

THE IMMORTAL NOW

Visualizing the Place Where Spirituality and Today's Families Meet

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Abstract

There is a keen interest in spirituality today - a new search for meaning. As Tacey (2003, p.2) ¹ comments; "We are caught in a difficult moment in history, stuck between a secular system we have out-grown, and a religious system we cannot fully embrace. "Clearly, a spirituality exists in Australia that is no longer associated with religion." I believe the starting point for this spirituality is in the everyday. Evidence of spirituality exists in families, a microcosm of society, and in family homes. This is where life's ultimate questions seem to be answered – Who am I? Where am I? Why am I here?

As a visual artist doing a Creative PhD, my thesis follows my own journey as an immigrant finding place and space, which I call '*splace*', in Australia. Being a mother, I have attempted to locate my children in a community and religious landscape foreign to me. The resulting fine art exhibition at Span Galleries, Melbourne, uses the familiar geography of the church building as a framework to explore aspects of spirituality in four galleries named:

VIRTUAL NARTHEX - The spiritual self's recognition of self
CHAPEL – the spiritual self's space/place within the family
NAVE – the spiritual self's relationship to community
SANCTUARY – the spiritual self's life journey 'from here to eternity'

The concurrent community art exhibition, '*CHISHOLM'S HOMES: Shaking Down the Miracle*', at the Migration Museum, Adelaide, augments the chosen themes and their creative processes.

My art as visual theology, places spirituality within the grasp of the everyday, a holy pilgrimage through the ever changing, ever challenging passage called 'family'. Using installation, it incorporates fabric, found objects, wood, styrofoam, tapestry, text, movement, digital composition and soundscape, to deconstruct fixed, preconceived family and spiritual references.

September 11th has increased a fear of other cultures. There has never been a better time to globally effect much more than tolerance but to reflect common values and visions; discovering a universal search for meaning as transferred through families and community. Beyond imagery and words, I explore the expression of spirituality in building a harmonious multicultural society.

To me, all this is the art of seeking the immortal now.

¹ Tacey, David. (2003). *The Spirituality Revolution: the emergence of contemporary spirituality*. Harper Collins Publishers. Sydney, NSW, 2003, p 2.

Declaration

I, Flossie (Florence) Peitsch, declare that the PhD exegesis and exhibition entitled *THE IMMORTAL NOW: Visualizing the Place Where Spirituality and Today's Families Meet* is no more than 20,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, references and footnotes. This exegesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this exegesis and exhibition is my own work.

Signature_____

Date_____

Flossie Peitsch

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Prologue

Often research begins where one's intrinsic knowledge diminishes. This is true for me and for my research. The insights recorded in this exegesis place my search for meaning in quite a standard scholarly format as one part of the research - the major part of the research being the fine art exhibition *THE IMMORTAL NOW*.

THE IMMORTAL NOW is an expression I partially equate with the phrase 'a sense of the sacred'. This 'sense of the sacred' has been noticed and widely interpreted by many people in history, attracting the particular attention of artists and craftspeople. An artist readily looks beyond 'the intellectual' as the way of 'knowing'. She often touches the existence of that which is beyond 'comprehension', beyond the physical and the emotional, while making tangible that which is ineffable. This sets the artist at the cusp of the divine and the mortal, the transcendent and temporal worlds. The sacred can be experienced as the cathedral, a sacred site, the abstruse, the beautiful, the journey, the icon, the secular, and as *splace*, which is the term developed in this research project.

A Personal Perspective

There are some broad personal considerations that contextualize my current visual art production. My family is the raw material for my art production at this time. As such, it is appropriate that I should introduce myself and them. I am Flossie Grace Peitsch, a 'Landed Immigrant' from Canada (official term on passport). My husband of thirty-two years is Thomas Edward Peitsch, an American 'Resident Alien' in Australia (official term on passport). Born in Australia, our six children, five boys and one girl, have on offer the choice of three nationalities. Matthias is twenty-three. Philip is twenty-one. Josiah is nineteen. Thaddaeus is seventeen. Ezra is fourteen. Patience is ten (*Figure 1, p. 11*). All have been the subject matter for my art since they were born. We

are a privileged family in many respects, particularly as I am able to pursue art full time.



Figure 1: Family Portrait (Stefano 2004)

I have one child in primary school, one in high school, two in tertiary education (although one of these is currently in the corporate world of waged work experience), one automotive mechanic apprentice, and one already launched into a music career having moved out of home more than two years ago. He is now setting his wedding date for January 2007, and then planning to move back home with his wife for a time.

My family does not fit the usual demographics. With seven spirited people living in one house, we are big, diverse, savvy, poor, ambitious, optimistic, needy, independent, religious, adventuresome, irreverent, resourceful, provocative, lonely, and resilient as a family. On many occasions we are considered misfits and outsiders. We have a somewhat universal feeling for everyone, especially immigrants, which all becomes raw material for artistic deliberation.

A point of differentiation is that we are all clergy. I mean 'all' because each one in the family has an unwritten role in the church, dependent on Tom's position as a parish pastor. Normally a partner's occupation would not be

considered for a PhD in art. But in my case, this contributes knowledge that helps contextualize my art and outlook.

Exegesis to Art

My art is a visual form of the ideas in the exegesis, and the exegesis is an extension of the concepts explored in the exhibition. In this way, my art is visual text and my text visual art (*Peitsch & Milech 2001, p. 64*). This exegesis is best read after viewing the visual art exhibition. Unlike most other theses, this document does not provide a decisive argument, but along with the exhibition creates the 'research question' journey.

The exegesis considers the overall context in which artistic understandings and cultural influences are developed. Thus, the art is illuminated². However, in an in-depth elucidation of the theoretical artistic cultural climate, the visual art and relevant exhibitions themselves are outside the scope of this exegesis. I link these areas only as they relate to my research. I address themes as a visual artist - not as a community cultural development worker, theologian, ethnographer or sociologist. My artistic concerns are necessarily expansive; I cross-disciplines, working not to become an authority, but as a keen inquirer with wide considerations.

Throughout the exegesis, I relate the themes under deliberation to specific installations or creative products along the research journey that are not included in the final PhD exhibition. In Chapter Three, I refer to the thinking behind my fine art in *THE IMMORTAL NOW*. This is my attempt to follow Nelson's suggestion to 'share the vision – instigate a creative synergy in pursuit of a vision – suggest the gestation – through prior work, reading and remembering other work; consider the work in progress, the forging and production of the ideas' (2000, p. 32). Rather than attempting to unwrap the

²Regarding the visual inclusions: the **Figures** are supportive material for the text. The **Images** throughout the exegesis refer to art that has been created during the research period but are not included in *THE IMMORTAL NOW*. The colour **Plates** are all installations included in *THE IMMORTAL NOW*.

potential layers of meaning in my final art exhibition, I purposely try to restrict my comments regarding this art to description process and personal considerations. I contend that the viewer can perceive numerous meanings evident within the art itself. Consequently, my intention is to allow the viewer a free interpretation of my art. The openness to interpretation thus offered, is essential to my research. Self-narrative is the key to my approach, and so, it works as a two way mirror through which anyone can see their world.

The Notion of *Splace*

Self-knowledge is the key to self-narrative. When anyone begins to reflect on where she is, why she is there and who she is – and to want for others what she wants for herself (*Elaḥi 1997*), she is beginning to construct meaning within the interior self. Not finding a satisfactory term to name this important site led me to construct a new term, contracting the words place and space to become - *splace*. I will use *splace* for the many times when place and space are considered concurrently in an argument, not as separate from each other; in other words, when both sense of status and location are factors in viewing one's self. This notion is supported in Relph's *Place and Placelessness*, '...however we feel or know or explain space, there is always some associated sense or concept of place' (1976, p. 8). This idea is alluded to using the terms *identity* or *persona* - but *splace* goes further.

In my past writings, I have neatly defined the term 'place' as the social position or standing that one holds within society or family, i.e., 'place in my family'. I have used the term 'space' to denote a physical allocation of territory designated for a particular use or psychological setting, such as 'personal space in my home' (*Peitsch 2002a*). With *splace*, I include both these perspectives.

Thus, the concept of *splace* serves as the centre on which to layer spirituality, families and artistic considerations in this exegesis. These themes relate to

each other inclusive of an awareness and sensibility of defined *splace*. A whimsical interpretation follows (*Figure 2*).



Figure 2: Defining Their *Splace* (Saddlery 27 October, 2006)

Through the use of *splace* I am able to imbue old concepts with new, expanded perceptions. These include an awareness of the time continuum, a sense of the eminence of 'belonging to', aspects of 'foreverness', and the perception of 'being home'. *Splace* also suggests a new model for theology - a concept of spirituality that can stand alongside the traditions within Christianity that have explored spirituality in terms of its redemptive dimensions. The definition of *splace* has expanded since the start of my research. Here, with the assistance of theological colleague, Neal Nuske (2006), is a working definition.

SPLACE:

- A site within consciousness where one can begin or continue the search for meaning in a way that identifies elements and themes from one's own spiritual tradition; or elements and themes from one's own philosophical tradition; or elements and themes from one's reservoir of deeply held beliefs and values - and integrate these with the creative dimensions of the artistic self.
- A context within which one can construct meaning.
- Meaning is found in the link between the internal world of the self and the way this is manifested in one's art.

Autoethnography

My art derives from autoethnography, with the perspective of my personal *splace* being core to my research process. Recently, there has been a wider acceptance and awareness of the autobiographical approach to creative arts. Although self expression has often been a part of the visual arts process, self narrative as methodology has recently gathered many loyal followers and academic substantiality across disciplines in works including those of Robyn Stewart (2000), Estelle Barrett (2006), Barbara Bolt (2003), and Maria Tamboukou (2006).

In my work I relate to the standpoint of feminist writer Christina Houen (2002), who describes her study through autobiography and autoethnography as:

Finding a space from which to speak, a space within a place...as Michael De Certeau puts it...A place is the order in which related elements are arranged, each with its own proper location, a stable pattern. A space is the actualization of place in time, a "practised place" (Houen 2002, p. 24).

Here, I think Houen's self-reflexive study developed from an intellectual intuition would have benefited from the use of my tidy term *splace*.

I also have an intuitive approach to art which corresponds with autoethnographic practice. I am a hands-on artist, drawing on my themes of spirituality or families that directly inspire my art. I prefer to use photocopied texts, even if I own the book, as all my ideas cover the margins and blank spaces of the pages. I sketch ideas on small pieces of paper and gather them in to a pile. Later, I sort the ideas as to feasibility, conceptual strength, suitability to gallery space, cost and materials on hand, and availability of time. I consider a creative production's viability on many levels. My method is to start with an idea, a dream or a sketch, act on its potential and possibility, and wait to see what happens next. I like to fashion things and play with materials. I process ideas as I labour; make associations, fiddle a bit and come back later.

My research studies the ontological nature of the human spirit, with particular links to the Tillichian concept of the divine entity as the ground of being; especially as it pertains to a broadly defined family, and sacredness of place. None of the self-narrated vignettes of my personal life are included in the exegesis for their own sake but each one factors into the resultant artistic outcomes of the research. This exegesis bases on the imaginative arts - through installation, sound, movement, poetry and performance. As a visual artist, my journey has been both spiritual and artistic. The art is a visual expression of where my body, mind and soul have travelled or are travelling.

Poetic Narrative and Narrative Prose

Surprisingly as a visual artist, some of the outcomes for the theme of families have included poetic narratives and narrative prose concerning processing of my relationships within the family. Sometimes my readings have been the impetus for these writings; such as *Being at Loss* resulting from reading Tillich (Taylor 1987). At other times I have produced writings such as *Don't Bring Lilies*, resulting from a particular experience; or even as an academic task, writing including *Being Immortal, My Mother Does Not Now Live in a Nursing Home*.

They have emerged easily from an unknown place in my being. Once written, I was content to put them aside and move on in my head and heart, recognizing them as a turning point. Although I do not make claims to be a poet or writer here, I have had a distinct sense of the 'before writing' and 'after writing' experiences marking important transitions in my research journey.

I have presented these writings on clear, acetate sheets within the exegesis - in a reversed position - as a signal to the reader that they are not there to access the art form, but rather a passage through or a 'see through' window to view the pre-existing or resultant art. Texts set apart on acetate or in Appendix 3: Biographical Windows into Personal Splace (p. 178) are part of the research process, only to be read as part of the artistic process - not apart from it.

Appendices

The shape of the appendices for this exegesis reflects the autoethnographic approach taken in this study. These include: the CD of *THE IMMORTAL NOW – Virtual Gallery Tour, Additional Installations, CHISHOLM'S HOMES* project and website, and introduction to the publication; '*Flossie Peitsch: Art and Soul*'; the DVD Soundscape/Visual Productions; 'Biographical Windows into Personal *Splace*' and various outcomes and essays, in both fine art and community art, produced during the research period. These provide important insights to my life and experiences as an artist, and elucidate my views on certain related topics.

Introducing the Chapters

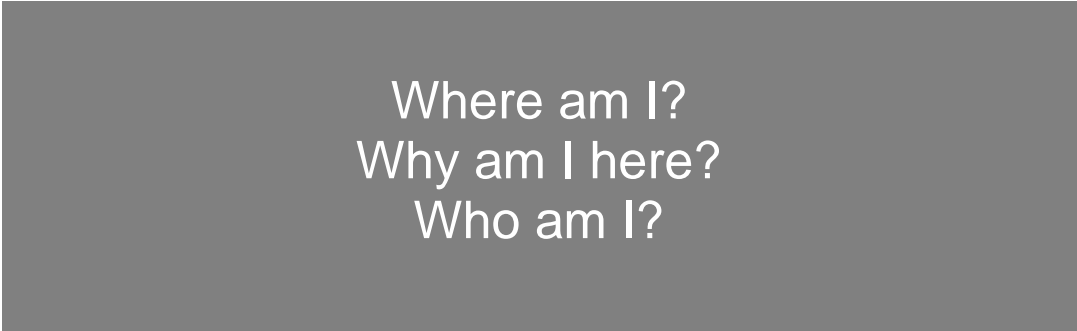
In undertaking this art research, I have created a new locus for embodying spirituality and families, a journeying, not an end. *THE IMMORTAL NOW* visualizes a context within which one can construct meaning – which I term *splace* - through interpretations in various artistic media and written documentation.

Splace is the locus for the potential birth or continuance of spirituality. I am interested in the concept of spirituality not as an entity in itself, but rather the spirituality of *splace*, and the *splace* of spirituality. The spirituality I refer to, sometimes called 'humanistic spirituality' (Elkins 1988), is common to all people. It is an aspect of the hermeneutic experience; that is, a construct of meaning drawn from an intimate reflection of the inner values held, or the things deemed to be important and meaningful. It is in part the dynamic sense of connection between the self, the other, and the divine. This spirituality is not the same as religiosity. Religion, in itself, is not a focal point of this project.

I am concerned not with the analysis of families generally, but rather, the *splace* of families and the *splace* in families. The resulting art is not about place and space in isolation. It is both existential and integrative in that elements of my understanding of the world are piece together into a particular form. Through community art projects and most significantly through fine art, I seek to encapsulate the meeting of spirituality and families in an immediate, everyday context.

The art forms I bring into being may have meanings that are suggested, hidden or partially disclosed, but need to be spoken about further (Nuske 2006). One task of this exegesis is to bring into language these alluded-to meanings and the research revealed in my general thinking processes. A Research Diagram for *THE IMMORTAL NOW* (Figure 3, p. 20) illustrates the outline my writings follow in concentric circles, with me and my *splace* in the centre. The

large outside surrounding sphere is divided into three equal wedges – spirituality, families and art. The inner circle delineates my community involvement, filtered principally through the *CHISHOLM'S HOMES*³ project, covering all themes. Each section interrelates as arrows are drawn from the centre core outward and cross between the three subject areas. The wedges thus formed correspond to the three core chapters of the exegesis. The final chapter is devoted to a closer look at *THE IMMORTAL NOW* as a topic common to all themes. As the starting inquiry for meaning and purpose in spirituality, families and art, I consider the questions 'Where am I? Why am I there? Who am I?'



Where am I?
Why am I here?
Who am I?

In agreement with Robert Nelson (2004), this exegesis follows a framework that has evolved in an organic way, similar to that displayed in *THE IMMORTAL NOW* exhibition. It begins with an introduction to spiritual *splace*, leads into family and community *splace*, and develops into my artistic *splace* which is shaped around traditional architecture of the Christian church. The final chapter does not summarize the content in the usual way, but instead, opens the reader up to eternal *splace*. To finish the exegesis, a short epilogue leads the reader to further explore their own *splace*.

