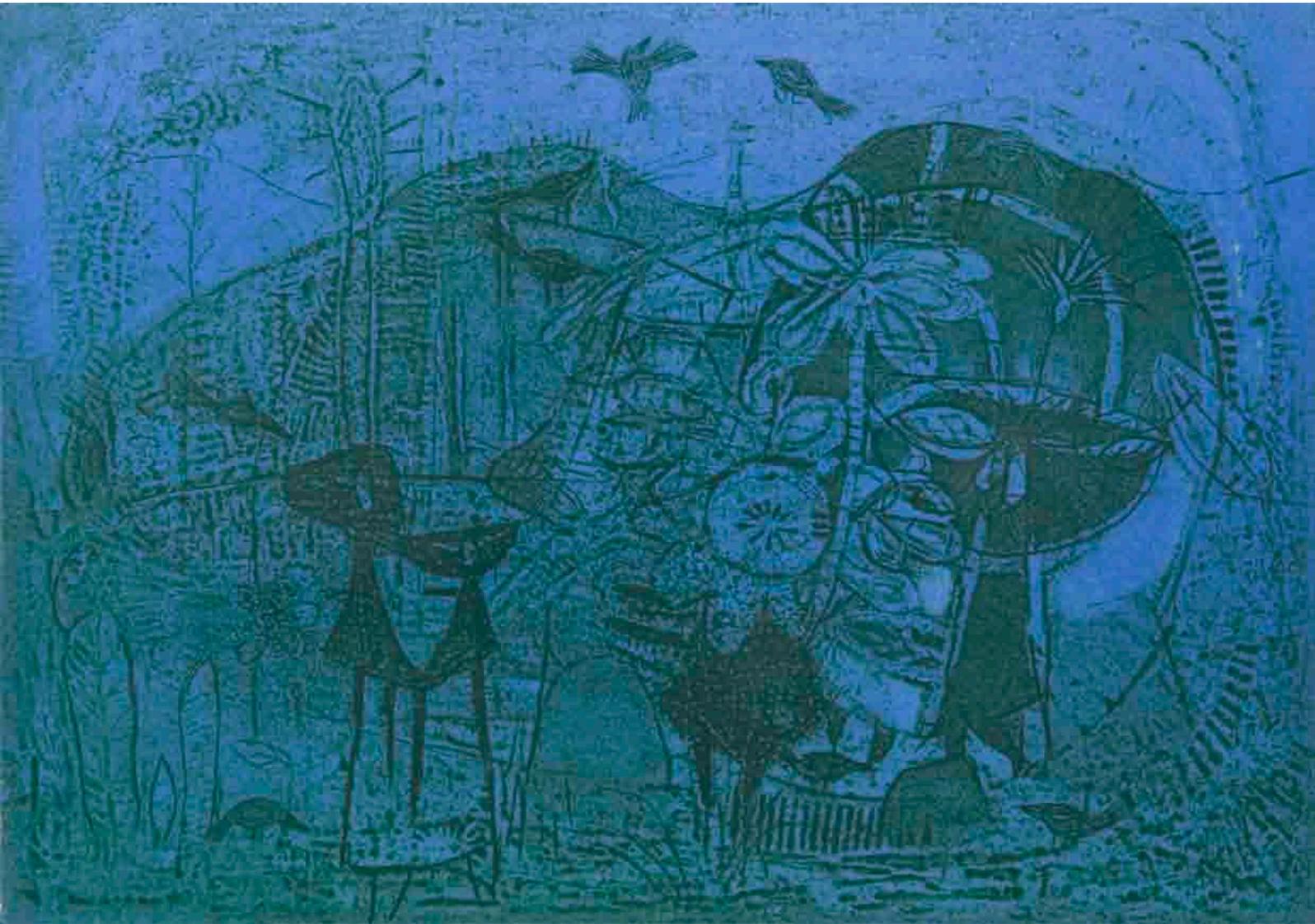


Clifton Pugh

PRINTMAKER



Education Pack

La Trobe University Art Museum
www.latrobe.edu.au/artmuseum

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This Education Pack has been designed around the Victorian Essential Learning Standards with a cross-curricula focus. The works and themes from the exhibition Clifton Pugh: Printmaker (Technique, Mythological Subject Matter, Australian Flora and Fauna and Conservation, From Bush to Desert: Australian Landscape and People, Prints and Illustrated Books) will be explored in the pack.

The pack is suitable for primary and secondary school students from years Prep to year 10. The pack may be used during a visit to the exhibition or as resource material to follow.

Front Cover

Clifton Pugh Australia 1924 - 1990

Children's Garden 1970

mixed etching techniques

colour A/P - 24.5 x 34.0 cm

The Dunmoochin Foundation Art Collection

held at La Trobe University



INTRODUCTION

Clifton Pugh (1924 - 1990) is best known as a painter of portraits, nudes and landscapes, with a particular passion for Australia and its wildlife. However, Pugh was also a prolific printmaker (etchings, lithographs and monotypes). Many of the themes of his print works mirrored those of his paintings, but the process allowed him to consider and introduce different concepts into the same subject.

Clifton Pugh: Printmaker is the first major retrospective of Pugh's prints to be held by a public institution. The exhibition explores some of his most significant themes including: Leda and the Swan (and his Australianised version - Leda and the Emu); interpretations of the Australian landscape; native flora and fauna; and environment and conservationist concerns.

La Trobe University is custodian of the Dunmoochin Foundation Art Collection, comprising Clifton Pugh's personal collection of artworks (both his own and those by other artists). The University holds over 100 prints by Pugh, providing a unique opportunity to present a major survey exhibition of his print works.

