

Practitioner's Statement

Lost Horizons

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My artwork portrays the beauty of the Australian landscape as well as the negative environmental impact resulting from human influence. While there are many current environmental issues, I chose to explore the impact of mining. In Australia mining is decreasing natural resources and biodiversity while increasing soil erosion and contamination.

This work consists of three panels which display the progressive degradation of the natural environment. The first panel features a pristine Australian outback landscape. In the second panel mining is beginning to have some impact, and in the third panel the same landscape is completely dominated by mining. The cumulative effects of mining are emphasized by the increasing panel size, the darkening mood and the progressive loss of vegetation.

My interest in environmental issues was sparked by my Year 12 Outdoor Education investigation in which I explored the effects of invasive weeds. Through this investigation I developed a strong personal connection with Morialta Conservation Park and Mount Arapiles State Park. The rock features incorporated into panel 1 and 2 are inspired by these two environments, adding my personal connection with nature. In panel 2 the rock features are less dominant than panel 1, and in panel 3 they are completely eliminated. This symbolizes the way in which mining not only degrades the environment, but also impacts our personal connection with nature.

My choices of technique and composition were heavily inspired Fred Williams. William's works are characterised by gestural markings which invoke the predominant features of the Australian landscape. In my work I attempted to create raw textures similar to William's, and found this was successfully achieved using palette knife and thick paint application. My wide format panels, influenced by William's '*Weipa*' series, were used to portray the vast expanse of the Australian landscape as well as symbolise the widespread damage caused by mining.

The strip of sky is a constant feature, connecting the three panels as a body of work. The use of blue effectively contrasts the landscape and provides relief from the predominantly 'earthy' colour scheme. Similarly, the dark colours forming the mine contrast the lighter colours of the natural landscape, emphasizing the impact of mining. Each panel shows a progression of darker colours in the foreground to lighter colours in the background, establishing a sense of depth. This is further emphasized through the decreasing size of the palette knife markings with distance.

I found that water based oil paint was the most successful medium for creating weight and thick textural markings. Through the experimentation process I learnt the importance of layering from 'thin to thick' as this prevents the paint from cracking.

One challenge I encountered was integrating the rock features into the landscape in a way that didn't appear disjointed. Placing these in the left of the work successfully balanced the mine in the second panel.

Overall this work is a successful exploration of William's style, and achieves my goal of depicting the severe environmental consequences and loss of personal connection with nature caused by human interference.