³ Chisholm's Homes is a multifaceted community art project involving over 700 participants generated and undertaken as part of my PhD research.

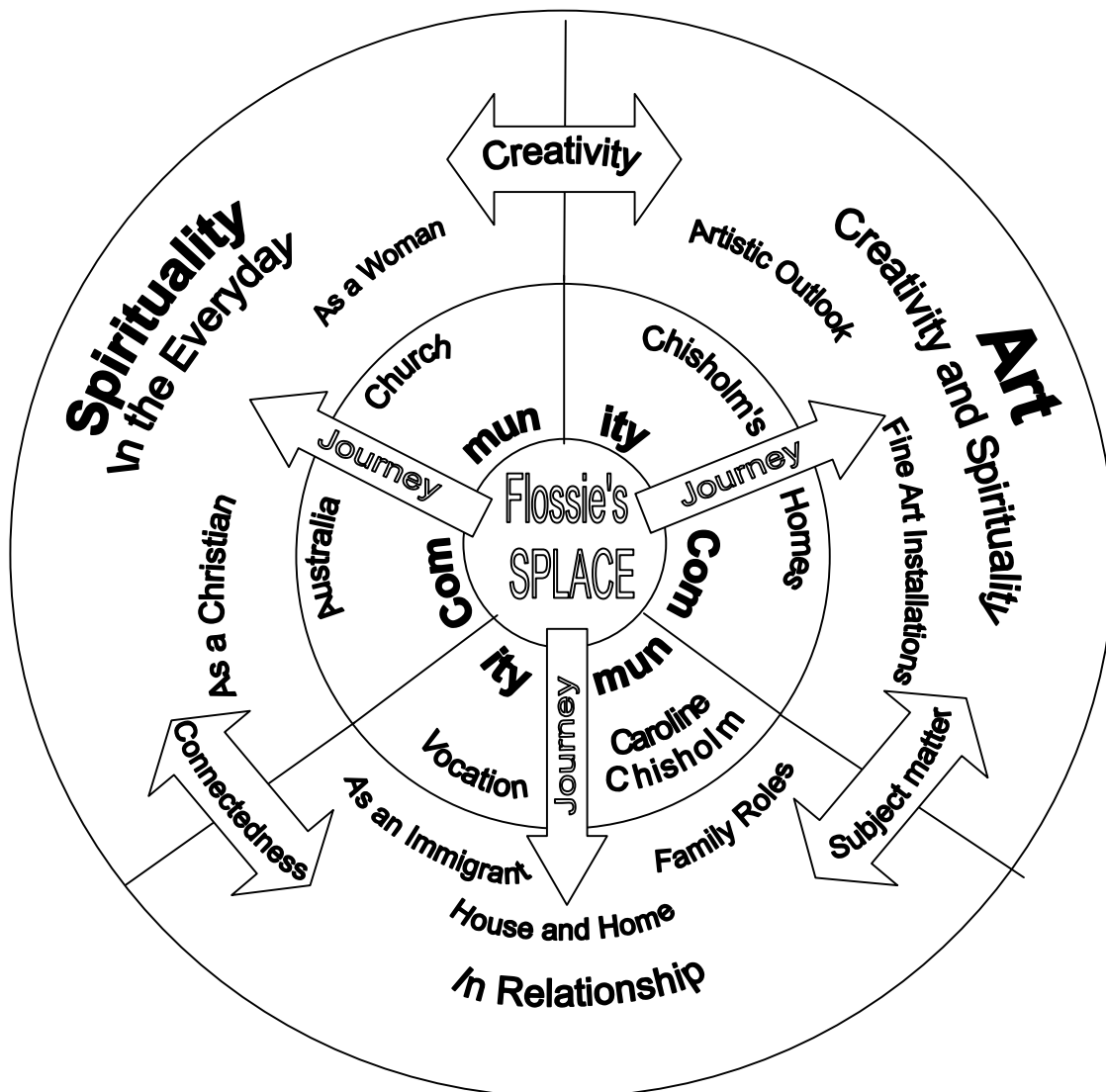
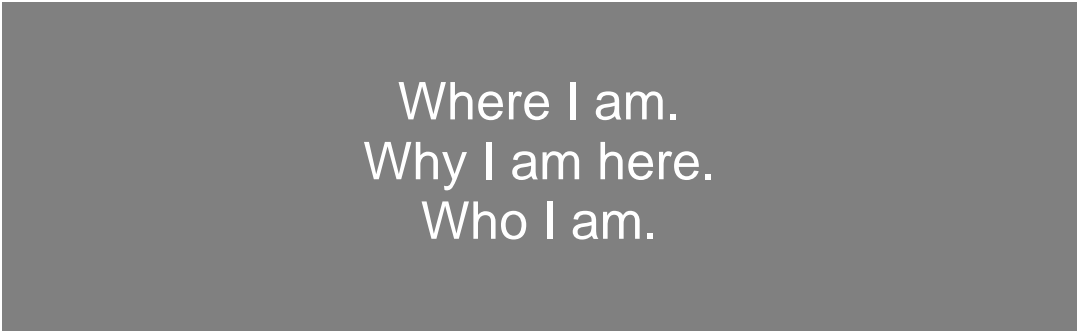


Figure 3: Research Diagram for *THE IMMORTAL NOW*

Chapter One, **Spiritual *Splace***, examines everyday spirituality in the light of the three questions: With a strong sense of searching in which I relate to Tillich's Christian theology, I write of myself as a spiritual *splace*, as a woman connecting to the feminine images this spirituality presents, and as a person living in community in Australia and the church.

Chapter Two, **Family *Splace***, reflects on three statements in the context of relationships, both within family and within community: 'Where I am. Why I am here. Who I am.' Aspects of my family *splace* have emerged through a consideration of the idea of home. Here, I recognize my own journey as an immigrant finding place and space in Australia. Being a mother, I have attempted to locate both myself and my children in a community and religious landscape that is often foreign to me, while coming to terms with the relentless changes that occur both in family and me.



Where I am.
Why I am here.
Who I am.

Chapter Three, **Artistic *Splace***, links spirituality with creativity and its role in addressing the same three statements, 'Where I am, Why I am here, and Who I am'. My artistic *splace* consists of my personal visual outlook and background; and the complementary community art project, *CHISHOLM'S HOMES*, Adelaide, amplifies the chosen themes and creative processes of my pre-existing and ensuing fine art. Using the community input, I explore the expression of harmonious multicultural building, kindled by natural spirituality. Finally and most significantly, details of the processes and outcomes of my installation art prepared for the exhibition, *THE IMMORTAL NOW*, Melbourne.

This key creative product for the thesis has been structured using familiar church architecture as the framework to explore aspects of spirituality presented in galleries I have named:

VIRTUAL NARTHEX	The spiritual self's recognition of self
CHAPEL	The spiritual self's space and place within the family
NAVE	The spiritual self's relationship to community
SANCTUARY	The spiritual self's life journey 'from here to eternity'

Chapter Four, **Eternal *Splace***, engages in particular reflections on experiencing the immortal now, in relation to 'Where I am, Why I am here and Who I am.' The focus is found in the occurrence of spiritual *splace*, family *splace*, and artistic *splace*. The title of this chapter refers to that of the creative thesis, to combine the future and the present. Using specific examples, this chapter offers a brief, reflexive response to each theme, without a traditional summary.

To conclude this 'introduction to the chapters', a visual link entitled *TRANSPORTAL* (*Image 1, p. 23*) is presented to lead the reader into the body of this exegesis. In this photo, two youthful male figures stand statuesque on either side of a child's upright bed - a red plastic Ferrari. The car is offered as a vertical entrance. A mat of green turf welcomes the viewer with the word 'transportal' cut into its surface. On the other side of the portal, a poised young child is looking directly at the camera. She stands resolutely, if not pensively, in a white space on the other side of the doorway. Not being firmly on the other side, I am as that girl in transit, searching, seeking the immortal now.



Image 1: *TRANSPORTAL*

CHAPTER ONE: Spiritual *Splace*

Introduction to Spiritual *Splace*

‘Where am I? Why am I there? Who am I?’ in the everyday

My interest in the spirituality of *splace* is not merely an abstract consideration or intellectual construct. Its contemplation is accentuated, as the spirituality of *splace* is crucial to my being, and so, crucial to my art which is drawn from my being. Norris acknowledged ‘Against all odds, I rediscovered the religion I was born to, and found it in a home’ (Norris, K 1993, p. 134). Altering the sense, I might say the converse - ‘*against all odds, I rediscovered the home I was born to and found it in the genesis of my spirituality*’ through researching these everyday personal experiences found in *splace* (Campbell 1990).

Essentially, the term ‘*splace*’ as I have defined it, already incorporates a sense of spirituality. So, to say ‘spiritual *splace*’ is, technically, redundant. But by emphasizing ‘spirituality’, I highlight *splace* as a personal sacred site; the ‘sp’ of *splace* keying the significance of ‘spirituality’, which I see at the foundation of ascribing one’s place and space, as *splace* for me. Crisp (1998, p. 8) asserts that ‘our environments are sacred and have meaning in our lives – mentally, physically and spiritually.’ In my opinion, this is only a partial explanation. I contend that our environments not only have meaning in our lives, but that our lives give meaning to our environments – creating sacred sites or *splaces*.

A sacred site generally is a predetermined place with borders, distinctly drawn or otherwise. *EXTENSION 1 (Image 2, p. 25)* uses a deconstructed portable wooden cot as a consideration of these boundaries - incorporating within an everyday object a sense of the impermanent, suggesting a ladder mode of transcendence, and presenting a protective/restrictive fence-type barrier, fragile in its flimsy construction. I reflect on such elements in the constructed



Image 2: *EXTENSION 1*

search for constructing meaning. *Splace* evokes movement from former spiritual understandings to new ones.

In the rationality of a material world, a renewed search for meaning in western culture has developed (Pink 2005). This search is grounded in Gardner's (2002) study on spirituality and religion creating a sustainable world. Seemingly unrelated disciplines such as architecture (Crisp 1998), science (Bouma, Ballis & Christian Research Association. 1999; Gamwell 2002), social sciences (Huebner 1981; Parks 1986; Willig 2001), sociology (Tacey 2003), anthropology (Goonan 1996), religion (Victorin-Vangerud 2000), medicine, art (Nelson 1999), philosophy (Lefebvre 1991), and many more, are drawn in to the hub of spirituality as factors in understanding human *splace* (Figure 4, p. 26). 'We can feel it in our molecules' purports Crisp (1998, p. 11), indicative of the centrality of spirituality in all human beings.



Figure 4: New Scientist Cover (NewScientist 2004)

The keen interest in spirituality today is even seen in patrons of popular web-based adventure games such as 'RuneScape' and 'Second Life', where church sites have been developed for prayer. Though raised secularly, many people are searching for something beyond themselves. Anderson's (1996) book of spirituality gathers writings which convey 'Immanence – finding God or the centre within – and transcendence – seeing God as an outside Being.'

'[Spirituality] is an experience of self-transcendence in which people find their lives integrated or made whole in relation to some reality greater than themselves' writes (Goonan 1996). The Tillichian inspired '[Spirituality is] the divine call within being itself' (Brussat & Brussat 1996, p. 11) well suits the chosen purpose of my writing. My constructed definition is '**Spirituality: The dynamic sense of connection between the self, the other and the divine.**' By 'dynamic' I mean 'active', as playing a part in one's perceptions in evoking images and assisting in the construction of meaning.

The sacred in the ordinary and everyday has been universal until now, reflects Moore (2002). 'As far as I know, we are the first people on the planet not to have a religious and spiritual perspective on all of experience' (2002, p. 127). However, he also suggests that 'Transcendence arrives when you embrace the life that is given' (2002, p. xx). This is also affirmed by Campbell (1988).

For Fox, 'Spirituality is about heart-knowledge and about awakening the being in us. We need to learn just to be' (Fox 1990, p. 16). 'Just being' does not mean motionlessly staring and considering eternity, Merton (1962) concurs. It means 'developing the powers of creativity, justice, and compassion in all persons. It is about unleashing divine powers in us all. It is about grounding persons and communities in the powers that will enable them to survive and even flourish in the midst of adversity' (Fox 1990, p. 17).

Mary Austin (1977) writes about spirituality as producing a satisfactory philosophy of the soul by considering all activities of life. Perhaps it is not so much a philosophy of the soul, but really a theology for being human, for affirming our humanity in celebration. In this way, *splace* can contribute another dimension (Nuske 2006), a positive construct of spirituality for multicultural community.

My Spiritual *Splace*

Where am I as a Christian?

Before I can consider spirituality for community, in keeping with my autoethnographic methodology, I will outline my spiritual *splace*. A respect for the diversity of all spiritual expressions is grounded in a respect and knowledge of one's own spiritual expression (*Tacey 2000*). This is an attempt to place the core elements of my spiritual being, my idiosyncratic spiritual centre, into the light of day. Christian spirituality is truth for me. But it is more than a belief system. Christian spirituality is the evocative dynamic that resides in, or constitutes the *splace* within my consciousness. It has formed and shaped the contours of my being and is the source of my personal engagement with, or interpretation of, the world of human experience within family.

It is a struggle to articulate one's personal spirituality, especially when one is primarily a visual artist. Yet, this struggle to express oneself spiritually can be artistically productive (*D'Apice 1989*), despite the struggle. *EXTENSION 2 (Image 3, p. 29)* is a dangerous looking room divider with jagged shards crossing the angled planes of visibility and transference. It is a visual example of the treacherous spiritual journey I often feel I am experiencing. Currently I am moving from the safety of my traditional faith and metaphors into new territory. However, this is not to deny my Lutheran roots.

In acknowledging the Lutheran traditions from which I come, the themes of spirituality that have been significant in shaping my *splace* are:

- I am valued and loved and important to God, and with all my heart I love God.
- I have a place in eternity, both in terms of the here and now, and reaching beyond this physical life.
- Because I love God, and know that I am loved by God, I love others as myself.



Image 3: *EXTENSION 2*

There is more. I know I am a Christian. There is nothing else for me to be; but I cannot say how or why I am a Christian without relying on words that sound like clichés. I have no words to set in concrete; nothing profound to say - except perhaps through my art language. I have just an awareness of being in this state of puzzlement, being seemingly without dogged resoluteness and understanding. I also know that it is entirely acceptable for me to be in this particular attitude of mind and soul and spirit. I can not think it through anyway, as I do not know everything about myself. Further, it is certain that no-one can know everything about God. As Leo Bloom from *The Producers* (Brooks 2006) zanily comments, 'There is a lot more to me than there is to me'.

Paul Tillich, philosophical theologian, provides an expression of Christianity that has flown into my being and taken up lodging there. Here I found a *splace* to return my spirituality. Tillich's God is a purely immanent God. This immanence is supported by Purce (1974). God is the ground of our being or Being-itself. He or She is not 'a' being, but is beyond essential and existential, beyond finite or infinite. God is the absolute, but after this, nothing else can be said about God which is not symbolic (Tillich 1951). Webb agrees '...whatever we say about God is metaphorical' (1999, p. 111). We can only describe God from our finite reality, our human understanding. This is culturally-based (Carey 1984), and inadequate because God is beyond human understanding and beyond powerful, being 'The Power'. Hegel notes in Hodgson (1997, p. 144) that 'Being-itself is fulfilled as spirit'. Tillich writes:

God as Spirit is the ultimate unity of both power and meaning...It is the Spirit in whom God "goes out from" himself, the Spirit proceeds from the divine ground. It is the ground of all abundance, and it is abundance itself (1951, pp. 250-1).

Before this abundance is experienced, a certain 'courage to be' is needed.

'Courage is the self-affirmation of being in spite of the fact of non-being' (Tillich 1952, p. 152). Courage needs the power of being to transcend the anxiety of fate and death, the anxiety of emptiness and meaninglessness, the anxiety of

guilt and condemnation. This courage must 'be rooted in the power of being that is greater than the power of oneself and the power of one's world' (Tillich 1952, p. 152). The acquisition of this courage may be a journey in itself.