BIOGRAPHY

1924

Born 17th December, in Richmond, Victoria

1942

Enlisted in the Australian Imperial Forces becoming a draughtsman for the Infantry Intelligence

1947-49

Attended the National Gallery of Victoria Art School under the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Training Scheme

1951

Purchased bush near Cottles Bridge, about 50kms outside of Melbourne, which he named 'Dunmoochin'. Here he was greatly inspired by the natural environment. As more land was acquired, other artists joined him there

1953

Formed the Dunmoochin Artists Society

1957

First solo show at the Victorian Artists Society Gallery, where he displayed both landscape and portraiture. The show was well received by critics.

1965

Won the Archibald Prize for a portrait of R.A.G Henderson

1971

Awarded his second Archibald Prize for a portrait of Sir John McEwan

1972

Won the Archibald Prize with a portrait of Gough Whitlam

1989

Established the Dunmoochin Foundation to preserve the bushland and enable other artists to use the studios in future

1990

Named the Australian War Memorial's official artist at the 75th Anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli

1990

Died in October

GLOSSARY

Archetype

a term used in psychology to describe a primordial mental image inherited by all

Collaboration

to work in partnership with another

Composition

the plan and arrangement of the elements in a work

Conservation

preservation, especially of the natural environment

Etching

process of using strong acid to bite an image into a metal plate to create an image in the metal which is then reproduced

Genus

grouping of animals or plants into groups with common characteristics

Heidelberg School

an Australian art movement dating from the late 19th century that takes its name from the Heidelberg area in Melbourne where many of the artists painted

Lithography

a printing process in which the image to be printed is drawn on a 'stone' with a greasy pencil or crayon

Monoprinting

a process in which an image is painted on a surface, for example glass, a sheet of paper is lain over the image and pressure applied. As a result the image is transferred to the paper.

Romanticism

a European movement that originated in the latter half of the 18th century characterised by particular interests in nature, emotion, the value of individual expression and the belief in the importance of spiritual aspects of the environment

Screenprinting

a printmaking technique that records an image using a stencil or blocked out areas on a piece of material such as silk. The screen is placed on the surface receiving the image, with ink then pushed with a squeegee across the surface of the screen. Ink transfers to the receiving surface through the sections of screen not blocked out or covered with stencils.

Tableaux

the presentation of objects and/or persons arranged to represent a scene

SELECTED REFERENCES & RESOURCES

Allen, Traudi *Clifton Pugh, Patterns of a Lifetime: A biography* Nelson, Adelaide, 1981

Gore, Al *An Inconvenient Truth* Rodale, Pennsylvania, 2006

www.aninconvenienttruth.com.au

Macainsh, Noel *Clifton Pugh* Georgian House, Melbourne 1962

O'Brien, Alana *Clifton Pugh Printmaker*, exhibition catalogue, La Trobe University Art Museum, Victoria 2007

Department of Sustainability and Environment's Forest Service: www.dse.vic.gov.au
Information and education materials on the distribution, ecology, use and management of forests in Victoria.

The Dunmoochin Foundation: www.dunmoochin.org

In 1989 Pugh established the Dunmoochin Foundation. Located in 200 acres of bushland the Foundation provides access to Pugh's large personal art collection, residential and studio facilities to artists, environmentalists and scholars.

The Wilderness Society: www.wilderness.org.au

The Wilderness Society is a community-based environmental advocacy organisation, which in 1983 commissioned Clifton Pugh to produce a series of etchings of the Tasmanian rainforest. Proceeds raised from the sale of these works were used to continue the public awareness of the plight of Australia's wilderness by the society.

Book Club

Blashki, Pam *A Kingdom Lost: A Story of the Devastation of our Wilderness*
William Heinemann, Melbourne, 1989

Blashki, Pam *The Legend: Leda and the Emu* Bay Street Publishing, Melbourne 1987

Lunn, Helen *Digger's Mate* Aird Books, Flemington, Victoria, 1991

Pugh, Judith *Wombalong* Methuen, North Ryde, New South Wales 1985

Smith, Ivan *The Death of a Wombat* Sun Books, Melbourne 1972

TECHNIQUE

Etching is another part of my working process. An etching needs a far greater discipline than a drawing or painting, so by working on an etching another concept can be brought into a theme.

Etchings are much slower to produce and sometimes as many as three or four plates are used, so therefore there is a waiting time for the acid to bite the plate. Then a waiting time to proof, then perhaps changes, then proof again. This can happen several times, so an etching with perhaps only on plate can take all day.

Much more thought goes into the image. I have quite often translated the new image from an etching into a painting which I produce more freely and emotionally.

Clifton Pugh, *The Legend: Leda and the Emu*, Bay Street Publishing, Melbourne, c. 1988

About the theme

Clifton Pugh used a broad variety of printing methods during his career including: monoprinting, etching, lithography, and screen printing. His first experience in printing was with the method considered the most painterly, monoprinting, (*Spider and Beetle*, (1959)). In 1970 Pugh studied in Paris at the printing studio Atelier 17 run by the renowned Stanley Hayter (1901-1988). There Pugh began to learn Hayter's technique of simultaneous colour printing. Different coloured inks were applied to a plate to be printed during a single run through the press; the inks remained separate due to their varying viscosities. Pugh's vibrant abstract *Hayter's Atelier, Paris* reveals his use of this technique. Hayter promoted the development of images and ideas on the plate, transforming it through various states; a practice which is apparent in Pugh's print works of the early 1970s.

Soon after returning to Australia from Paris Pugh set up a printing press at Dunmoochin. John Olsen and Frank Hodgkinson joined him there and in a spirit of collaboration reminiscent of Hayter's Atelier 17, produced prints in the style of the Atelier 17. Pugh's initial burst of enthusiasm for etching seems to fade within a couple of years. There was a period between about 1972 and 1980 when no new plates appear to have been made, although he did reprint some of the plates he had already etched.

Pugh produced his first lithograph, *Flight of Birds*, in 1978 as part of the Bodford Terrace portfolio, (he and six other artists produced original lithographs to raise funds for the restoration of Bodford Terrace). Though he expressed enthusiasm for the medium, he did not revisit it until the middle of 1988.

