvanised and rusted metal
(wall mounted)

Weed Trough (2005) is a further instance of the artist's exploiting the expressive power of simple contrasts. A narrow, rectangular trough filled with grasses is suspended from the wall by a chain. This ostensibly straightforward combination is not only visually effective, it is simultaneously suggestive of permanence and impermanence, kinesis and stasis, fragility and strength. Its pushing into the viewers' space is intrusive yet almost querulous, and forces viewers to come to terms with the coalescence of the natural and the cultural as configured by the artist. Ironically, for the most part this confrontation will take place in the highly rarefied cultural construct of an art gallery. Through the simplest of means Teakel achieves compelling aesthetic and conceptual eloquence.

Much of the artist's sculptural work embraces the concept of spaces