'The acceptance of despair is in itself faith and on the boundary line of the courage to be' (Tillich 1952, p. 170). This was good news to me and I thoroughly absorbed Moore's *Dark Nights of the Soul* (2004) where the 'dark night' is accepted as part of normal life, not something to be purged. De Caussade (*Burns and Oates* 1933), a seventeenth century monk wrote that the further you feel from virtue, the closer you are as nothing is left but God. It is self-abandonment to divine providence that heals, giving up the need to contrive. 'We conceive ourselves as authors of our own meaning and being, set in the midst of a world there for us to interrogate, manipulate, and control' (Ricœur & Mudge 1980, p. 4). In Farrington's novel (2002), a pensive former monk writes to zealous Brother James:

I am nothing. I have looked within, long and hard, for the soul that would hasten to God, and in the end I was not there. What is left when we get to the bottom of the self, when we have exhausted all our tricks? Real prayer is a disappearance, a surrender of deepening mystery, in darkness. In that darkness, finally, God alone is. And God is infinite surprise (Farrington 2002, p. 259).

The writings of Parks (1986) and Fowler (1980) tell me that these stages of faith are typical of my time in life. My recognizing 'the loss' status often integral to this stage of life is not bad in itself. In fact, it leads to the "courage of despair" when I accept the despair that comes from the meaninglessness of life. It is an act of faith (Tillich 1952). 'We expect God's presence to be thunderous, spectacular, monumental; but it is our need that is so large. The real presence slips past our demands for spectacle. It slips past our despair' (Farrington 2002, p. 37).

Being at Loss

By Flossie Peitsch, 02/02/06

I won't	I refuse to	
Lose the loss.	Lose them	Still, I must.
The loss	At last.	Still not wanting
Is all		Still not trusting
I have	The loss	Still at a loss
Of them.	I can leave	
	At least.	Being here
I will		Being-itself
Grieve the grief.	Without me	Is here.
The grief	Where are they?	
Is all	Who are they	So, I let
I have	Without me?	Them leave
For them.		At last
	I want to know.	Mom and Dad.
When that		
Is done	Without them	So
They are	Who am I?	Being at loss
Gone	Where am I	Still, Being is
To me	Without them?	Still so still
Forever.		At loss.
	I do not want to know.	

With this new insight, I was able to write *Being at Loss*. A burden left me. A hesitant lift entered my spirit – a *splace* was created. My soul found timid peace. ‘The God above the God of theism is present, although hidden, in every divine-human encounter’ (Tillich 1952, p. 180). I am beginning to look for and believe in the God above the God of Theism, as the woman I am.

Who am I as a Woman?

A part of looking for the divine is identifying one’s self at the nexus of being, creation. I see my feminine self in the eye of the divine, made in the image of a creative God. Being a woman is an important consideration of who I am in my *splace*. I effortlessly fit being female into my spiritual viewpoint. With *TRINITY VEST* (Image 4, p. 34, see Appendix 1: Thesis Overview CD, p. 175), I incidentally portray the female three-in-one view of Godhead (see Appendix 3 - Window 13: *TRINITY VEST*, p. 183). Doubtless, the morphed garment has been influenced by seeing ‘*Four in a Vestment*’ by James Lee Byars (Crumlin, Woodward & National Gallery of Victoria. 1998) many years ago.

TRINITY VEST is likely to be approved by Victorin-Vangerud, a theologian who has personally influenced my research. Victorin-Vangerud’s book, *The Raging Hearth* (2000), outlines a reconsideration of the Holy Spirit as



Image 4: *TRINITY VEST*

an equal person in the Trinity. It dismisses the idea of a 'flighty messenger' under the 'subservient son' and 'demanding father' (my words). This investigation, starting a process of re-figuring families and the church 'toward more inclusive models of human community' (2000, p. 68), would be considered radical thinking in many forms of Christianity. Buschart (2006) also encourages 'theological hospitality' which celebrates genuine diversity within society.

Gendered consequence goes back to the very beginning of Christianity. 'Death came through Eve, but life has come through Mary' (Jerome 1893) reveals the crucial roles females play in Christianity. Understandings such as 'For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb' (The Bible, Psalm 139:13) places women at the centre of the creation of life. The capacity to breastfeed (Figure 5, p. 35) inspires 'Like newborn babies, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation; for you have tasted the kindness of the Lord' (The Bible, 1 Peter 2:2). These and other sacred texts (Campbell 1990) affirm my female body, in all its fecundity, as essential to my splace. As a woman I have great status in the teachings of Jesus, in opposition to the dominant culture of his day and sadly, to a component of the church today.



Figure 5: Peitsch Sketchbook (2004)

Unfortunately, the Christian church still struggles with the legacy of the applied patriarchal system (Bouma, Ballis & Christian Research Association. 1999) inherited from Greek and Roman cultures. *Women's Role In The Church*

(Schaefer 1999); *Feminization Of The Divine* (Fox 1990; Tacey 2000), and *The Construct of the Trinity* (Kimmel 1992; Victorin-Vangerud 2000) present some of the duly provoked resulting theological contentions. With a charred miniature



Figure 6: Church Campfire (Peitsch 2005 - 2006)

steeple, the image *ALL FIRED UP* (Image 5, p. 37) can be seen as a warning to where this debate might lead (Appendix 1: Thesis Overview CD, p. 175).

It is noteworthy that the ancient Greeks and Romans gathered by a hearth, considering it a sacred centre (Murray & Price 1990, p. 192). The hearth still gathers people today (Figure 6). Nourishment, a seemingly female domain, and mealtimes within a close community, represent a ritual experience in many cultures; especially celebration of marriage. The domestic ceremony of



eating has also become the liturgical sacrament of the Eucharist (Peitsch 2000) (Figure 7), an important representation of the community of all believers.

Figure 7: TABLE EIGHT (Peitsch 2002b)

The 'Holy Communion' founded from the agape meal of the Bedouin tradition of hospitality was once a household event. As such, it must have been in the control of women who prepared the mealtimes. The development of first century Christianity with its predominantly patriarchal outlook, took it out of the home (Nuske 2006).

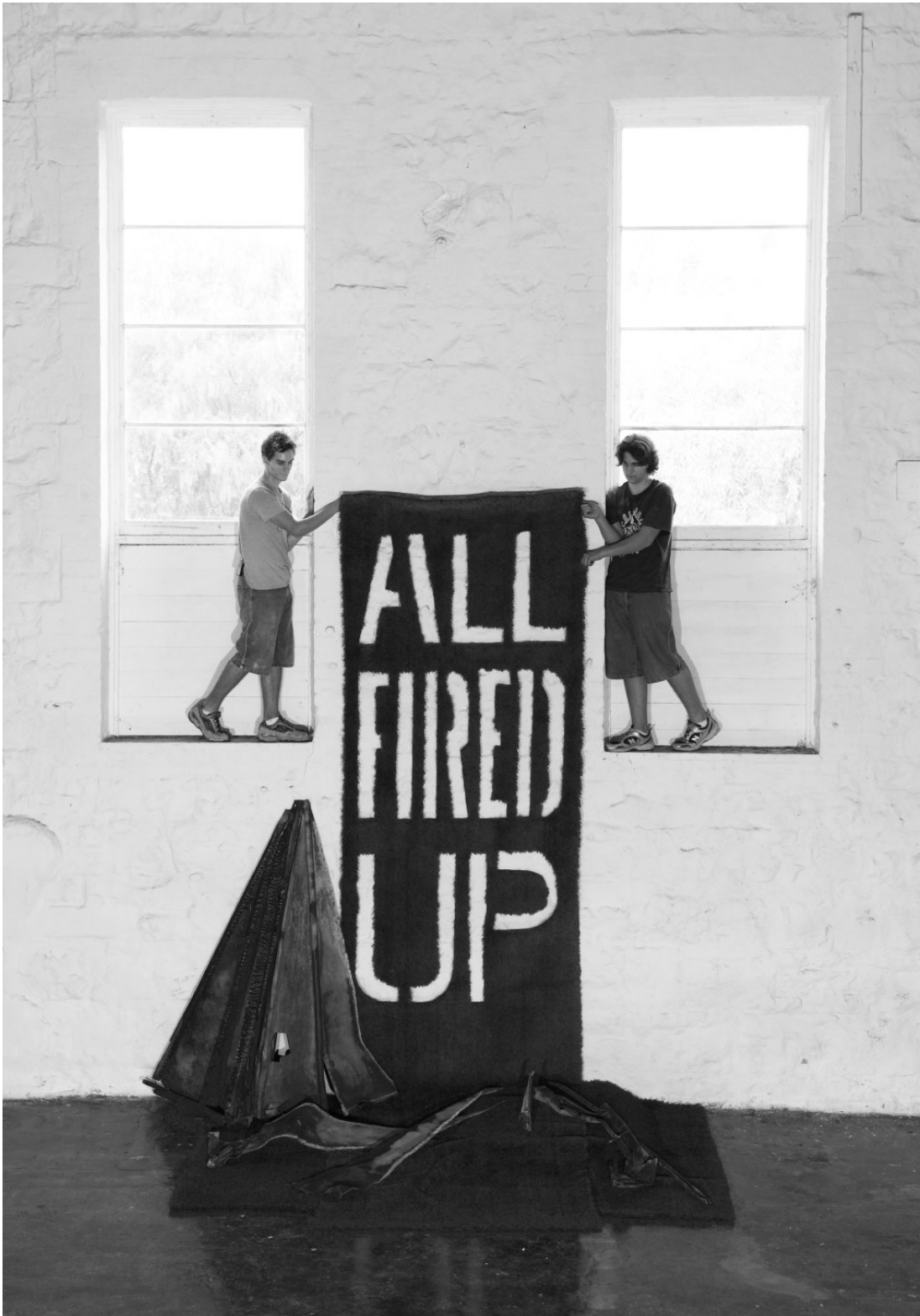


Image 5: *ALL FIRED UP*

Other writers, mixing home and espousing the idiom of traditional female and fertility imagery, are Bachelard (1964) and Moore (2004). Jung's (1963, pp. 213-4) words specially resonate with my interpretation of *splace*, 'From the beginning I felt the Tower as in some way a place of maturation – a maternal womb or maternal figure in which I could become what I was, what I am and will be. It gave me a feeling as if I were being reborn in stone'.

Having stated earlier that religiosity is not part of my research of spirituality, I have drawn on some church references because the church is a significant community for me (*Appendix 3 - Window 2: Church*, p. 178). The explorations I make about myself, art and spirituality are largely located within that community.

Why am I here in Community?

Besides the church, Australia as a spiritual community is significant to my *splace*.

There is no such thing as an 'Australian Spirituality' - or so many think. However, Tacey (2000; 2003) convincingly argues that 'a spirit of place' affects everything done here; even the world religions instituted in this country have been changed, despite themselves. Religion is foreign to the experiences of many in Australian society, but spirituality is not. In his chapter on 'Spirit and Place', Tacey (2000) describes the pull of a 'down-to-earth' spirituality with a mystical intensity, tangible to all inhabitants of 'the vast red land'. Australia is well suited to the notion of 'spirituality in the everyday'. Its indigenous people are aligned with a theology of the land, as indigenous artist Rover Thomas's (*Figure 8*, p. 39) work exemplifies.



Figure 8: Cyclone Tracy (Thomas 1991)

Anne Pattel-Gray, Indigenous theologian, writes 'It is only through our spiritual link with the earth that we can preserve our identity...To us the earth is sacred. We are spiritually bound to the earth' (Bähr 2000).

However, this important concept is taking longer for Anglo-Celtics to recognize. Observations of colonial visitor Sir John Lubbock in 1889 state 'The Australians have no idea of creation, nor do they use prayers, they have no religious forms, ceremonies or worship. They do not believe in the existence of a Deity, nor is morality in any way connected with their religion, if it can be so called' (Lang 1913, p. 5). These views, objectionable today in a more inclusive, culturally aware society, came from his personal, cultural bias in theology, a distorted form of Christianity. He was looking for signs of his personal experience of God, a heady mix of liturgy and creeds.

Figure 9: Eternity on Sydney Harbour Bridge (Williams, R 2000)



Australians, coming from a harsh, punitive society, developed a long standing aversion to formalized religion. Convicts from the First Fleet burnt the first

church to the ground a month after it was built (Walker 2000, p. 118). The church was another authority to thwart, not a *splace* to be. *Splace* was controlled and governed by the power structures of organized religion. Often images of family and home are tied with church, but not without ill ease at times; as

sagaciously related by turn of the 19th-century Australian writer, Joseph Furphy:

From my date of sprinkling until I was seven or eight years of age, we enjoyed no opportunities whatever of hearing the long-suffering Scripture perverted, suppressed and supplanted. Then providence, waking up to our higher wants, began to send round occasionally a stern minister... (*Furphy 1843 - 1912*)

A century later, Sydney presented a new sentiment to the world when on the eve of the year 2000, 'Eternity' (*Figure 9, p. 39*) blazed in fireworks on the Sydney Harbour Bridge. This image originated in the mid 1900's when Arthur

Stace (*Stell & National Museum of Australia. 2001*) was known as a wandering vagabond in Sydney. Claiming Sydney as his own, Stace had written 'eternity' a million times on its pavements - an original graffiti artist. 'He said eternity was something for all of us, something to lift us out of our ordinariness, out of our sin and give us hope' (*Croucher 1991, p. 274*). Sydney claimed 'Eternity' as its own. This official sanction was to a home-grown, down-to-earth spirituality.

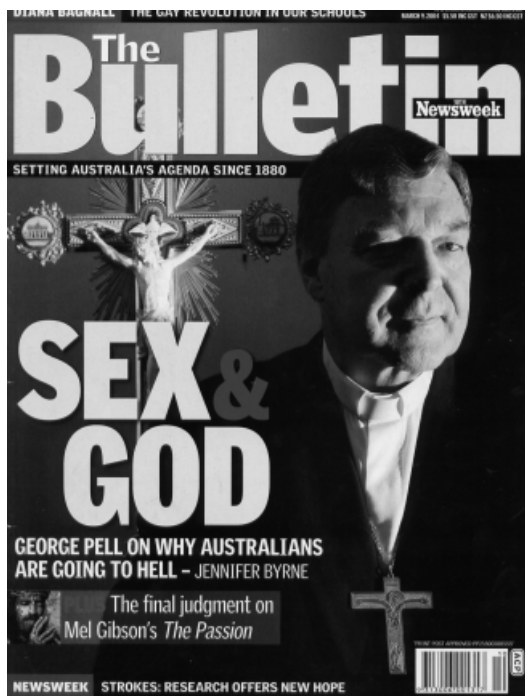


Figure 10: The Bulletin Cover (2004a)

Presently, Australia Day newspaper editorials such as those presented by The Age, eulogize 'Australian-ity' to the point of spiritual-ity. Current publications focus on popular spirituality; happiness and spirituality; spirituality and life decisions; and on the 'religion plus politics plus spirituality' triad (*Figure 10, p. 40*). In so doing, they frequently express spirituality as interest in 'the greater meaning of life'.

With the advent of globalisation and the influx of new cultures, *splace* in Australian society is now being reinvented (Bouma, Ballis & Christian Research Association. 1999; Mackay 1993). Transformation, decay, collapse and change are all factors. 'Who we are?' and so, 'Who am I?' are pertinent questions being asked (*Figure 11, p. 41*). Part of the spiritual impoverishment of our time is the absence of *splace* (Nuske 2006). Not surprisingly then, Tacey (2000) prophesizes the emergence of 'a new religious attitude' concerning community *splace* which will be purposeful, multicultural, diverse, tolerant and strengthening.

Community *splace* will have a focused redemptive dimension. Paradoxically, at the same time as a new awareness of inclusiveness has emerged in Australia, such aspirations have been problematized in recent struggles. These echo the earlier Catholic/Protestant history, and emphasize differences in religious structures rather than spiritual similarities shared across those divisions.