In about 1980 a critical change in Pugh's etching practice occurred. David Rankin of Port Jackson Press introduced him to the artist and master printer Max Miller. Miller became the primary edition producer for Pugh's etchings for the next decade. Stylistically Pugh's etchings become simpler, more direct and less crowded. This is probably in part a result of Pugh no longer developing a single plate over a long series of immersion in acid. Miller provided the technical knowledge and innovation that allowed Pugh to achieve desired effects that he might not have been able to do alone.

A further technique that Pugh experimented with in the 1980s was that of soft ground etching. He would press various objects, both organic – for example leaves or feathers – and inorganic – for example cloth – into the soft ground coating on the plate. *Two Owls*, 1986 – where leaves and small Australian wild flowers on stems create the background – shows evidence of this technique.

Key words

etching

Paris

acid

flight

rainforest

abstract

lithography

multiple

screen

Europa

mono

Creating and Making

Monoprint Project



Clifton Pugh Australia 1924 - 1990
Christ at the Whipping Post c.1965
monoprint · 32.0 x 25.0 cm
Courtesy of Shane Pugh

You Will Need:

Watermixable Oil Colours
Oil Mediums
Flat Paint Brush
Clear Film
Oil & Acrylic Sketch Paper
Hard Black Roller

What You Do:

1. Find an image of Australian flora or fauna. Photocopy your selected image and place it underneath an A3 sheet of clear film
2. Paint onto the clear film with the watermixable oil paints by following the outline of the image underneath. Experiment with different effects by mixing in a little water or adding the oil mediums
3. Take your sheet of sketch paper and place it over the painted image on the clear film. Use the hard roller to apply pressure evenly over the image
4. Lift the paper carefully to reveal the duplicated image. You can now make multiple images or add to your work using pastels or other media

Colour Lithography as seen in Pugh's 1978 work *Flight of Birds* gained huge popularity in France during the 1890s. Look here at the work of Toulouse-Lautrec. David Hockney is another artist who used this technique. Describe the common features of each artists work and interpret the content.

Frottage Exercise

The word frottage comes from the French word, Frotter which translates 'to rub.'

Surrealist artist Max Ernst developed this technique by taking a pencil and paper and rubbing it over a textured surface. Ernst was inspired by a wooden floor which was marked heavily after years of scrubbing.

Collect some leaves, this could be from your back yard, outside the gallery or discovered on the way to school. Look for interesting texture and pattern. Using crayons place the leaves vein side up and your paper on top. Selecting different colours make a rubbing of the different varieties of leaves you have collected.

How are found objects from nature used by other artists such as Andy Goldsworthy?

Exploring and Responding

Art Trail

There are a number of works within the exhibition where the artist has included found elements from nature. His 1986 work *Two Owls* is one, can you see how thin branches and leaves make up the background? In another he uses feathers to represent wings... can you find this work and the example of another where the artist incorporates found elements?

Answer: *Icarus and Sturt Rose in the Bungle Bungles, Donkey Orchids, Leda and the Emu* [also known as Young Leda I and Young Leda II, diptych], *Leda and the Swan* (1982), *Metamorphosis – The Beginning, Leda and the Emu* (1987).



Clifton Pugh Australia 1924 - 1990
Two Owls 1986
 colour etching A/P · 39.5 x 62.0 cm
 Master Printer: Max Miller
 The Dunmoochin Foundation Art Collection
 held at La Trobe University

MYTHOLOGICAL SUBJECT MATTER

Leda and the Swan

A sudden blow: the great wings beating still
Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed
By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,
He holds her helpless breast upon his breast.

How can those terrified vague fingers push
The feathered glory from her loosening thighs?
And how can body, laid in that white rush,
But feel the strange heart beating where it lies?

A shudder in the loins engenders there
The broken wall, the burning roof and tower
And Agamemnon dead.

Being so caught up,

So mastered by the brute blood of the air
Did she put on his knowledge with his power
Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?

William Butler Yeats (1865 – 1939)

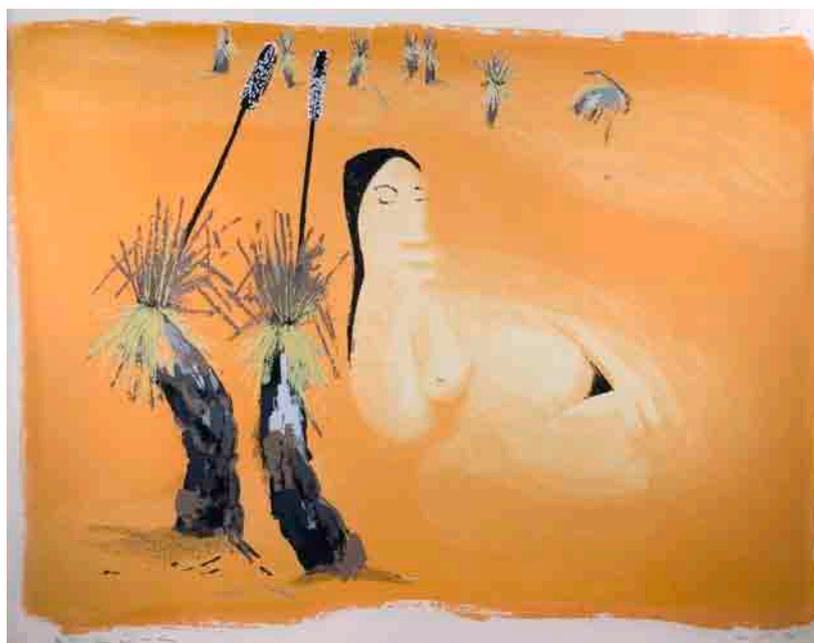


Clifton Pugh Australia 1924 - 1990
Leda and the Swan II 1989
colour etching 42.0 x 32.0 cm
Master Printer: Max Miller
The Dunmoochin Foundation Art Collection
held at La Trobe University
Plate held at Dunmoochin:
Cancelled: Kangaloon

Leda and the Emu...

These etchings form part of that series, in which Clif makes a gentle satirical comment on the sexual behaviour of the Australian male; he sees a parallel between this and the proud yet awkward movements and naivety of our national bird.

New Releases, June 1980, Port Jackson Press



Clifton Pugh Australia 1924 - 1990
Leda and the Emu 1980
screenprint A/P ed. VIII/VIII
60.5 x 80.0 cm (irreg.)
The Dunmoochin Foundation Art Collection
held at La Trobe University

About the theme

The first mythological theme that Pugh explored in his print work at Stanley Hayter's Atelier 17 was Europa and the Bull, for which he made two distinct versions. Soon after he began exploring the theme of *Leda and the Swan* in etchings. Both were subjects that Pugh had already explored in paintings, *Europa and the Bull* (1959) and *Leda and the Swan* (1964). However, Hayter was also interested in mythology which may have provided a further stimulus to explore these themes.

Like Hayter, and other artists drawn to the Atelier 17, Pugh was not so much interested in recreating the myths visually for their own sake, but rather to use them as allusions to other truths; things connected to primal urges and prohibitions. Pugh was particularly drawn to the Greek myth of Leda and the Swan in which Zeus transforms himself into a Swan to seduce Leda. The relationship between the two seems to transform through the various prints of the myth that Pugh produced. In *Leda and the Swan*, 1970, the Swan sits perched above Leda, dominating her disjointed form. In *Leda and the Swan*, 1971, Leda appears on the same plane as the Swan, which rears up before her. Leda embraces her legs tightly to her chest and she glances fearfully at the Swan over her knees. In 1989 though, we find the lovers entwined in a mutual embrace, as they dance together in a lagoon, surrounded by a softly shimmering light.

At the end of 1970s Pugh Australianized the myth so that Zeus transformed into an Emu rather than a Swan. Familiar with the Australian Emu, a number of which lived with Pugh at Dunmoochin, he felt that the gauche Australian male resembled this awkward creature. At first the Emu is too focused on himself to notice Leda and then he is confounded by her interest and makes her wait before finally approaching her. Leda waits for the Emu to make his move in numerous Australian environments, the bush, the desert, a dam in the moonlight. At times, such as when she reclines in the deserts, she seems to merge with the landscape itself.

The Australian landscape was instrumental in suggesting another Greek myth to Pugh. One imagines that it was the intensity of the Australian sun and the rocky landscape that suggested to Pugh that the Bungle Bungles might have been the backdrop to Icarus' attempt to fly to the sun. Pugh first produced *Icarus and Sturt Rose in the Bungle Bungles* in 1986, but the idea must have remained imprinted in his mind. When he again decided to produce another Bungle Bungles etching in 1989 he again connects the scene with Icarus. He was not content with this new attempt though, and in the resulting etching *Waterhole in the Bungle Bungles* the area where Icarus flew has been turned into a large green waterhole.

Keywords

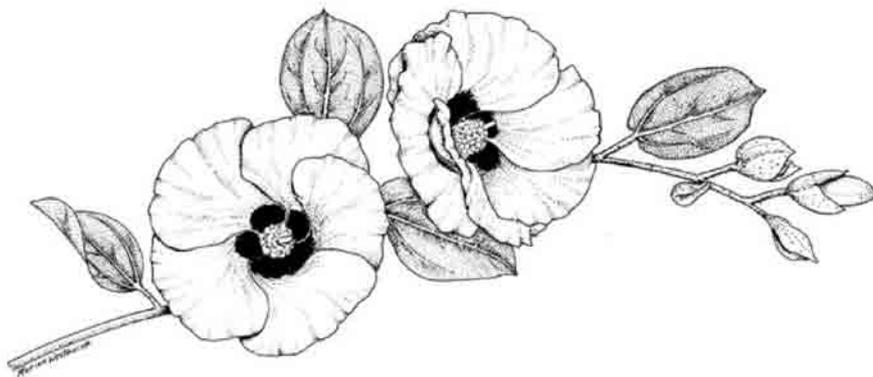
symbolist
lagoon
waterhole
intensity

myth
photograph
landscape
colonise

icon
emu
satire

Creating and Making

State Floral Emblems



Marion Westmacott *Gossypium Sturtianum*
www.anbg.gov.au/embrs/nt.emblem.html

In Pugh's 1986 work *Icarus and Sturt Rose in the Bungle Bungles* he represents the Northern Territory floral state emblem, the Sturt Rose. Its Latin name is *gossypium sturtianum*, with *gossypium* referring to its genus of cotton and *sturtianum* in reference to the explorer Captain Charles Sturt, who first collected samples of the flower during his expedition through central Australia in 1844-45.

Research Victoria's floral state emblem. What interesting facts have you discovered? About the flower's history, its plant family, when it flowers...

On a map of Australia represent its distribution of growth. Does it grow in your local area? Using coloured pencils and paper design a 50c stamp using an image of the flower found during your research.

See www.anbg.gov.au/embrs/vic.emblem.html

Exploring and Responding

Australian Iconography

The motif of Leda and the Swan taken from Greek mythology became a recurrent subject within both Pugh's painting and print works. The poem above by symbolist poet, William Butler Yeats tells of the seduction of Leda by Zeus embodied as a swan. Pugh ultimately chose to Australianize the story and replace the image of the swan with one of the emu. Why do you think the artist chose to do this?

The Australian male, the Aussie bloke is another archetypal personality that we find alongside those of the swagman, the ANZAC, the lifesaver... can you think of any other iconic characters that form part of the Australian imagination?