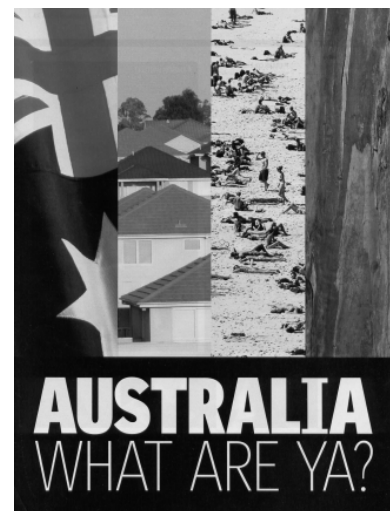


Figure 11: Feature Article (Bulletin 2004b)

Facing God

By Flossie Peitsch, 2005-6

I always thought God had a face I guess I was mistaken.	No picture to picture. Apparently, no image appears.	works for some. Currently, I'm at a loss. Looking profoundly, as God would,
A face I'd ever recognize But surely I am wrong.	The large empty cross, looming and stark has no hold on me.	Placeless Spaceless Faceless
Once His face was that of Dad. I didn't know it then.	A Christmas baby in a cot unseeingly stirs me not.	As unfounded as is found. As unseemly as it seems
Was my Mom perhaps. This too, is gone.	So how do I post my prayers? Where do I place my thoughts?	This unfound God unforeseen by me, appears to be Unseen.
His visage has vanished.	A winsome shrine	

The new religious attitudes envisioned by Tacey (2000) are evidenced in the DVD production *FACING* (Image 6, p. 44, see Appendix 2: *Soundscape/Visual Productions DVD and Notes*, p. 175 for colour version). Through art and sound, *FACING* is an exploration into the role of faith in building a harmonious multi-cultural society. My post-graduate peer group and I represent many home

countries of birth.

Together we performed a reading of the poem

'*Facing God*'. It is a

narrative about my faith journey, but could

represent anyone's

search for meaning in

life. Some students

interpreted the poem in

their own languages.

Participants, easily a

community already,

agreed to be recorded.

One emailed response

concerning the universality of '*Facing God*' was as follows:

Flossie,

It was a great opportunity for me to be able to translate your poem about God in my mother tongue MALAYALAM and TAMIL another language that I know. It was not very hard for me to do the translation in both of these languages, even though the words that you had used in your poem had a very deep meaning. I really thought it would be ok when it comes to the time of recording and did not read it another time before the actual recording. To be totally honest, I was spell-bound because of the depth and the meaning of the words you had used. Your imagination carried an incredible feeling. A feeling I never had experienced in my life. I wasn't able to speak my own language, which I am speaking every day. Truly, your poem was a lesson about God.

Cheers,

Siva (2006)



Image 6: Still from *FACING*, DVD production

MALAYALAM (Siva's mother tongue)

ദൈവത്തെ അഭിമുഖീകരിക്കാൻ
(Deivathe abhinmugadhasikkann)

എന്റെ അഭിപ്രായത്തിൽ ദൈവം ~~ഒരു~~ മുഖമുള്ളവനായിരുന്നു

പക്ഷേ എനിക്ക് തെറ്റി .

ഞാൻ വിചാരിച്ചു ദൈവത്തിന്റെ മുഖം എപ്പോഴും

നിറച്ചിയാൻ പറ്റുന്നതായിരിക്കുമെന്നു .

പക്ഷേ എന്റെ ധ്യാനം ഉറപ്പായിപ്പോം തെറ്റായിരുന്നു .

Figure 12: Siva's Mother Tongue added excerpt

This shared community experience has also profoundly affected my *splace*, adding to my experience of 'where I am and who I am spiritually'. Thirty years of experiencing 'Australian spirituality' have engendered an inimitable *splace* within me. This helps me to find answers to questions about why I am here in this distinctive ecology, with these and similar unique communal relationships. In many ways, Australians have become family to me and my children, adding to my birth family, and determining our future relationships. A deliberation of family, in both a broad and narrow sense, is a major consideration of my *splace*.

CHAPTER TWO: Family *Splace*

Introduction to Family *Splace*

‘Where I am. Why I am here. Who I am.’ in relationships

‘Silly Goose’, ‘Old Chook’, ‘Bird-brain’, ‘Big Rooster’ - there are many bird metaphors in the English language used to suggest individual and collective human attributes. ‘Feathering the nest’, ‘laid the golden egg’, ‘in the catbird seat’, ‘bird’s eye view’, ‘crowing’, ‘perched’, ‘roosting’, ‘cock fight’, ‘talk turkey’, ‘hen pecked’, ‘pecking order’ are some of the many bird words that punctuate human social positioning and relationships. An installation of nine wall-mounted birdhouses by Robert Macpherson (1987-89) at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, represents this phenomena. In my *splace* of human families in community, *NESTBENCH* (Image 7, p. 47) holds promise as a colourful feathered visual metaphor (Appendix 1: Thesis Overview CD, p. 175; Appendix 3 - Window 11: *NESTBENCH*, p. 182).

For better or worse, family *splace* is the most important vehicle of socialization in existence. It shapes the individual’s self-worth, world-view, and his/her personal spirituality from a very early age (Hartley & Australian Institute of Family Studies. 1995; Moore 1992; Peitsch 2002a). Families attempt to meet humanity’s basic needs – physically, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually (Wilber & Wilber 2000). In the absence of, or with the assistance of, religion, it seems that families answer life’s ultimate questions in various ways – ‘Where am I? Why am I here? Who am I?’ (Walsh 2003). As such, families can be seen as home for the spiritual self.

Most families adopt some form of expression and implementation of spirituality. ‘Over centuries and across cultures, spiritual beliefs and practices have anchored and nourished families and their communities.



Image 7: *NESTBENCH* detail

Families have lit candles, prayed together, meditated, and quietly turned to faith for solace, strength, and connectedness in their lives' (Walsh & Pryce 2003, p. 337). 'Be careful to recognize the ordinary and banal as yet powerful and significant in and for spirituality lived in the family home', suggests John Koch (2004), Lutheran Lecturer emeritus. Not to consider, discuss or apply spirituality within family *splace*, is also a form of religious perception and socialization. This, as other intimate social relations, occurs within the family.

However, 'family *splace*' is not always a place of fulfilment and contentment. 'Social relations, which are concrete abstractions, have no real existence save in and through space. Their underpinning is spatial' states French sociologist and philosopher, Lefebvre (1991, p. 404). His writings suggest the notion that *splace* is not only a tool of analysis, action and thought production, but is also a means of control. 'Splace is the locus for the potential birth of spirituality. It can also be the locus for despair' (Nuske 2006). Society is capable of this despair on a large scale, personified in holocausts such as Auschwitz and Dachau. To a somewhat lesser extent, the possibility of despair is also true within families and their homes.

The spiritual life within family is not a singularly successful life. It offers much with which to contend. Feminists and historians have disclosed the home as a place of repression, conflict and slavery. Moore refers to marriage itself as often 'a dark night of the soul' (2004). Anne Sexton was 'overwhelmed by the struggle of just staying alive and being with her family' (Moore 2002, pp. 120-1).

In the *splace* of the family, all aspects of spirituality can be experienced within a narrow field of reference. Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat (1996) developed an 'Alphabet of Spiritual Literacy'. Their criteria for the inclusion of diverse though suitable writings and reflections in their book fall under simple headings: attention, beauty, being present, compassion, connections, devotion, enthusiasm, faith, forgiveness, grace, gratitude, hope, hospitality,

imagination, joy, justice, kindness, listening, love, meaning, nurturing, openness, peace, play, questing, reverence, shadow, silence, teachers, transformation, unity, vision, wonder, the mystery, yearning, you and zeal. At its best, these are the heartbeat of family and home.

The starting point in the everyday as it exists in families and in family homes in Australia (Peitsch 2000) is a spirituality that is not associated with organized religion or limited to indigenous 'dreaming'. Here, the family is a microcosm of society (Holland 2003, p. 118), and spirituality is part of how the wider community relates.

Spirituality and Connectedness

The spiritual self in relationship is community

As evidence of natural spirituality (Elafi 1997), communities exist because individuals relate to each other over an extended period of time. Holland (2003, p. 118), writes, 'Family is the creative communion of kinship across time and space – reach[ing] outward in concentric circles to friends, community, and ultimately to the entire human family. Family is the fundamental cell of all society, the biological root out of which society grows. Society in turn is the family blown large.' Similar to Davies (2005) and Seerveld (2000) and suggested by Smith (1993), McGoldrick and Carter (2003) use a circular chart to illustrate the place of the spiritual self to the wider culture (Figure 13, p. 50).

The post-modern community is precisely about the relationship between place and space, a basic human need, according to T. Peitsch (2005) and Parks (1986). Noted by Relph (1976) and Downing (1994) stress that only the understanding of how and why the relationship between place and space is so important, will allow us to construct and safeguard the places that structure the major frameworks of our lives. This understanding helps us create not just a *splace* for ourselves, but a *splace* for and of the world. The idea of *splace* is fundamental to all human ecology (Crisp 1998).

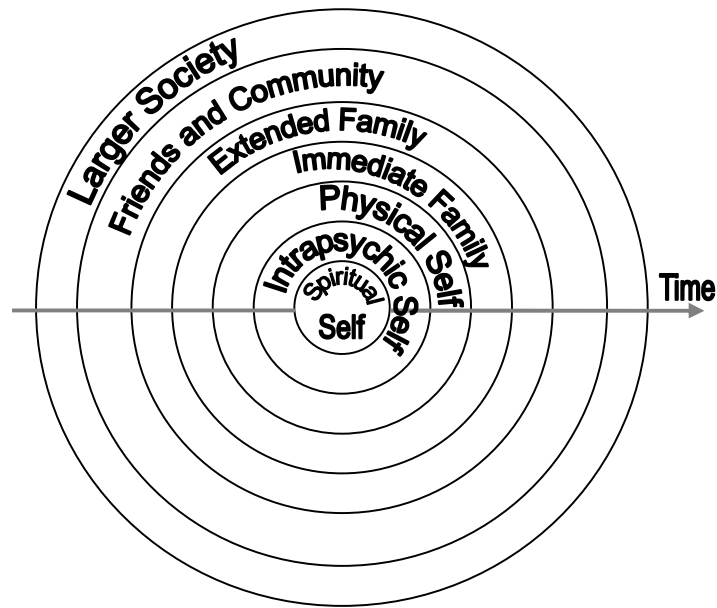


Figure 13: Community structure based on McGoldrick & Carder (2003, p. 379, Fig 14.1)

Community is the spiritual self's relationship to the wider family. Tacey (2003) underscores that spiritual concerns and beliefs have profound implications for healing and growth in community, and so, Walsh (2003) suggests that therapists should start with explorations of their own religious traditions and journeys.

I see the family, in whatever form one finds it, as a spiritual entity – not only consisting of a collection of immortal souls to be cared for, but also somehow appropriating the existence of the divine (Peitsch 2000). The home occupied as a sacred place, the site of ritual and of incubation (Walsh & Pryce 2003), is a place of realized spirituality, wherein occurs the ever changing, ever challenging journey called family. Part of the journey includes the changing family roles that come into play (Appendix 3 - Window 1: Home and Heart, p. 178).

My Family *Splace*

Homemaker

One family role is that of being a daughter. Strangely, my friend has just recently become a daughter. She had been lovingly adopted as a baby, and was now herself a mother of two. However, she did not see herself as having family until she recently traced, and was embraced, by her birth father and half siblings. 'No longer do I flounder with the feeling of being in the wilderness of isolation and solitude.' I included this newfound family in her commissioned painting *WILLIAMSTOWN MADONNA* (Image 8, p. 51) as a photo on the wall behind her abstracted portrait. Happily, this gave the painting the desired family completeness experienced by the owner (*Appendix 1: Thesis Overview CD*, p. 175).



Image 8: *WILLIAMSTOWN MADONNA*

Artist Louise Bourgeois finds the family a good source of material for art. This does not belie the difficulty of being forced to explore relationships that are

painful and difficult, as confessed by author Doris Brett (*Brett 2003*). Similarly, the *spaces* I have experienced within family and community have given me much to consider (*Appendix 3 - Window 5: Family Roles, p. 180*). Many simultaneous roles have been experienced:

daughterandsisterandwifeandmotherandfriend

In many ways, the several female roles I perform in the family have enabled me to be a homemaker, like countless women (and men) over the centuries, in many cultures. Here I propose that 'homemaking' is about creating and occupying family *space*, not about doing the household tasks. A passing tram advertises an aged care centre with 'Home is where the care is', a suitable slogan for any homemaking.

I have considered the specific roles of members in families through the writings of noted authors including: Alberti (1969) documenting Renaissance Italy; Murdock (1949) disputably defining family structure; Ariès (1962) tracing the daily life of children through the centuries; Winnicott (1986) defining 'the good father'; Foucault (1980) suggesting family as an instrument of control and power; Lacan's (1977) mirror phase for babies; Kristeva (1987) deconstructing choices about family; Badinter (1981) refuting maternal instinct; Moore (1992) observing family as the place of incubation; Hardyment (1998) being positive about the family of the future; DiQuinzio (1999); citing mothering as a point of contention in feminist theory; Williams (2000) outlining the conflict between family and work; and Steel and Kidd (2001) noting family stereotypes in the media.

I am also interested in offering my personal life experiences as a research source. I have been a daughter for fifty-three years, a sister for fifty-three years, a wife for thirty-one years, a mother for twenty-five years, and a friend for fifty years. This accounts for two hundred and twelve concurrent years of research. Processing of this research has also been occurring within these time frames, and will continue into the future given me.

Despite not upholding myself as a poet or a dramatic writer, poetic narrative and narrative prose as interpretive pieces have become important in my research, as they are expressions of my musings of being a 'Daughter, Sister, Wife, Mother and Friend', and of being a spiritual person who is part of home. Many of these writings refer directly to my changing family *splace*. 'Home is the foundation of our identity as individuals and as members of a community, the dwelling place of being' (Relph 1976, p. 39). I am reluctant to give up what I know about my family and community *splaces* where my being dwells, for a completely unknown future.

Doreen Massey writes 'We are always creating, in other words, not just a space, a geography of our lives, but a time-space for our lives' (Read 2000, p. 49). The time-space role in family *splace* is naturally, relentlessly altering. The *splacial* journey in family cannot be denied. Changing *splace* means I am on a pilgrimage like many others, yet somehow travelling alone. Though I do not like the thought, being cowardly at heart, as a homemaker I have entered the decades of loss and release (Appendix 3 - Window 6: Decades of Loss, p. 180). The many roles I hold are reliant on the family roles of others and the interpretation of those within and between us all.

Being Immortal, My Mother Does Not Now Live in a Nursing Home

A Response to Doreen Massey's Narrative 'My Mother Lives Now in a Nursing Home'

By Flossie Peitsch

**Once I lived at 106
West Avenue. That was
my home forever.**

**But this Forever
is short.
It came and
went so fast. I forgot to
remember it wouldn't last.**

No, that's not true.

**But I did always want
my home to exist.
I did always want to be able to
go home,
Put my hand in
a drawer
And take out what
I had put there,
Over thirty years before.**

**They sold 106.
I helped them do it.
I sorted, I kept,
I dumped, I cried,
I died.**

**So did my Dad.
So did my Mom.**

But that's not all.

**Like them,
Though I'm neither completely
There nor here,
I exist in completeness
all the same.**

**I'M MORTAL
IMMORTAL
NOW
the same
but not.**

You might think that I planned it. For my Mother to die, that is. You would be wrong for sure, though I may have seen it coming. The experience of her passing away is so crucial to my research. A gain I would gladly have lost. There was loss that she didn't come home with me after Dad died. There was the gradual loss of her conversation on the phone. There was loss when she came to visit me and my family for what was to be the last time. That is certain. My sister came along as a carer, as an interloper. My mother was not my own. She didn't look longingly at me as her daughter, but rather at my sister who accompanied her. It was my sister who received the accolades. I stepped aside. I was my mother's daughter's sister... It was loss when Mom became ill before leaving on the plane, and saying goodbye was too real. Then she wasn't allowed to live home on her own. It was punishing to have Mom live in a nursing home which I had never seen. My sisters made all the decisions but not as I would have done. They left much work undone, for later, for me. That's not what I would have done. My Mom and Dad had always been here for me, for us, at births and beyond. But it was not for me to help out now. Much loss. I asked Mom if she felt alright after the heart attack. She said she never felt worse, ahead of much more pain and loss. My Mother doesn't live now in a nursing home. I find I wish she did. I went home to bury her. I was there. But I don't believe it's true. I have pictures and many of her things now. I'm wearing her wedding rings. So it truly happened - but how? Gone is my place. I'm no longer a daughter. Gone is my space. I own nothing in Canada, not even a burial plot. Gone is my family. Whose funeral would I go back for now? And who would come out for mine? Gone is myNo, my Spirituality is intact. I'm okay. All of this is about spirituality. This is the event to be waited for. This is the reality ahead. But Death has no grip. This is what I base my life on... life despite death, life over death, life instead of death. Death is what I live now. Life is still to come. Most people would see it the other way around. But then this is not my home. I don't really belong here, on earth this is. I can say that it's still a struggle. As much as I struggle to write, I struggle more to imagine the truth, the way, and the life. And it can seem that the trees will outlast us all.