Read the passage below taken from the book by Russel Ward *The Australian Legend*:

According to the myth the 'typical Australian' is a practical man, rough and ready in his manners and quick to decry any appearance of affectation in others. He is a great improviser, ever willing to 'have a go' at anything, but willing too to be content with a task done in a way that is 'near enough'. Though capable of great exertion in an emergency, he normally feels no impulse to work hard without good cause. He swears hard and consistently, gambles heavily and often, and drinks deeply on occasion. Though he is 'the world's best confidence man', he is usually taciturn rather than talkative, one who endures stoically rather than one who acts busily. He is a 'hard case', sceptical about the value of religion and of intellectual and cultural pursuits generally. He believes that Jack is not only as good as his master but, at least in principle, probably a good deal better, and so he is a great 'knocker' of eminent people unless, as in the case of his sporting heroes, they are distinguished by physical prowess. He is a fiercely independent person who hates officiousness and authority, especially when those qualities are embodied in military officers and policemen. Yet he is very hospitable and, above all, will stick to his mates through thick and thin, even if he thinks they may be in the wrong.

Ward, Russell *The Australian Legend* Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1978, pgs 1-2.

Do you agree with the author's portrayal of the 'typical Australian'?

The Australian landscape is another icon featuring strongly in debates around national identity and psyche. Think of the Australian Bush, Outback and our Beaches...

Look at the work of contemporary artists:

Rosemary Laing www.tolarnogalleries.com and Siri Hayes www.sirihayes.com

Look at the work of Colonial and Heidelberg School artists:

John Glover, Tom Roberts, Arthur Streeton, Fredrick McCubbin

Both Laing and Hayes draw inspiration from Art History and challenge the romanticising of the Australian landscape. In Laing's *Natural Disasters* series she reuses the titles of original works by Heidelberg School artists but subverts the narrative by using newspaper

clippings of common images of environmental 'acts of god' that affect Australia. Hence scenes of drought, flood and cyclone. The iconic image of Uluru is replaced with a mound of Ikea furniture covered in the red dust of the desert, providing commentary on the post-colonial occupation of the land.

Photographer Siri Hayes, like Laing, works in series. In her Lyric Theatre series she directly references early colonial artist John Glover and his painting of the Australian landscape in her work *John Glover's Trees*. Laing in her 2001 *groundspeed (Red piazza)* series does the same with Glover's 1835 work *A View of the Artist's House and Garden, Mills Plains, Van Diemen's Land*.

Existing European conventions of composition and subject matter were often employed by the colonial artist; contributing to a familiar tableau of a constructed Australian landscape. Both Hayes and Laing evoke narrative in their work whilst providing a critique of the European rendering of the Australian landscape.

Hayes deliberate construction of the scenes within her Lyric Theatre series stems from the more intimate relationship a landscape in your own neighbourhood, or one that you visit often, can provide. Why do you think Hayes chose to include the detritus of the urban environment in her *Cat's Cradle* work from the series? How does the work of both Laing and Hayes contribute to new readings of the Australian landscape? Discuss the difference between documentary photography and the constructed tableaux of Laing and Hayes.

Consider the last photograph of which you were a part. Was it a formal family portrait, perhaps a snap shot of an object or event that took your interest, if it included people, were they aware a photograph was being taken? Bring a recent photograph into class and create a photo mural on a wall in the classroom. Discuss the differences and similarities between your classmate's chosen photographs.



Siri Hayes Australia 1977
Crossing the Merri (from Lyric Theatre Series)
 2003 type c photograph
 165.0 x 136.0 cm
 La Trobe University Art Collection

AUSTRALIAN FLORA, FAUNA AND CONSERVATION

We have moved to Dunmoochin, the painter Clifton Pugh's bush property, about thirty kilometres north of Melbourne. Dunmoochin is a commune of artists, potters, weavers, sometimes writers, scattered through the bush near Cottlesbridge, on land that Clif owns. The houses, half a dozen or so, are made of mud brick and second-hand building materials, so that this little 'village' seems to merge into the straw- coloured countryside, as though it has always been here. The landscape around is rolling, dry hills, with eucalyptus foliage exploded on the lower sky and above the paddocks; there are also bright yellow wattles, in their double season and many dams. The way of life is rather Spartan: we are starting off with one room, no electricity, just a fuel stove, and with an outside 'dunny,' but the children seem to love it; they run wild, barefooted, and swim in the dams.

When I think of the depressing spectacle of Australian suburbia, with its disregard for a sense of place, I can very readily say 'Yes' to this. In the city, confusion is compounded with such questions as 'Where am I,' 'What am I,' 'Why is life not giving me enough for my spiritual needs?' Despite the creature comforts of the city, it is a Waste Land. The only life you are going to have has no meaning there.

The work done at Dunmoochin by the painters is naturally most of it landscape – somewhat retardé, would be the response of many, but it has far greater spirit and intention than fashionable abstraction, which is currently leading to an impasse in Sydney and Melbourne.

John Olsen *Drawn from Life* Duffy & Snellgrove, Sydney, 1997 p. 69

About the theme

Pugh was well-known as a staunch environmentalist and for his love of the Australian bush. Pugh's house at Dunmoochin was literally an animal sanctuary. Orphaned wombats and kangaroos were frequently brought there and emus, a cockatoo, and possums were also residents of Dunmoochin. Pugh was particularly fond of wombats; he found them to be intelligent, endearing and determined creatures. The numerous animals living with Pugh and in the nearby surrounds provided Pugh with ample models to sketch and to eventually inspire paintings, book illustrations and print works. These animals appear in etchings such as *Apostle Birds* (1982), *Two Owls* (1986), *Willy Wagtail and Dam* (1982), and *Wombat Thinking* (1980).

It was due to his concern for the environment that Pugh began buying up hectares of land around Dunmoochin. This land was then placed under a covenant to protect it from future urban development. Just as he did with his paintings, Pugh would use prints to transmit his message about the need to protect the environment. Two factors made prints a more viable way for Pugh to transmit his messages, prints are much more affordable, and produced in multiples, a single image could be sold to many more people and thus his message could reach a wider public.

In 1983 the Wilderness Society asked Pugh to produce a series of prints inspired by the rainforest along the Gordon, below Franklin River. This series was sold to raise funds for the Society which had been involved in a major advertising campaign to stop the damming of the Franklin River. Pugh travelled to the region with the master printer Max Miller where they stayed at the blockader's camp. This is portrayed in the aptly named *Blockaders' Camp* (1983). Of particular note in this series is Pugh's use of green. Generally Pugh limited his use of green, a colour he associated with his experiences in New Guinea where he fought during World War II. However, in the dense undergrowth of the ancient forest, everything took on a green hue, even the birds, as depicted in *Scrub Wrens* (1983).



Clifton Pugh Australia 1924 - 1990
Scrub Wrens 1983
 colour etching A/P
 24.9cm x 19.4 cm
 Master Printer: Max Miller
 The Dunmoochin Foundation Art Collection
 held at La Trobe University

Keywords

mateship

humour

ocker

conservation

identity

folklore

larrikin

bush

nationalism

suburbia

Exploring & Responding

Conservation

Study the ecosystem of the Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park located in Tasmania. What features are specific to the environment there?

Clifton Pugh was commissioned to produce a series of prints on this area of rainforest for the Wilderness Society in 1983. Both physical processes and human activities are a threat to this fragile ecosystem. What potential threats can you imagine these to be?

In 1980 the Franklin River became part of the Wild Rivers National Park, however with this proposal came a government decision to build another dam, on the Gordon River. The Wilderness Society began the 'NO DAMS' conservation campaign in a bid to conserve the area and prevent the damming of the Gordon. In the exhibition Pugh represents the blockader's camp in use during this campaign. The artist was a staunch supporter of conservation campaigns like this one.

During this campaign public debate rose over the government's responsibility to protect natural resource and sites of natural beauty. This area subsequently received attention on local, regional and global scale. The campaign then made Australian environmental and constitutional history when the Commonwealth Government over-rode Tasmanian Premier Robin Gray's decision to push forward on dam works in the area. This was reflected in future decisions made by the Commonwealth Government to protect areas of global significance in Australia. Can you think of a current environmental issue featured in today's media? Perhaps one specific to your local area...? The Kyoto Protocol is one. Discuss the arguments for and against within your chosen issue.

Romantic Idealism

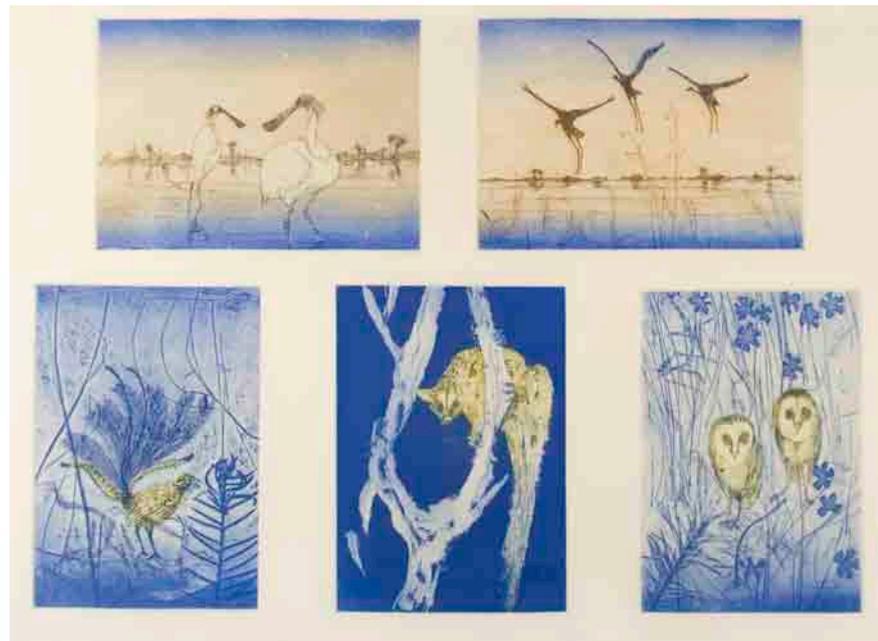
The romanticism of the Australian Bush and Outback has long been a part of Australian visual and literary culture.

Look at Sidney Nolan's works dating back to 1949-1953 from his expeditions into Central Australia. What archetypal imagery do we find here consistent with the same represented by Pugh in this exhibition?

By 1910 the majority of the Australian population lived an urban existence and since the early twentieth century has continued to settle along the country's coastline. Despite this the Australian Bush continues to cast its spell and remains at the forefront of debate on national identity. Why do you think this is? Consider the key words listed above.

Further Reading

Poetry of Henry Lawson and Banjo Patterson



Clifton Pugh Australia 1924 - 1990
untitled (spoon bills, lyre bird, possum, owls, water birds – Exxon Suite) 1989
 5 single plate etchings
 44.8 x 62.8 cm
 not signed, not dated
 Master Printer: Max Miller
 The Dunmoochin Foundation Art Collection
 held at La Trobe University

FROM THE BUSH TO THE DESERT: THE AUSTRALIAN LANDSCAPE AND ITS PEOPLE

Going 30 km north up the stony bumpy corrugated dusty road, is the wire – netting fence two metres high built to keep the dingo north, away from the sheep. Every 40 km is a boundary rider's hut where he maintains his stretch of fence, which is 20 km on either side of the hut.

The fence is patrolled at least twice a week the whole year round... all to keep the dingo north.

It runs across sand dunes, stony plains, at fantastic cost... all to keep the dingo north.

But in this country within an hour you can have an inch of rain which washes all the sand away from under the fence.

After the flood the dingoes almost queue up to go through.