Daughterhood

Beginning as a daughter, the biggest change for me has been to no longer be someone's daughter (*Appendix 3 - Window 17: Excerpt from a Letter to My Sisters*, p. 186).

The Day I Lost My Sisters

By Flossie Peitsch 27/01/05

As if I could lose my sisters,
How unbelievable would that be?
Small and rare collectables,
No one else should need.

I was playing with them the other day,
Counting one to three.

They should be just where I left them
I always pack away.
But somehow, now they've been misplaced
Completely gone astray.

When did it happen?
Now let me think.

Was it growing up and leaving home?
Was it marriage and its kit?
Was I careless only of late
Or dislocating them bit by bit?

It wouldn't be my Mother's death.
Oh, no,
It couldn't be.

That may be so for someone else.
Certainly
Not for me.

I mean to visit 'back there' again
To Canada and Beyond.

*Never mind my own boys
Recently cast adrift
With no phone calls. no pics,
No letters, no lift.*

If I could only find those girls
And only find them home
Things would be
Just as before.

If I could,
I promise this,
I'd 'unlose' them all
Once more.

That role has finished, now but not before undertaking profound responsibilities for my parents and learning something about myself in the process. I also responded to my sisters' roles as daughters.

Sisterhood

None of us are now daughters. This made a difference in our sentiments toward each other. As a female child, my three sisters have been my 'other faces'. They are my generation. But what served as my *splace* in my birth family - likened to 'a place waiting for me at the home table' - will not serve me with them now. Though our love for each other as sisters has not changed, the catalyst for our getting together has gone. Through the death of my parents I lost my *splace* as a person of consequence in Canada. The fading of my homeland, surprising to me, even lost my *splace* with my sisters. From now on their own families, as mine, will have the strongest pull. But I was separated from my sisters earlier than this, through marriage.

Wifehood

I have allowed my sisters to be my 'other faces' - so that my husband can be seen as my 'other half' (*Figure 14, p. 58*). This is not meant in a stifling, fused, exchangeable manner. Rather, it is recognition that I have an essential, mutual commitment to my partner beyond all others. Rather, it is a bond of trust, love and friendship between both of us, requiring prioritized, extremely complex, continuous and effective input into our marriage (*Appendix 3 - Window 16: He's Gone, p. 186*).

Figure 14: Flossie and Tom (Peitsch 2005 - 2006)

This effort continues through all stages of a marriage. Recently I was commissioned to create a tapestry for the commemoration of a Fortieth Wedding Anniversary (*Image 9, p. 59*). The wife commissioned the work and supplied me with her father's war medals which I used to represent her children. Weekly, she excitedly inquired about the tapestry's progress. She was enthusiastic about attending the 'weft-cutting' formality and was touched by the incorporation of family history into the design. I believe culture is often passed on through celebrations organized by women (*Appendix 1: Thesis Overview CD, p. 175*).



Motherhood

First-time motherhood is something to celebrate. From the start, I have been beset with being a mother, deeply aware of the pros and cons. I am preoccupied with my own family *splace*, its particularities being the starting point for much of my recent visual art. While this is fascinating, being an artist and mother has been also a point of consternation (*see 'Artist in Residence' poetic, p. 88*). Zanette Kahler (2004), a fellow post-graduate artist, is investigating the possible effects of domestic space on



Image 9: *FORTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY*

Don't Bring Lilies

Flossie Peitsch, 20/01/06

*Don't bring her lilies.
They are the smell of death.*

We reached South Australia soon.
Her mother had died overnight.
I wanted to be there,
Would take the children too.

Quietly, I am now her Mum,
My boy to be her spouse.
Travelling along a parallel road
Looking for home as found.

*Don't bring her lilies.
They are the smell of death.*

I'd like to say it's over now
But that would be untrue.
Even with the hymns of hope
More pain she will endure.

Not Leanne, I mean, of course
But the girl who bravely sits.
The daughter was the mother too
This difficult to forget.

*Don't bring her lilies.
They are the smell of death.*

'Unwell but healed', I heard them say,
As if it were enough
To strip away that thread of life,
To die away decay.

Right now that truth
Is shrill and harsh
With comfort far away.
Furthermore, you need to know

Don't bring me lilies again.

Beauty defying the death of birth
Defining the birth of death.

women artists. She has had no problem eliciting heartfelt emphatic responses. Mirka Mora, now a Melbourne artist icon, remembers clearly the struggle to raise her children amidst artistic endeavours (*Figure 15, p. 61*), remembering the dates of works according to the birthdates and ages of her three sons (*Delany, White & Museum of Modern Art at Heide. 1999*).



Figure 15: 'Laughing Angel' (Mora 2003a)

At this time, my current stage of mothering is physically less demanding, reducing the stress significantly. The children have moved on from the earlier parentally dependent and emotionally demanding, high need stage. There are more adults in the family than minors, or at least, more adult bodies. Perhaps with the biting reality of some very difficult years fading, I am allowed to be more speculative,

Pricilla

By Flossie Peitsch, 2005-6

Yes, yes, I can see. That's her coffin up front Whitely entering this space.	Insuring no reality Really hits home And no one thinks too hard.
--	--

She took her life, I was told that day But I can't believe it's true.	Her deft action May yet be catching God have mercy on her soul.
---	---

Her family is wondering I should think, Where she has really gone.	<i>It shouldn't be me I wouldn't think But then, one never knows.</i>
--	---

As from far away England They scribe the text Bidding her fond adieu.	God have mercy on us all To not be snatched along.
---	---

Supporting her decisions To this point, to this bitter end Is very brave to say.	What is left Now she has left? Questions and endless loss.
--	--

<i>That wouldn't be me I shouldn't think But then, one never knows.</i>	Yes undying, yet clearly not. Yes strong, yet clearly not. Here yes, yet certainly not.
---	---

The celebrant sets the service Light, though sad And so sincere.	I wonder Where is she now?
--	-------------------------------

introspective, and philosophical about my life situation. The distancing allows space for more than an intuition to survive and decipher (*Appendix 3 - Window 18: Yesterday was my Son's Confirmation, p. 188*). With the recent acceptance of my parents' passing from this life, and the realization of time continuing to pass, my world has presently both diminished and settled. At the very least, at this time I do not feel the extreme pressure of being accountable to someone every waking moment. Nor do I feel in control of my family, nor feel a need to be in control (*Appendix 3 - Window 15: The Eve of the Eve of Christmas, p. 184*).

A new responsibility I have is as a future 'mother-in-law'. My eldest son is marrying in 2007. His future bride, Renée, recently lost her mother to a fatal illness. For years, as the daughter this young girl had mothered her own mother through a progressing disability, and cared for her younger brother. Renée's father has not been on the scene since her childhood. Surprisingly, I knew this family before Renée was born. Renée's mother and I were pregnant with our first babies at the same time, part of the same church and playgroup. I am, in effect, a mother to both marrying children, while having lost a friend in Renée's mother.

Friendship

I count the loss of any friend a tragedy. Friendships become more important as I become older. Life's complications and extended family responsibilities leave little time for these important others. True friendships offer as much as they take, a needed resource for life. Much friendship takes place within the home, as found in the writings of Anne Tyler, Jo-Ann Mapson and James Thurber. As consequential as family, friendships help to make home a *splace*.

Household as Home

House and home are interchangeable terms in my usage, and both refer to *splace* as a 'peopled place'. Further to this, home is a mobile concept. It is applied to any variety of places one might occupy during a lifetime, especially where *splace* holds warm memories (*Bachelard 1964*). 'Home' speaks to me of a place with people; people or the memories of them often being understood within the term. *HOUSEWARMING* (*Image 10, p. 65*) is a portable installation of wool and wood made in reflection of these thoughts (*Appendix 1: Thesis Overview CD, p. 175; Appendix 3 - Window 12: HOUSEWARMING, p. 183*). The distinctive scent of camphor impregnates the installation, as it would treasures from a cedar chest. I have often in the past used 'the house' as a metaphor for personhood in my art (*see LOW WALLS, p140, Chapter Three*). This metaphor is able to contain multiple messages concerning the essential relationship between human beings and their surroundings.

The Essential *Splace*

The home is the place of spirituality for the family.

'Home is where one starts from' wrote T. S. Eliot (*1940, p. 23*). This classic statement quoted many times over, justifies the study of the family abode on numerous levels. Walls of poetry, volumes of song, rooms of paintings, attics of trunks and albums of photos, all support this. Not only is home the place 'to begin from' but it is thought of as the place 'to return to'. Home is essential to



Image 10: *HOUSEWARMING*

the development of self and memory (*Bachelard 1964*). 'The house has come to symbolize a form of retreat for restoration and regeneration of mind and body' (*Crisp 1998, p. 12*). This comment implies the structure of the house as instrumental in *splace*.

For some, sacred *splace* of home (*Bender 1991*) extends to exist within the church. Now, Spirituality seems to be less cloistered now in the everyday physical environment of the home.

Today there is a shift from religious-based spirituality to secular based spirituality. 'I want to remind myself and others that our homes can [also] become sacred places, filled with life and meaning. We do not need cathedrals to remind ourselves to experience the sacred' (*Norris, GB 1992*). Traditional places of worship may no longer be seen as homes of belief for many. The buildings themselves may not be considered sacred places. Family homes may instead, or as well, constitute sacred places.

As such, not only is home the starting place, but it is a continuing 'container for the soul', credits Lawlor (*1997, p. 22*), writing an elaborate guide for sensual dwelling with spirit and imagination. Here 'each element of domestic space define[s] the setting where soul is transformed from raw energy into the myriad experiences of living' (*1997, p. 22*).

This tie is augmented in the Levi Strauss (*Hugh-Jones & Carsten 1995, p. 2*) assertion 'House, body and mind are in continuous interaction, the physical structure, furnishing, social conventions and mental images of the house at once enabling, moulding, informing and constraining the activities and ideas which unfold within its bounds.' So, a person is defined by the house, and at the same time, the house defines the person (*Churchill 2001*).

The family home, as the family, can be a disconcerting *splace*, a sordid mix of secret and scandal, tolerable only for fleeting visits (*Read 2000*). Historically, in Renaissance Italy the family home space and public piazza were not only the

sites of definition and inclusion, but of exclusion, execution, and territorial conquest, built as a stronghold for protection against war. In San Gimignano (Broadbent et al. 1995) for instance, hundreds of private house towers were toppled to demonstrate the destruction of the resident families. In synchrony, Wigley (1993) uses provocative chapter titles for his deconstructive writings on dwellings such as *Throwing up Architecture* and *Dislocating Space*. *The Architectural Uncanny* suggests the 'unhomely', *unheimlich*, interior as the propensity of the familiar to turn on its owners, 'the imperceptible sliding of coziness into dread' (Vidler 1992, p. 57). The Melbourne Festival of Arts 2004 held a visual art exhibition entitled 'Heimlich Unheimlich'. It offered a gallery full of haunting domestic installations. Home can be the generating *splace* of meaninglessness and destruction of spirituality. But the loss of home can also lead to despair.

With loss of home can follow intense grief, shock and helplessness, a disorientative attitude that is never fully recovered from or explainable. Displaced indigenous people, survivors of the Hiroshima bombing, just as those surviving devastating tsunami or bush fire, and even those merely dislocated by community redevelopment, all experience a brutal extrication that belies contemporary society's dismissal of the significance of home (Relph 1976). Such homes mourned for are not only bricks and mortar, roads and trees, but also the spaces constructed through history where we build through relationships with others - in the lounge, over the back fence, negotiating parked cars, barking dogs; complexities that are always in flux - fragile and fleeting, simple and complex, personal and culturally profound.

Attentive to the times in which we live, when books are not as commonly read as movies are seen, Brussat & Brussat (1996) point out that many cinema examples show the connection of home *splace* to spiritual self as central to the story line. I note recent films as - 'My Life as a House', 'The Lakehouse', and 'Just Like Heaven'. Movies of this genre further reveal the house to be the key point of individuals existing in the immortal now. John Berger (1984)

describes home as the centre of the world in an ontological sense. 'Without a home at the centre of the real, one was not only shelterless, but also lost in non-being, in unreality' (1984, pp. 55-6). Again, in Bachelard (1964, p. 7) 'Without it, a person would be a dispersed being'; true in a spatial and spiritual sense. But when home ceases to exist, it can continue as memory.

Remembered *Splace*

Downing (2000) explores the meaning to all of us of the memory of *splace*. She suggests that designers draw on their personal *splaces* of youth, especially the birth home, yard and family times, as the unconscious impetus for future designs. It appears that the more comprehensively designers can access their memory histories, the better they can incorporate this scene into new localities. Many of Downing's examples of personal memory *splaces* in her family have struck a cord with my own experiences. She describes playing under the table while the 'rellies' ate and drank, just as I did with my cousins. Her cubby house was as I had experienced mine: the scenery from the yard, and the creating of pretend 'walls' with dirt rows.

Memory holds true for both inside and outside *splaces*. I have a special bond in Canada with a four hundred acre woods we called 'The Bush'. I was married at this location because of the attachment. I can picture myself sitting on the banks of the babbling Cannaggajig river, wiling away a hazy afternoon. It was my place to dream. It was my exploring place. There my sister and I knocked the teeth out of a cow skull, saving them in a glass jar in my parents' basement for forty years. There, one persistently hot, weary summer, I hooted with the rest of my family when Mom found her bathers had become bottomless after laps afloat the river rocks. This moment of hilarity joined all of us to each other and this family *splace*. I am 'haunted by a profound nostalgic melancholy... this is still the place toward which my well-conditioned unconsciousness turns like an old horse heading towards the barn' (Stegner 1962, pp. 21-2). There I chartered new worlds.

‘Not only do memories affect us: we affect our memories’ writes Blythe (2003, p. 132). Memory is not the ‘outside of self’ experience it seems. Rather, in a short time, it becomes ‘our self’. When nothing of the original occurrence exists, what else can be real except what exists in our minds? The attributes that create memory are all our senses at one time, and in one place. It is not only sight. We are told that it is actually smell and taste that are the longest standing triggers for memory, providing the underlying essence or spirit of a place (Crisp 1998; Downing 2000).

Treasured garments like my mother’s and my shared wedding dress have the camphored smell of the cedar chest. I have kept an empty perfume jar, a scent worn in my stimulating undergraduate days. Sometimes I open it for a winsome sniff of the past. I remember that my old home had a particular smell upon entry - sawdust from the basement combined with closed-in dog’s bed at the door, both diminished by my Mom’s distinctively aromatic Germanic cooking.

Memory is based on actual experience and specifically does not exist without *splace*. It is the combination of the two aspects, space and place, that creates an awareness of what is *self* and what is *non-self*. ‘So we stand, reach, touch, see, hear, smell, shout and whisper our own existence, gathering our particular experiences within our growing sense of self. The non-self world is not just a necessary “other”; it is our experience, our life. This world is embodied by us’ (Downing 2000, p. 13). This point was reiterated in a chat with my eldest son, a struggling musician. I mentioned that despite the added cost of living away from home, I thought the experience was good for him. He responded, quite rightly, ‘Mum, it is not an “experience”. It’s my life.’

Remembered *splace* blurs the line between self and other. Just so, *splace* can blur the line between life and art. As with Andy Warhol’s Time Capsules (Warhol 2005), the contentious display of collected, dated and boxed personal paraphernalia, Mirka Mora’s (2003b) cluttered but loved home is an example of

this phenomenon. Both artists' unfettered collections are attributed to, or contribute to, art. Lowenthal (1985) attests that things from before, as memories, allow us to live at once in the present and past, to immortalize existence. Art can house this *splacial* occurrence. Art has helped me to make the transition from my foreign past in Canada to a nearly foreign future in Australia.

As to Homeland

Homeland is the future I chose when I moved to Australia. It is now *splace* for me. After living here all my adult life, I am now becoming aware of the enormous cost involved in making this so. Now I realize like the Benedictine monks in North Dakota not wanting to relocate their shrinking community... 'If you take us somewhere else, we lose our character, our history, - maybe our soul' (Norris, K 1993, p. 9). So, place is an important consideration.

In his way of making places for everything, my father made beautifully crafted wooden cases for cassette tapes, as any artist would - each signed and dated. My set of seven cases incorporated within the cardboard palettes that carried my inherited furniture to Australia and blocks of wood from Dad's special stockpile, were as a portable household shrine or a city skyscraper. I remember the proportional playfulness of Claes Oldenburg's constructions and Louise Nevelson's imposing but domestic wooden structures. *SOUND PACKING* (Image 11, p. 71) is not intended as a shrine *to someone*, but a memorial *of something* – my far-away past (Appendix 1: Thesis Overview CD, p. 175).

My past includes distinctively Canadian dwellings. Abel (1997) writes extensively about how architecture is not something we 'have', but something we 'are'. Many overseas settlers took with them their sense of culture in the form of building styles when relocating.

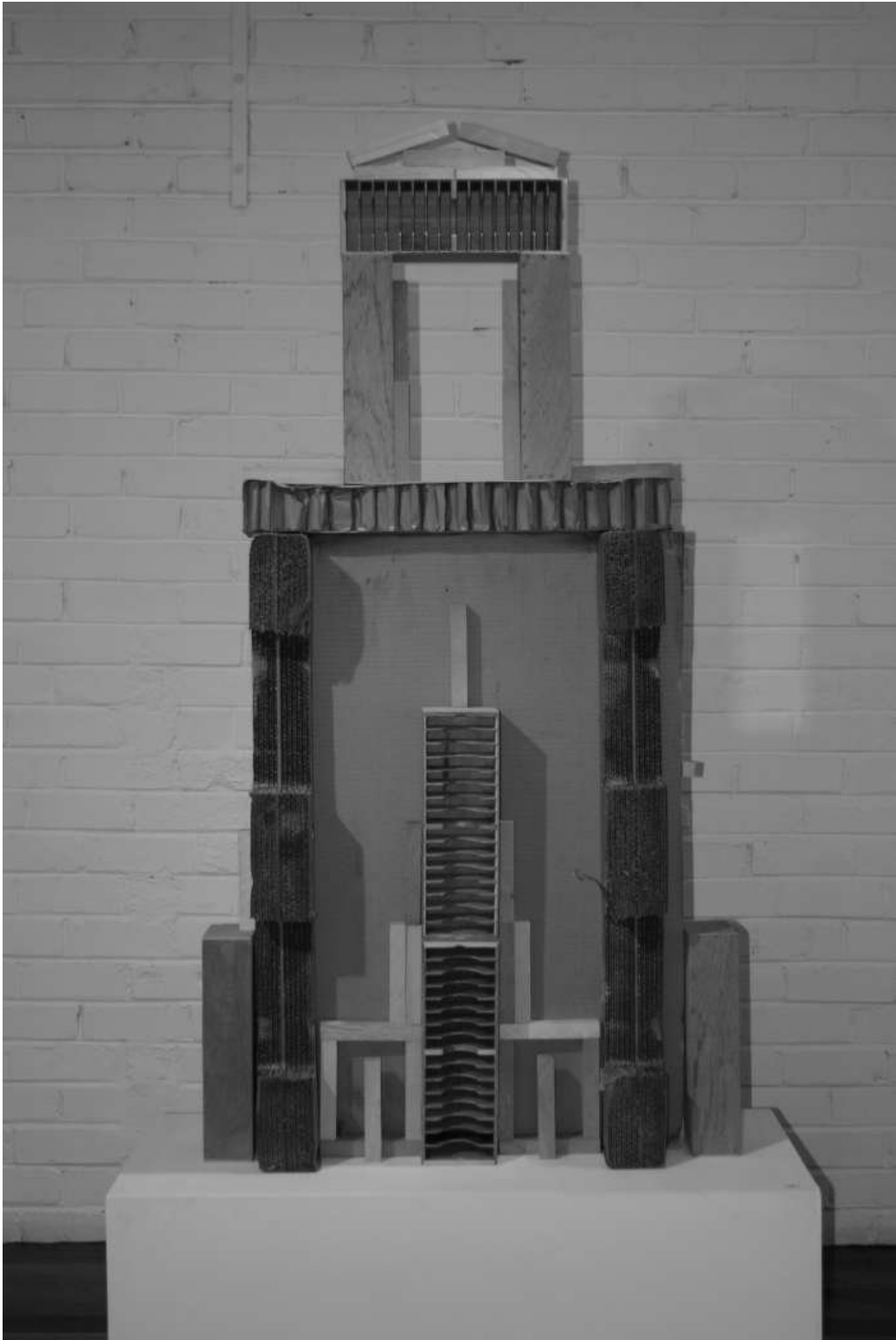


Image 11: SOUNDPACKING

This is evidenced in the English gardens and grand civil structures and homes that are familiar wherever the British Empire colonized. Because of this I felt 'at home' upon first arriving in Australia. I recognized a very similar architecture to that which I had experienced in Canada, as demonstrated in the sophisticated 'portable home' installation by a Korean artist Do-Ho Suh (1999), the buildings for habitation and the ways the land is divided up, are among the original ways in which culture knows itself. This is why asking the question 'Where are you?' helps to tell you who you are (Abel 1997). Mayes (2003, p. 96) goes further, pronouncing 'Where you are is who you are. The further inside you the place moves, the more your identity is intertwined with it'. *Splace* is derived from many culturally and historically based sources. It is an expression of the similarities as well as the differences among civilizations. The outcomes of *splace* cannot be ignored.

If I describe myself as an immigrant to Australia, arriving without mother or father, husband or relatives, and without knowing a single soul, it would explain my intrigue with the concept of *splace*. The fact that this arrival was thirty years ago; my new husband arrived only three months later; my parents visited me ten times; all my six children were born here; and I speak fluent English - may cause wonder about all the fuss and interest in this notion. Surely, by now one would think, there must be no question of where I feel I belong. However, my experience holds implications for many current residents in Australia.

The experience of family and its connectedness or detachment, is a lifetime issue - all the more for immigrants (Falicov 2003; Mackay 1993). Garrison Keillor (1985) remembers Lutheran Norwegian settlers in Minnesota.

Homesickness hit the old-timers hard, even after so many years, and it was not unusual...to see old people weep openly for Norway or hear about old men so sad they took a bottle of whiskey up to the cemetery and lay down on the family grave and talked to the dead about home, the home in Norway, heavenly Norway (1985, p. 64).

Similar to those Lutherans, my German speaking Lutheran mother often walked me through my family's cemetery in Canada, visiting late relatives. With her, the details are now lost to me. Home, whether found or not, is a place of the heart's longing. Within the family home, immigrants' routine family interactions importantly mix the old with new cultures, integrating continuity with change (Falicov 2003).

I wish to illustrate this premise with the example of 'The Engagement Gift'. Recently I presented my son Matthias (Figure 16, p. 73) with a gift relating to his personal family heritage for his upcoming marriage. It is a small, simple, old fashioned, hand painted wooden Russian toy; a farmerette feeding four



chooks. I explained that it represents both his maternal grandmother who loved raising chooks, and his father's family who is of Polish/Russian derivation.

Figure 16: Matthias Peitsch (Peitsch 2005 - 2006)

Stories hold great significance to an immigrant family such as mine. I often relate the story of how I came to arrive in Australia. 'It is a mistake to think of this storytelling as merely a quaintly nostalgic or sentimental self-indulgence. Much of it serves to create a coherent narrative past and makes meaning out of inevitable changes and transition into present circumstances, as well as hopes and dreams for the future' (Walsh 2003, p. 293). Astley (1996, p. 191) writes 'that the family, like any true community, is structured by story'. My children are reminded of my foreign past while I build connections with the new country through them.

As in the separation from families, the separation from 'home' and its stories is accentuated for immigrants. Those of us, who left all semblances of a physical home and supporting blood relatives when we crossed the border into Australia, have moved from home forever. It cannot be reclaimed even if

we physically travel there. We are changed along with everything else – family, language, culture, interests, priorities – altered by memory and time (Heyman 2006). This actuality applies both to those who have immigrated as well as to those having moved out of home. Equally for both, the home remembered cannot be revisited.

Attempts to revisit home have been creatively addressed by my husband's widely dispersed family. The siblings, from points overseas and within Australia, have a restricted access website called 'The Front Porch', where they chat to each other about family – mostly aging parental concerns. It is a *virtual* place of communication likened to the actual front porch of their family residence. Once a common North American custom, Keillor cites a porch etiquette which hallows the porch as 'no finer amenity...the *temple* of family life...the *sacred preserve* of the luxurious custom known as "visiting" (Keillor 1985, p. 132). Since religious feeling takes form and shape at home (Moore 2002), such religious labels apply effortlessly to familiar practices of natural spirituality (Elafi 1997).

Strong links exist between family, home and religion. Kathleen Norris' (1993) 'Dakota: A Spiritual Geography' outlines her remarkable discovery of self and spirituality by travelling back to the inherited home of her Grandmother. We are told that as creating relationships with other people is part of our basic humanity, so is our need to attach to place (Relph 1976).

This attachment to place can take unexpected turns. The arborist who cut down our huge gum tree sawed a chair into the stump and engraved it deeply with my young daughter's initials 'P H P'. Her brothers arrived home to take indignant swipes at the chair with a stray steel pole. They felt displaced in their own yard. I collected old fence palings for a future art project (Plate 15 & 16, p. 129), piling them in a corner of the yard. Soon my 13-year-old son, Ezra, fashioned a lean-to humpy ostensibly for the dog, but he was able to fit neatly inside too, as was his brother (Figure 17, p. 75). At any age people seem to be

looking for their *splaces*. The immigrant has lost hers, never wholly refinding it - thus required to create a new *splace*.



Figure 17: Thaddaeus and Priscilla (Peitsch 2005 - 2006)

I looked for home during my time in Canada following my mother's death and the painful disposal of her things. I was faced with a clear understanding that nothing would be enough to refind the essence of home (*Appendix 3 - Window 4: My Mother's Splace, p. 180*).

I noticed the slant of the light on the buildings, the humidity on my face, the cracks in the sidewalk, the distance between driveways, the sound of the buses, the angle of the hills, the sound of the distant school buzzer, the sound of the phone, the taste of the pumpkin pie, the touch of the lush grass, the fresh smell of the forest, the colour of the birds, the humour of the jokes, the lilt of the laughter, the distances between here and there, the length of the day, the greying of the church spire, the bumps in the road, the hardness of the cement. All this defied recording, having imperceptibly, over time, generated my space in Canada. All were factors in my changing life now gone since. I felt keenly aware and at great loss. The links with that home space had slowly become tenuous and intangible, even the vivid noting of details on this final visit could not sustain them.

I became certain of how this loss of 'home' affected me through a dream I had some time after I arrived back in Australia. I dreamt that I could not find my passport. I started looking in my Mom's things but, while dreaming, realized that it could not be there because all her things were gone. Next I looked in my sister's things. It was not there either. Then I saw myself finding the passport in the travel folder on my desk in my home where my children and husband live.

Passport

By Flossie Peitsch, 04/02/06

(Sung to the Tune of Jimmy Crackcorn)

*Passport's done and I don't care,
Passport's done and I don't care
Passport's done and I don't care
My home has gone away.*

Upon waking I realized that I did know where I belonged after all. I would not be seeking my identity in Canada again. Later I penned the trite ditty 'Passport's Gone'. Clearly, my faithful role at home in Canada is finished; but just as clearly, there is more family and community in which to invest.

Housework In community

Faithful service and community work takes many forms. This is represented in the soundscape/visual production FAITHING (*Image 12, p. 78*), a six minute DVD which developed as an outcome of these themes, co-produced by Omega Music. Though a spiritual journey can be isolating, no one is completely alone. There are other travellers with whom to connect. At times community is supportive and at other times, it is a trial. At all times, joining seems to require stepping out. The Peitsch family starts from a safe enclave. Without looking back, each strides into a separate future, donning an 'apron of service' in the process. Each is surrounded by a crowd of voices, seemingly from within and without. Each takes nothing but who he or she is, offering 'self' from that deep place which has been formed in their personal experience of remembered *splace* (*Appendix 2: Soundscape/Visual Productions DVD and Notes, p. 175*).

Being true to one's self can already be a service to community, especially when part of being true to one's self is commitment to nurturing children. In my case, the essence of 'housework' is directed energy, usually applied when rearing children, needed to orient family or community members to be useful or valuable to others for the greater good, or imparting the required reasoning for such actions. According to Vergote (1980), within community, ideally every person experiences unconditional acceptance from the others, and good will at all levels.



Image 12: FAITHING

Dogmatics

by Flossie Peitsch
10/02 - 04/02/06.

'Beware of Dog'
Is no more
Only
'Beware of God'

A lonely family
Had a dog,
That little dog
Has died.

Who knows?
Who cares?

I do,
I do.
Does God?
He used to.

Though not today.
He wasn't
Looking but
He used to.

Dog gone
And
God gone.

Doggone.

Be aware of dog, God.

The community as self, and the self as community, affords mutual acknowledgment.

Vocation

John Koch (2004) suspects that 'the expression of spirituality in the home and family, and communication with the "other" in the process, is more intuitive than it is conscious and intentional – people are more likely to be involved in being spiritual than reflecting on spirituality (active spirituality rather than meta spirituality)'. Schaeffer (1983) affirms the importance of a solid offer of service to community. Part of this active spirituality can be service to others, simply by being available to them.

This spirituality may take the form of managing household duties or daily work undertaken outside the home (*Stackhouse 1997*). Either of these work situations can be referred to as 'vocation'. Luther (*Tappert 1959*) calls vocation a function or station in life to which one is called by God, such as the vocation of marriage, a particular occupation, business or profession, or a strong impulse or inclination to follow a particular activity, career or path of service. I put my art practice soundly into the category of vocation, as I do my marriage and the raising of my children. My vocation is also one of community service through community art. A good example of strong vocational undertaking is found in the historical figure with whom I became familiar - Caroline Chisholm. Her vocation, influenced by her open-hearted upbringing and Christian spirituality, was one of community service through social interaction.

Caroline Chisholm

It is rare to find a faithful person who embraces the perspective and celebrates the hope of the whole human community. I found such a person in Caroline Chisholm, a colonial immigrant to Australia from England, and a true humanitarian. To me, she exemplifies community – in spirituality and connectedness (*Appendix 4: A Kindred Spirit - Caroline Chisholm, p. 191*).

‘Caroline was a woman looking for a home’ (*Stevens-Chambers 2004, p. 1*). This sentence is also true of my life. Perhaps this is my strongest connection with Chisholm. It is a fantastical dream of mine that by thinking hard and long, maybe I can create my *splace* in Australia. Maybe by doing this, I can recognize the *splace* of my own family, and so, ensure a *splace* for all others.

As I have proceeded with my PhD, I have often felt discouraged, as if I’m working against impossible odds. Then I wish I could talk to someone else doing fulltime research who has a wide-ranging topic; must raise funds to realize their projects; has a restrictive completion date with no secretarial help; is raising six children - four of whom are teenagers; has no extended family support, or domestic help; has limited finances, energy, time; and whose husband’s work requires his frequent absences. Not surprisingly, no one comes to mind easily.

Then I read about Caroline Chisholm in a brief newspaper article of her and her work and history in my part of Victoria (*Murphy 2004*). I recognized a kindred spirit, only much more than I could have imagined. My complicated lifestyle and profession seemed frivolous when compared to the arduous life of this woman of high spiritual conviction and practical action.

I realize that within colonial Australia, Chisholm is the successful embodiment and compassionate visionary of just the issues I am researching now. My study also brings me to the close investigation of *splace*, spirituality, and families. Dealing with all of these, Chisholm achieved astounding social

results, helping over ten thousand people find a secure, safe home in Australia (*Hoban 1984*).

For many, family *splace* is the first opportunity to give service to others. In the Australian Government's Wellbeing Manifesto, everyone is encouraged 'to help people develop the skills to build stronger family relationships' (*Hamilton, Eckersley & Denniss 2005*). It also states that 'wellbeing comes from having a web of relationships...family, friends and spiritual beliefs can all increase our wellbeing.' Finding these relationships in life through common experiences can be a challenge.

As a visual way of seeing through 'otherness' and connecting in a mutual respect for each other through the recognition of giving a child in marriage, I chose to share the small private, family ritual of presenting 'The Engagement Gift' mentioned earlier in this section, with assembled participants, from many cultural backgrounds, in my presentation at the 'Narrative as Research' symposium (*2006*). I called my son to the front of the room and spoke to him about the gift, my workshop participants being the witnesses. I needed a community with which to celebrate; the participants needed the model of self narrative as creative incentive. All were rewarded by the faith we had in each other's interest beyond ourselves. 'The truest faith, then, is the faith that embraces the perspective and celebrates the hope of the whole human community' (*Marstin 1979, p. 44*). 'Self in service to others' may be part of the construction of the meaning of life as found within the interior self, in other words, within one's *splace*.