Clifton Pugh, "A place of whims, whips and many stones", The Herald Weekend, Sat. Dec. 24, 1977, p. 11.

About the theme

The Australian landscape is an important theme in Pugh's paintings and by extension, also in his print works. He was an enthusiastic traveller and made trips to various remote areas of Australia. Many print works were inspired by his travels, which included trips to the Corner Country and its towns (Western NSW bordered by SA and Queensland), the Channel country of Queensland (including the Diamantina river that 'runs' down toward Lake Eyre in S.A.), Arnhem Land (N.T.), the Bungle Bungles (W.A.), and South-West Tasmania.

The desert was his favourite landscape after the bush of Dunmoochin. Pugh would make yearly trips to the desert, frequently to the small town of Tibooburra, which often acted as his base. Even after visiting the area for twenty years Pugh still declared that there were so many "superb sites" around the town that he still had not "exhausted the area even within two miles of the town." Among the locations depicted are *Dead Horse Gully* (1985) and *Tibooburra Homestead* (1985). Spring may have been his preferred month for visiting as it offered a more temperate climate. But as he further noted "if there has been the usual seasonal rain, the desert is transformed and blooms in a sea of wildflowers. If not the parched dry country provides a range of beautiful colours". He celebrated the local fauna in prints such as the *Tibooburra Suite*.

Tibooburra, and the Corner Country is an area steeped in Australia's explorer history. Milparinka, about 40 kilometres south, is close to Depot Glen where Charles Sturt camped for 6 months waiting for the drought to break. In *untitled (Ruin with Plate)* Pugh presents a view of Milparinka as seen from the veranda of its pub. While Pugh was not so interested in depicting the plight of Australia's early explorers, the three hazy figures in *Mirage* makes an oblique reference to one of the exploring groups searching for the inland sea. Pugh's use of vibrant oranges (at times almost luminescent) and yellows convincingly conveys the heat of these inland locations.

Toward the end of his life Pugh began to develop an interest in the sea and beach scenes. *Saturday Afternoon, Bondi* (1990) is one of the few beach scenes to be found among Pugh's prints. The etching records a scene that caused Pugh some amusement. As the title suggests, one Saturday afternoon when Pugh was at Bondi Beach he saw, wandering in amongst numerous scantily clad females, bathing in the sun, three Jewish men in their traditional garments.

Keywords

desert

wildflower

explorer

portrait

suite

homestead

atmosphere

drought

luminescent

light

Exploring and Responding

Art Trail

A favourite motif of Pugh's is the bird. Birds feature in a number of works in this exhibition, how many can you spot? Which birds do you recognise? Are any of these birds found in your local area? What differences lie between these birds? Create a table with your discoveries and share this with the group.

The World's Longest Fence

Australia is home to the world's longest fence built in the 1880s to keep dingos out of areas where farmers were housing sheep. The fence has had limited success in controlling the dingo population, as seen first hand, and mentioned by Pugh in his quote above. Which three states of Australia house the fence?

After the bushland area of Dunmoochin, the outback landscape of Tibooburra was of particular fascination to Pugh. Situated in Corner Country, alongside the Dingo fence Pugh spent many years visiting the area. In a number of these works Pugh has employed a palette of iridescent orange. Discuss your opinion of the artist's intention here and the subject matter he focuses on. Research this part of Australia, its native flora, fauna, the origin of its name and explorer history. With your research create a tourist brochure or imagined Tibooburra website homepage with information to attract visitors to the area.

Manindi – A Special Dingo

Jean A Ellis has compiled a series of Australian Aboriginal legends in her anthology, *This is the Dreaming* taken from the rich oral history Aboriginal people refer to as the Dreaming. In the tale below of Manindi, told by the Ngauri and Piladapa people, we discover the significance of the colour red and the reason they believed there to be an abundance of ochre in their area, where the New South Wales and South Australian borders meet.

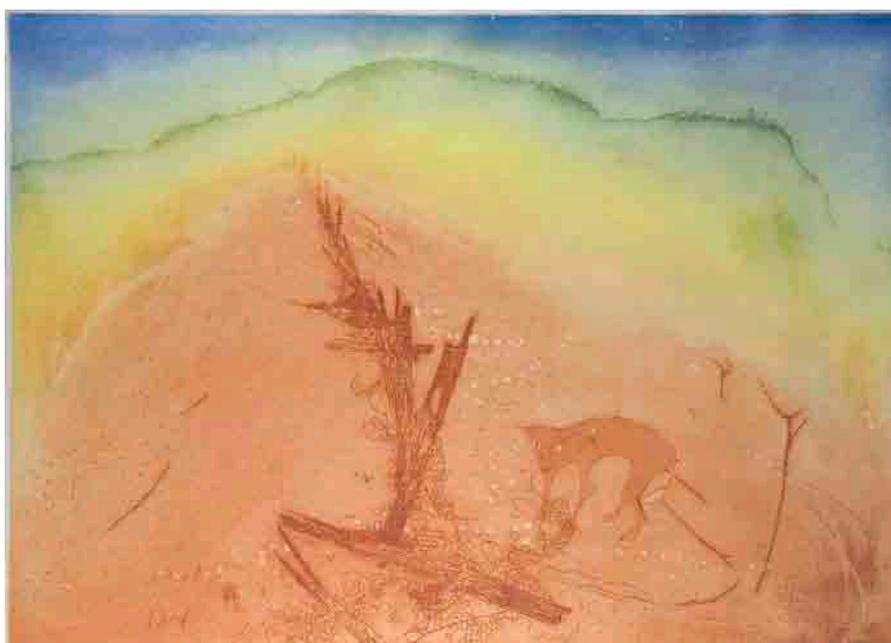
In the early days of Aboriginal history, a giant lizard, one of dinosaur proportions, lived in the Flinders Ranges and preyed upon the unfortunate people. Many brave hunters attempted to protect their people but nothing seemed to baulk or worry the massive creature. At this time the Ngauri people had a pet dingo which they had named Manindi. They had found Manindi as a pup and raised him. Though he now roamed free, he remained their faithful friend. One day the giant, marauding lizard approached a peaceful campsite, planning yet again to drag away some of the defenceless people. Manindi saw the beast approaching. He was afraid, but he steeled himself to fight to the death to save the people. Manindi walked to the edge of the campsite and attacked the surprised lizard. He was no match in size for the ferocious lizard and very determined to defend his people.