Though I am part of a family and the wider community, part of my *splace* is recognizing my need to be a separate, creative individual. Each person has a need to be a creative individual. I have realized that as a creative individual, I am a visual artist.

CHAPTER THREE: Artistic *Splace*

Introduction to Artistic *Splace*

'Where I am. Why I am here. Who I am.' in Creativity

Being an artist shapes my process of self-actualization. I use my family and spiritual *splace* to interpret the world through my art practice. My resulting *splace* comes with making meaning out of meaninglessness. My installation of eight wooden chairs, *EIGHT UNSEATED* (Image 13, p. 83), hanging at odd angles and animating a jaunty curve on the gallery wall as an image of artistic *splace*, represents the artist on an arched trajectory (Appendix 1: Thesis Overview CD, p. 175). She is projecting herself beyond intellect and expectation, 'up in the air', only the unknown being a certainty, with the flying and the fall inevitable.



Image 13: *EIGHT UNSEATED*

In *Art And The Question Of Meaning*, Hans Kung (1981, p. 39) emphasizes that the artist, should not leave unanswered the great questions of ground and

meaning; 'to know whence we come, whither we are going, who we are'. The artist who knows this makes possible a new relationship with the past, the present and the future. As these questions have traditionally been answered in terms of religion (*Smith, H 1994*), parallels between both art and theology become clearer. This 'spiritually profound' process is casually or confidently endorsed by the works of artists themselves; Dali, Duchamp, Gonzales Torres, Kandinsky, Nador, Newman and Picasso, and many more. For example, Newman wrote that 'the very process of creating an original work of art is a morally affirmative act, and this is something that artists since time immemorial have at least instinctively believed' (*Golding 2000, p. 202*). Assertions such as this focus the attention around spirituality and creativity in the process and outcomes of art.

Furthermore, considering the genesis of artistic import, Langer (1957) finds that there is more to art than mere intellectual assent. Rather, art speaks emotively to 'the ultimate realities themselves, the central facts of our brief, sentient existence' (1957, p. 260). Theologian John Cobb (*Norris, K 1999, p. 59*) describes artists as vessels or conduits of the divine, and Oscar Wilde (1970, p. 45) sees artists as the only people who can inspire Hope in a sometimes hopeless world.

Creativity and Spirituality

Being 'creative' suggests a 'spiritual' process, and being 'spiritual', a 'creative' process. At the centre of this suggestion is 'the notion of human beings as co-creators for the cosmos is a work of art given to us from the hands of the creator. It is not a particularly Christian thing because art is a cross cultural phenomenon' (*Nuske 2006*). An additional notion is 'Art is religion, religion art, not related, but the same' asserted by Coomaraswamy (1956, p. 62) in 1934. Referring to the history of art in society, Coomaraswamy comments on perceptions of religion, spirituality and art. While the now slippery concepts of art, religion and spirituality may not be interchangeable, a similar search for

meaning is suggested. As Hegel (1975, p. 46) writes, 'The task and aim of art is to bring home to our sense, our feeling, and our inspiration everything which has a place in the human spirit'.

Other authors including Coleman (1998), Gamwell (2002), Kuspit (1986), and Tillich (1952), agree that creativity is spiritual, although not as unequivocally as Coomaraswamy does. Moreover, Forrest (1981), Eco (1986), and Harten (1999), perceive the artist as both priestly and prophetic within community. This is why they regard art as more than the sum of paint, canvas or metal presented merely as diversion or decoration.

Creativity, aestheticism and spirituality may not be interchangeable, but they are integrally interrelated (Coleman 1998, p. 185), often being located together. For me, this was never more apparent than when I visited Florence in 2004. Here, viewing masterpieces from the creative impetus of the renaissance period, I became profoundly aware of the creative power of the interaction between the above three elements.

My Artistic *Splace*

Who I am In Artistic Outlook

It is hard to look past Italy as a centre for creativity, aestheticism and spirituality in the works of Fra Angelico, Donatello, Giotto and Michelangelo. I found that the sketches and paintings (*Image 14 & 15, pp.86, 87*) I completed in response to such masterful inspiration were an answer to desires formed in my student days. I had travelled to Florence as an art student over thirty years earlier, visiting the same art, buildings and museums, wishing that I had the ability to capture something of their essence in my art. Now, in 2004, I had returned with better drawing skills, only to realize my artistic sensibilities had altered. Unlike the ephemeral journal sketches of Adele Flood's *Journeying Pen* (2006) , I did not want an impressive travel log to be my final art outcome,

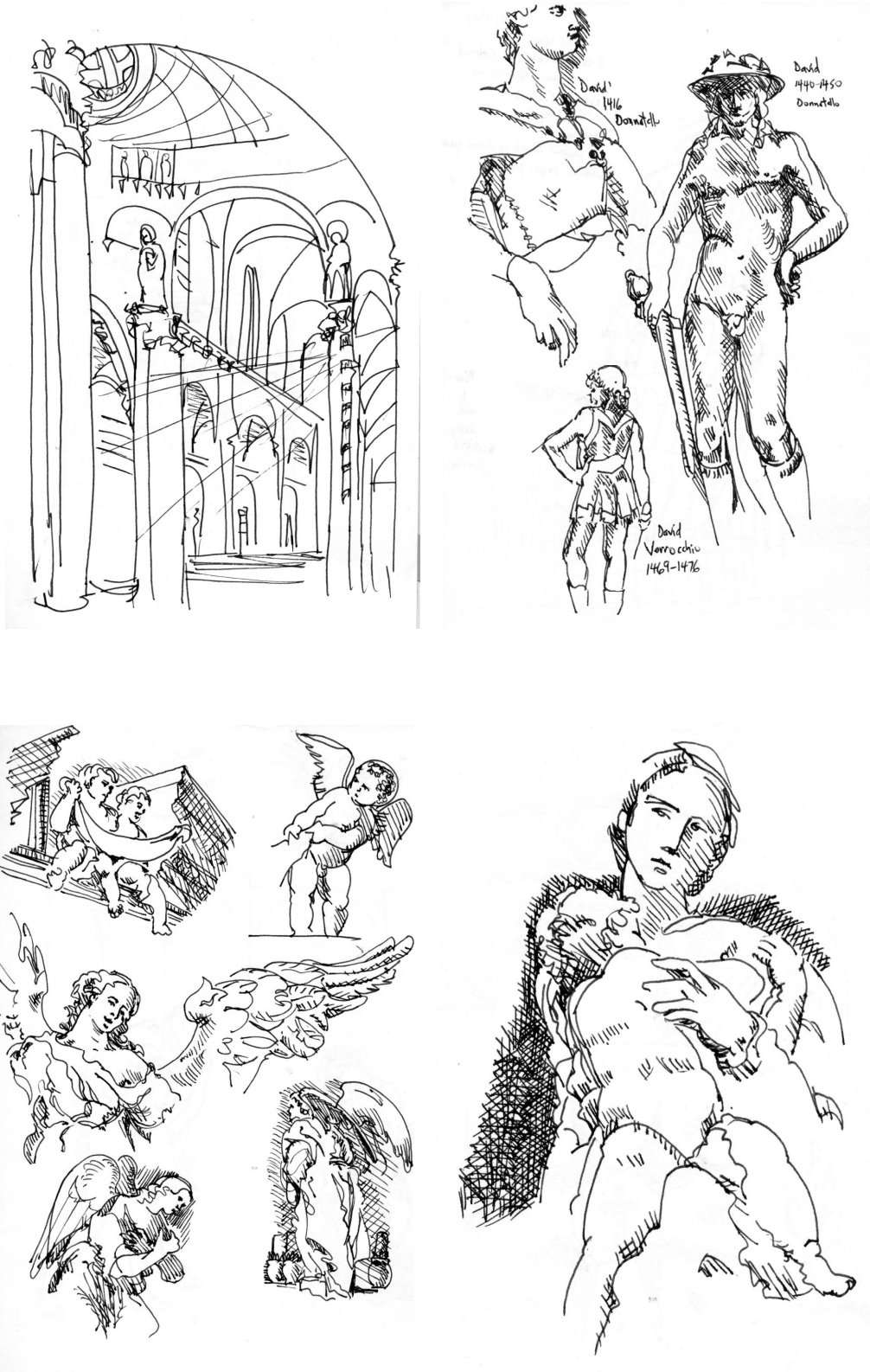


Image 14: Sketches in Italy



Image 15: Paintings en plain air, Italy

Artist-In-Residence

A Spoken Duet for Two Voices

An Artist for a Mother

Is there any way that my domestic environment does not influence my creative output?' The answer is a simple 'No'. You see, it's 9:30 pm and is the first chance I have to consider my day. This is evidence in itself that my domestic life competes entirely with my artistic practice. Today I took one child to piano lessons, then to the masseur. I visited another child's School Band Performance at the shopping centre. While there, I shopped for eighty-six (86) cartons of milk, pies for Tea and luncheon meat. I sat in the car a few minutes waiting to see who would need a lift home from the performance. Then I drove to the primary school for Assembly. After dropping off the groceries I picked up two more for Dentist appointments followed by taking two others to the Optometrist. One boy I'm teaching to drive the car. Other drop-offs and pick-ups occurred. At seven I got home to make tea and give my apologies for a secondary school Evening Meeting. By the time I chased some onto the piano and others off the computer, I was in no mood to be 'creative'. Today my creativity was invested in staying sane. Admittedly, not all days are like this. Some are worse. Sometimes I am totally, completely, fully immersed in my art all day and then I lament having missed out on 'home life'. I can't please myself. Family and art, I do so want it all.

A Mother for an Artist

The other day I thought to myself that I really could use a 'mother' about the place, the old-fashioned kind, like my mother was who quietly kept things going, orderly and clean. She would know where the piano books were. She would put away the dishes. She would do the ironing and not even grumble. She would have time to listen. Now I think that maybe it's not really a 'Mother' I need but a 'home-person'. Even years ago, mothers had hired help; though it is not within my budget. I could be that Helper if I didn't have this ridiculous idea that I should be doing art. When the children were small I did all the homely things because I was home with them. It was sort of fun then. Now, I don't want to be the one to be doing it, though I think housework is important. I have no time or energy for all that, while I'm investing myself in art. I don't ever remember being referred to as a 'housewife' nor would I appreciate the term, but I wish there was one in my home.

but rather a 'means to an end'. The sketches were to be only one part of the process in developing an artistic response. In this way, I saw myself as an artist on pilgrimage in Florence, and metaphorically on a pilgrimage of the immortal now.

THE IMMORTAL NOW: Visualizing the Place Where Spirituality and Today's Families Meet, is my approach to art as visual theology, responding to creativity, aestheticism and spirituality. When I began this work, I was searching for a renewed *splace*. However, 'the place', as such, that I clearly

expected to visualize at the start of my PhD studies, had not yet eventuated. My revelation was that I would never actually find a *fixed place*, but would enter a journey which I now call *splace*. As a result, each installation developed as a place of spiritual *process* not as an imagined *location*. In this process, I found that my personal positioning is all in keeping with an

autoethnographic process (see *Prologue*, p. 10) of self-discernment (*Tamboukou 2006*).

Through this self reflection, I have moved through the difficulty of articulating my art, dependent on the expression of my personal spirituality. The spirituality both evokes images and inspires creativity, while itself being redefined by those images and creativity. In this way, the art becomes a form of theological language (*Nuske 2006*). From one perspective, it has form and shape that does not in any way distinguish it from other forms and shapes of art, yet embedded in the form and shape of the art is my being, and has aspects of my reflective, creative self of constructed meaning.

That meaning is shaped by themes of family and spirituality which are at the core of the self-narrative in my recent works. Although I had worked exclusively as a watercolourist for almost twenty years, lately, I have found myself paying increasing attention to installations using fabric, found objects, wood, styrofoam, tapestry, text, movement, digital composition or soundscape, to deconstruct fixed notions of family and spirituality. The focus around such installations is reflective of the earlier discussion around house and home (*Household as Home*, p. 64). For example, I now recognise that found objects have wide potential for artistic interpretation. But I usually deconstruct these, not tempted to remain outside the directive process completely. Touching, smelling, manipulating and struggling with all kinds of medium allows a two-way communication. The exacting concrete materiality of such experience facilitates the success of the outcome. It also reinforces the multidimensional nature of *space* which guides so much of my work.

As another consideration, Tillich (*Taylor 1987*) observes that people are anxious to find a final form of existence where they have neither control nor vitality. As an immigrant I have acutely experienced such anxiety, and my considerations of the future remain heavily imbued with words and metaphors relating to immediate personal narrative and the concrete experience of now. In

agreement with Downing (2000, p. 22), 'Place has become the framework of living, resting between logic and biography'. As such, the experiences of memories of past *spaces* are invaluable to my existence.

From all these, the materiality and corporeality – in opposition to the ethereal and the incorporeal of the immortal now – of my particular artistic emphasis emerges. This present physical life in comparison to eternity seems ephemeral to me, so I use the firmness of wood, solidness of metal, weight of tapestry, depth of damask and the certainty of salient colour, to explore the incorporeal. My art reconstructs or replaces these previously occupied *spaces*, and is the language I use to explore *space*.

Why I Am in Community

Art is a language that can also explore community *space*, a site of personal interest to me. My inspiration from Caroline Chisholm and my role as art educator, combined with my roles as artist and researcher initiated *CHISHOLM'S HOMES* (Image 16, p. 92), a community art project on a grand scale. I have found that combining fine art and teaching skills are essential to my practice. Other artists have also found this to be the case. For example: Anne Riggs (2006), in her World Vision project in India; Scott Baron's (2006) Anglo-Japanese community art based in Japan; and Rita Irwin, through the innovative process 'A/r/tography' (2006) in China (2005). These artists have used the dynamic processes of visual art for the betterment of community and global understanding.

One outcome of *CHISHOLM'S HOMES* is the audio/visual production *Shaking Down the Miracle* (see Appendix 2: *Soundscape/Visual Productions DVD and Notes*, p. 175). This is a computer-animated re-enactment of Caroline Chisholm's Victorian achievements, specifically exploring the ideas of community *space*. We used a distinctly Monty Python-ish approach to stimulate interest. This includes sailing ships being chased by sea monsters in the dark to reach a noticeably bored-looking kangaroo on land.



Image 16: *CHISHOLM'S HOMES* Banner

The 'passengers' are bouncing their way into a new life trailing Chisholm, who appears to be planting houses on a fine day. This was seen as a fun approach to presenting history. Investing in community for the good of all, a dramatic Soundscape was used to wrap images, folding in the names of Shakedown locations while declaring 'You are here to make a difference. The future belongs to you' (Mah 2005). The production *Shaking Down The Miracle* provides an example of the outcomes of my involvement in community art, emulating from both my teaching skills and art interests.

The project *CHISHOLM'S HOMES: Shaking Down The Miracle* not only included this fun DVD, but a variety of outcomes staged over a period of six months, with over 700 multi-aged and skilled contributors from all over Australia (Figure 18, p. 95). Creations included handcrafted aprons, paintings on paper and canvas, digitally printed aprons, *The Left Sock*, 3D projects, paper mosaic murals, performance, and wooden constructions of the Shakedowns (Image 17 & 18, pp. 96, 97, see Appendix 1: Thesis Overview CD, p. 175, for the complete website outline). This multifaceted project required much of the same creative approach and heedless abandon that I apply to my own fine art production, and signifies the first of many artistic parallels.

In this community art project, the life journey of Caroline Chisholm (see Chapter Two: Caroline Chisholm, p. 81 and Appendix 4: A Kindred Spirit - Caroline Chisholm, p. 191) has been my inspiration. In 1855, Chisholm cajoled the government to build, in one year, ten *Shakedowns* or shelter sheds between Melbourne and the Victorian Goldfields. To mobilize a government for this enormous production in one calendar year was truly a feat. This accomplishment was driven by Chisholm's Christian spirituality and great desire to help families find safe travel and shelter.

In developing *CHISHOLM'S HOMES*, my intention was to use the arts to create an increased community spirit in regard to service and respect for

others as inspired by the example of Chisholm and her dedicated local involvement with immigrants. In addition to the historical interest, the project generated inquiry into the everyday environment of spirituality, changing family location, relationships, and the emergence of selfhood.