The battle raged for several hours and the people watched in horror, yet fascination. Eventually, to everyone's great relief, Manindi won. It was very exciting. The people watched as the lizard died. They watched as its blood run freely, and heavily stained much of the soil in the area. The ancestor spirits had watched too. They were pleased indeed with Manindi's bravery and ordained that the soil would remain forever red so that people throughout all ages to come would remember the faithful dingo and his amazing victory. This is how it has been.

The people of all groups in that vicinity were of course very relieved and most grateful. Their lives were much more pleasant and peaceful once the giant lizard was dead. On occasion each group planned and performed a corroboree of celebration, which, through mime, retold the story. Before presenting it, they painted and decorated their bodies in red to further show their appreciation. Red, since that time so long ago, has remained a special colour for them all.

Ellis, Jean A. *This is the Dreaming* Collins Dove, North Blackburn, Victoria 1994 pgs 104-106.

Many of the native animals represented by Pugh in the exhibition have also been included in Aboriginal Dreaming legends, such as the willy wagtail, the emu, and others. Conduct your own research to discover the Aboriginal legends behind these native animals and the location within Australia they hail from. How did the kangaroo get his tail, the cockatoo its crest, why is the emu unable to fly... Break into small groups and share your stories.



Clifton Pugh Australia 1924 - 1990
The Dingo Fence that Was 1985
 colour etching [4th state]
 35.0cm x 49.5 cm
 Master Printer: Max Miller
 Courtesy of Shane Pugh

PRINTS AND ILLUSTRATED BOOKS

As I became more and more involved with nature, I found suddenly in myself a growing awareness of and concern with the problems of animal conservation. It was about this time I first heard the radio broadcast of Ivan Smith's *The Death of a Wombat*. It is difficult to describe how much this work impressed me. The writer seemed to share the view of nature that I tried to portray through my canvases – nature raw and untamed, and yet infinitely beautiful; nature: a personality, a force, a lover, a killer.

Clifton Pugh *The Death of a Wombat Sun Books*, South Melbourne Victoria 1972 p. 9

About the theme

Pugh's first involvement in a book project was a limited edition (6 copies) collaborative artist's book titled *Is...* (1971). Pugh and the artist Frank Hodgkinson contributed five prints each using Hayter's technique, while the American poet Harry Roskolenko wrote the poems. Alternative printings of three of Pugh's etchings found in this book – *Europa and the Bull* (1970), *untitled (abstract entwined figures)* (1971) and *Owl up a Tree* (1971) – are included in this exhibition.

Pugh was later involved in the illustrating of children's books, in particular, those that had distinct conservation inclination. The first was *Death of a Wombat*, published in 1972, originally a radio play written by Ivan Smith. Others that he provided etchings for include *A Kingdom Lost: A Story of the Devastation of our Wilderness* (1989) and *A Sometimes River: The Story of a Kangaroo* (1986).

Although Pugh provided illustrations for these books, he was not a "book illustrator", he himself declared that he did not have the "self-discipline" to illustrate a book. Many of Pugh's etchings used in the books had originally been produced as artworks in their own rights. This is the case for the illustrations in *A Kingdom Lost* including the *Morning Flight* triptych (1986) and *Ghost Gums and Cherry Blossom* (1986).

For Pugh, the books and their artworks provided a two-fold benefit, particularly for children. It provided them with good examples of Australian art, while teaching them important lessons in conservation. He further asserted:

Talking to adults about conservation is a waste of time – they've already made up their minds... You have to teach the children. Children are the key to conservation and the future preservation of Australia's bush.

The author Pamela Blashki collaborated with Pugh on several conservation themed books, including *A Kingdom Lost* and *A Sometimes River*. Not all of their collaborations, however, were children's books. In the late 1980s Blashki wrote a poem on the affair between *Leda and the Emu*, for the book *The Legend* (1988). The text accompanied a series of works depicting Leda and the Australianized Zeus, who had transformed into an Emu rather than a Swan, that Pugh had brought together for a bicentennial show held in Sydney. The *Leda and the Emu* (1987) appeared in this book.

Keywords

environment
responsibility
process

nature
illustration
pattern

triptych
collaboration
poetry

Exploring and Responding

Book Club

Did you know...

An adult wombat grows to about 1 metre in length but it is only about 2cm long at birth! The newborn wombat is tiny, hairless and unable to see. In Book Club you can read the tale of Digger's Mate as illustrated by Pugh. Joyce and her dog, Digger discover a newborn wombat and take her into their care.



Clifton Pugh Australia 1924 - 1990
Wombat thinking 1980
etching A/P
15.2 x 10.8 cm
Master Printer: Max Miller
The Dunmoochin Foundation Art Collection
held at La Trobe University

An Inconvenient Truth

Pugh believed educating the young was fundamental to tackling awareness on conservation issues. The same message is true of 2006 film *An Inconvenient Truth*. The closing statement by Al Gore runs as follows:

Future generations may well have occasion to ask themselves: 'What were our parents thinking? Why didn't they wake up when they had a chance? We have to hear that question, from them, now.'

In small groups discuss the following questions:

Do you believe that parents and guardians have a personal responsibility to raise the awareness of their children to environmental issues such as global warming and its effect on our environment?

Do you agree with Pugh and Al Gore and their belief that the education of children is key to the success of conservation?

How would you answer the questions in the quote above?

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