Celebrating the 150th anniversary of Chisholm's shelter sheds made the artistic input from community participants possible. I discussed the project requirements with the teachers and community groups, carefully working to their needs, time restrictions, and within my artistic expectations. The resulting effect was to impart new artistic skills, with everyone feeling a part of 'some important outcome'. 'You gave me permission to just do it!' one self-satisfied *CHISHOLM'S HOMES* workshop participant commented. The project used the arts in everyday life as *splace* for mutual community expression and respect. This approach echoes Shirley Brice Heath (*Heath & Smyth 1999*), who encourages the development of multiple talents, not just in the individual, but also in the group collaborative effort. In *CHISHOLM'S HOMES*, handsome art developed, but just as important was the community involvement and communication between the participants.

Wide community interest in this project was celebrated in Melbourne's western suburbs. It highlighted an event of local significance, as the first Shakedown was built in Essendon on the path for many travellers which stretched along the western regions of Victoria. Local history also saw imported explosives used in the goldmines being brought up the Maribyrnong River, gingerly unloaded and housed in the still-standing 1850's Jack's Magazine. This dangerous cargo travelled along the same route as the immigrants. Fittingly, the new Delfin Land Lease Edgewater Housing Estate, and The Living Museum of the West - both on the banks of the Maribyrnong River – concurrently held the exhibition of *CHISHOLM'S HOMES* in October 2005.



Figure 18: Chisholm's Homes Participants (Peitsch 2005 - 2006)



Image 17: Samples of Chisholm's Homes Projects (1)



Image 18: Samples of Chisholm's Homes Projects (2)

From there the exhibition travelled to various locations, culminating in an exhibition running from October to December 2006 and held at the Migration Museum, Adelaide, South Australia, a division of the History Trust of South Australia.

The Left Sock and *The Aprons* are two distinct projects within the larger CHISHOLM'S HOMES project on which I will comment further. I see these as the art of seeking the immortal now, experiencing something divine through the 'down to earth', and encountering the extraordinary in the ordinary; with the use of the very ordinary being no better exemplified than in *The Left Sock*.

The Left Sock

The Left Sock (Appendix 1: Thesis Overview CD, p. 175; Appendix 3 - Window 10: Behind the Socks, p. 182) is a metaphor for the many people we see and household tasks we do in a day. We selflessly organize, see to tiny details, prepare, gather, drive and clean up for the family and community. The mate less sock is left as a witness to our tender attention. The worn out sock represents years of service, attention to detail, investment, work, care and love for anyone with whom we live, as a symbol of the victory of everyday service.

Community fabricators from all over Australia submitted embellished single socks. Aged two to eighty-two (*Figure 19, p. 99*), they painted, sewed, knitted, bejewelled, machine-stitched, stuffed, embroidered, glued or otherwise creatively decorated socks like precious treasures - with stickers, ribbon, buttons, lace, sequins, glitter and edging, and then trustingly posted the socks to me (*Image 19, p. 100*).



Figure 19: A Left Sock Creator (Peitsch 2005 - 2006)

Given this trust, I soon became concerned that I was exploiting the willing workers with one more futile task; but it was not perceived in this way. It became a contemplative channel for many, linking with the immortal now. Moore's (2002, p. 244) statement, 'The concrete loss of self achieved by getting lost in the material lies at the heart of spiritual practice' was highlighted in the many unsolicited personal notes tucked inside the socks. Here is an excerpt from one such letter:

I made these pompoms in my mother's last days as she looked her...cancer in the face and made the wonderful journey to God on July 20th, 2005. The anchor buttons symbolize solidarity and our attachment to God to keep us safe. Also I thought of Caroline Chisholm coming out on a ship. If my sock joins the others 'twould be fun (*Sock Fabricator*, 2006).

The Socks as joint *splace*, set out on a purposeful journey of their own, reminiscent of the doubtless often sock less journeys of the homeless travellers in Chisholm's era. They formed an intergenerational eclectic and tactile community across Australia. A community of requirement, no matter how transient, also existed in those temporary 'shelter sheds' en route. All abiding people— Indigenous, Chinese, European slept safely side by side - temporarily unconscious to the menacing cultural climate of the time (*Stevens-Chambers 2005*).



Image 19: The *Left Sock* Examples

Perhaps not much has improved in regard to the menacing cultural climate of colonial Australia. '9/11' reawakened fear and loss of security. However, I feel it is not terrorist surveillance that will bring freedom to Australia or the world. I agree with Lawrence (2006, p. 127) who writes 'Fear sows mistrust in the community and reduces people's desire and ability to come together for constructive social change....We need an answering vision of justice and optimism'. The community acknowledgement of common values and visions, affirming universal natural spirituality transferred through families as engendered in *CHISHOLM'S HOMES*, may contribute to constructive changes in community understanding.

Such changes do not come automatically in history. Potentially and most regrettably, the 'terror of other', even labelling 'other' as 'terrorist', in contemporary culture sadly, may have been predictable - but it was not the precursor. 'Otherness' in a myriad of forms has been under serious consideration since the early writings of postmodernists. Bhabha (1994) for example, observes that if a particular culture becomes 'fixed in difference' to other cultures, it precipitates both rigidity and disorder. Community disorder is the effect of both terrorism and the fight to overcome it.

This outcome has been witnessed in Australia, as politician Lawrence (2006, p. 2) states 'At a time of heightened fearfulness following the September 11 and Bali bombings, our national government told us that asylum seekers represented a threat to our security because some of them could be terrorists'. Deciding who is good and who is evil is poignantly demonstrated here. A return to the use of absolutes such as evil and good shows postmodernism has perhaps ended as the language of western culture; 'good' now being what is familiar and 'evil' being what is embodied in the 'other'.

However, the unfamiliar becomes the familiar in Melbourne, a cosmopolitan city of 'others', excelling in variety. Despite individuality and the difficulty 'to

get inside another's head' (Marstin 1979, p. 35), this familiarity allows community to occur, as in people from all cultures respecting services offered to others in needful circumstances. 'We have the power to create ideas and we should act upon those ideas. Although our understanding of the world is not ultimate, it would be a mistake to let this insight paralyse our thinking and actions', asserts art educationist Maxine Greene (Shaw 2001). This is an edifying and inspired starting point for community creativity.

When any community has an opportunity to consider its ethics or principles, its 'raison d'être', it creatively comes in touch with its collective spirituality. 'The more the cultural mass explores its own interior values, the more it tends to align itself with a political economy and a cultural politics of place' (Harvey 1993, p. 27). When this same community is creative, it can generate spiritual art in a broad but significant way.

[Art] gives us most of our creative images of ourselves, our world and our relations to one another. Human life is lived in and through symbols that shape and guide us in all we are and do: symbols of nature, symbols of ourselves – who we are, what we can be, what we ought to be – symbols of our community and society, symbols of the sacred that permeates all. Works of art set these symbols into images; through them we can see ourselves and our world, possibly for the first time (Apostolos-Cappadona 1995, p. 191).

It occurs to me that there has never been a better time to globally reflect a common valued and visioned journey; discovering a communal *splace*, a search for meaning as transferred through community. This has developed through fun 'frivolous' artistic exploration, reaching into mere lost socks to express a spirituality integral to building a harmonious multicultural society. A soulful soft step into the future!

Maxine Greene writes 'Art offers life; it offers hope; it offers the prospect of discovery; it offers light' (1995, p. 133). To everyone living in Australia, Chisholm's selfless humanitarian work is local history. This *Left Sock* project, as with the digitally printed aprons, gives shared voice to a community 'owned' narrative (Tamboukou 2006).

The Aprons

The narrative aprons (*Appendix 1: Thesis Overview CD, p. 175*) owned by the artists' families, developed from my interest in depicting personal *space*. In FLO-ART workshops where I model art approaches for beginning artists, artists drew and painted their self-portraits. Parents supported the creation of digitally printed aprons (*Image 20, p. 104*) by purchasing the aprons, then loaning them to *CHISHOLM'S HOMES* for one year for the touring exhibition. The aprons travelled to different locations such as San Francisco, Adelaide, Sunshine, Williamstown, and Sydney, where participants at seminars about narrative, community art, education or intergenerational arts projects, wore the aprons for a session. Linking *spaces*, the wearers wrote notes to the apron artists.

Completing the community circle, the unique aprons are returning to the owners with the notes attached. The aprons had a positive impact on my fine art. The production and display of these one hundred digital aprons allowed me to imagine a new fine art installation of bold blue aprons, as *HAUSTAFELN* (see *Plate 17, p. 133*). This work now contains a community narrative. William Faulkner once wrote that he believes that 'man will not merely endure, he will prevail. He is immortal not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit, capable of compassion, sacrifice and endurance' (*Faulkner 1967, p. 120*). Community narrative is in this way, itself enduring.



Image 20: Aprons Being Worn and Caroline Chisholm

Humanity's compassionate, sacrificing, enduring spirit is tangible at times. I feel as Greene (1995), that the commitment to one another's cultural lifestyle, against the odds, is what will change the world, not government policy or legislature. Contributing to a more accepting and reconciliatory world is an ultimate good. Families and their homes, communities and their schools can play a significant role in accomplishing this task, and the arts is one way to facilitate it. Holland (1990, p. 120) concludes that a significant step in bringing about such a thing would be the 'cultural celebration of life as creative communion'. I place *CHISHOLM'S HOMES* in this category. Moreover, this *celebration of life as creative communion* can be seen as substantiated in my fine art production.

Where I Am in Fine Art Production

Overview

THE IMMORTAL NOW: Visualizing the Place Where Spirituality and Today's Families Meet, my responses to the extraordinarily rich experience of working in community inspired by Caroline Chisholm, are fulfilled. This has become part of my private *splace* of self, family, spirituality and art. Using installation, my visual theology places spirituality within the grasp of the everyday, a holy pilgrimage through the ever changing, ever challenging journey called 'family'. My personal family *splace* is familiar with the structure of church. A Span gallery floor plan locates the various installations within a gallery setting and a further developed virtual tour of the gallery is provided on the attached CD (*Appendix 1: Thesis Overview CD, p. 175*).

I use the architectural distinctions of the church building as the framework to explore aspects of spirituality. In my exhibition, the galleries are individually entitled: ***VIRTUAL NARTHEX: The spiritual self's recognition of self*** (p. 106), ***CHAPEL: The spiritual self's space and place within the family*** (p. 116), ***NAVE spiritual self's relationship to community*** (p. 127), and

SANCTUARY: The spiritual self's life journey 'from here to eternity' (p. 141).

The installations in *THE IMMORTAL NOW* (Appendix 1: Thesis Overview CD, p. 175) exhibition have been developed for the gallery spaces available at Span Galleries, Melbourne. Entitling these galleries 'VIRTUAL NARTHEX', 'CHAPEL', 'NAVE' and 'SANCTUARY', has helped focus my intentions within each space, and strengthened the linking between the installations and my overall themes. It has also enabled me to set the scene for a consideration of eternal *splace*, which reaches beyond the gallery walls, as it does the church walls, into its own mystery.

VIRTUAL NARTHEX

The spiritual self's recognition of self.

Am I? I am.

The initial context of space for the three galleries represented in *THE IMMORTAL NOW* exhibition (Appendix 1: Thesis Overview CD, p. 175) alludes to an entrance hall leading to the nave of a church, commonly called the narthex. This is separated from the nave by a railing or screen, designed to encourage the proper frame of mind and attitude of body for persons entering a sacred space, a site of divine purpose. This frame of mind may be a subtle sensual awareness, a conscious shedding of a 'worldly' mind-set, the adding of a head covering, or the quieting of the body to prepare oneself. The *virtual* narthex in the exhibition is the two-part installation, CELESTIAL INVERSIONS.

One part of this installation is the CELESTIAL INVERSIONS BOOK (*Plate 1 – 8, pp. 108 - 115*), a pseudo-biologically labelled and oversized, 32 page silk-on-cardboard book, reminiscent of an unwieldy, used government issue procedural directory. Its substantial weight and size create an imposing, presence. It is ominously displayed, playfully chained and locked to prevent the unauthorized removal of this highly privileged and consequential information. The contents outline, in strict pseudo-scientific detail, attitudes that are harmful if not deadly to the hapless spiritual self, if not detected and removed.

The second part of this installation is the CELESTIAL INVERSIONS DISPLAY (*Plate 9*). Assorted gold-angel wings are mounted with colour-coded glass pins. The 'scientific classifications' are secured under each wing. The collection is laid out in an antique museum-display cabinet.

Background and Process: In presenting the two-part installation in *Virtual Narthex*, CELESTIAL INVERSIONS, I had a tongue-in-cheek approach to the idea of spirituality and clichés found in base religiosity. While I have found it is rare that an art idea starts with an attitude of fun and finishes in the same way, this has been the history of the CELESTIAL INVERSIONS BOOK and the CELESTIAL INVERSIONS DISPLAY set within the narthex space. First, I set aside a selected assortment of ordinary gold angel wings for the portable wardrobe installation entitled *WOMBROBE* (see CELESTIAL INVERSIONS Book, p. 108). The wings appeared conspicuously sewn to the wardrobes outside skin, adding a sacred presence. The wings looked kitsch in a good way. I found they were also reminiscent of the ancient 'Ark of the Covenant', the portable storage for the stone tablets Moses received (*The Bible, Exodus 34:1-4*).



Plate 1: CELESTIAL INVERSIONS BOOK 'Detail'



Plate 2: CELESTIAL INVERSIONS BOOK

**The Specific Investigative
Identification and Subsequent
Realized Eradication of Invading
Eschatological Inversions
Forming Significant Anti-celestial
Spiritual Sympathies**



BIOHAZARD

INSTITUTE FOR THE INVESTIGATION OF CELESTIAL INVERSIONS

Division of Noxious Quasi-Spiritual Arousals
Threat Research and Control Division
Melbourne, Victoria

The Specific Investigative Identification and Subsequent Realized Eradication of Invading Eschatological Inversions Forming Significant Anti-celestial Spiritual Sympathies

A Semi-exhaustive Study and Taxonomic Collection of Quasi, Semi, and Pseudo Spiritual Germs

May 2006

by

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BIOHAZARD



'Celestial Inversions'

The scientific discipline of classifying living organisms is known as 'Taxonomy'. The taxonomic collection of the 'Institute for the Investigation of Celestial Inversions', like all other such collections, is classified according to the Linnaean system, listing each specimen's Family, Genus, and Species.

This wingsical collection is a little different from most. The 'angels' whose wings you will find here, are not 'organisms' as such, but are anti-spiritual or pseudo-spiritual values that have such power and influence that they create lives of their own.

It may seem cruel to tear off the wings and mount them here for display, but this de-winging is an action done for the greater good. To earth an angel could be seen as an attempt to de-sanctify it, to pull it down, to demystify it, making profane what was holy – and indeed, that is what we are doing here. But these particular 'angels' are not the heavenly kind that one might imagine.

These seemingly innocuous 'bugs' are pet attitudes, hang-ups, traditions, and prejudices that, although held as holy by some, are destructive to authentic human expression. They fly in the face of mutual tolerance, understanding, and respect for all forms of spirituality within communities.

NOTE: The discovery and eradication of these influential noxious pests requires resolve and more than a little courage on many ethnographic levels.

Wash hands after contact



File Image 23
Demonstrating localised infestation



File Image 775
Decontaminated area (interior)

File Image 440 Fumigation Process

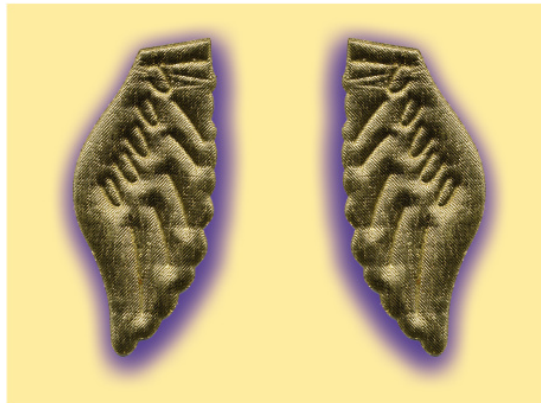


Plate 6: CELESTIAL INVERSIONS Extraction



PHILOSOPHICIDAE
Polemicus sectarius

PHILOSOPHICIDAE
Polemicus sacredicus



PHILOSOPHICIDAE
Ecclesiastica agnostica

PHILOSOPHICIDAE
Ecclesiastica religiosa

TAXONOMIC COLLECTION
REF # MW0601

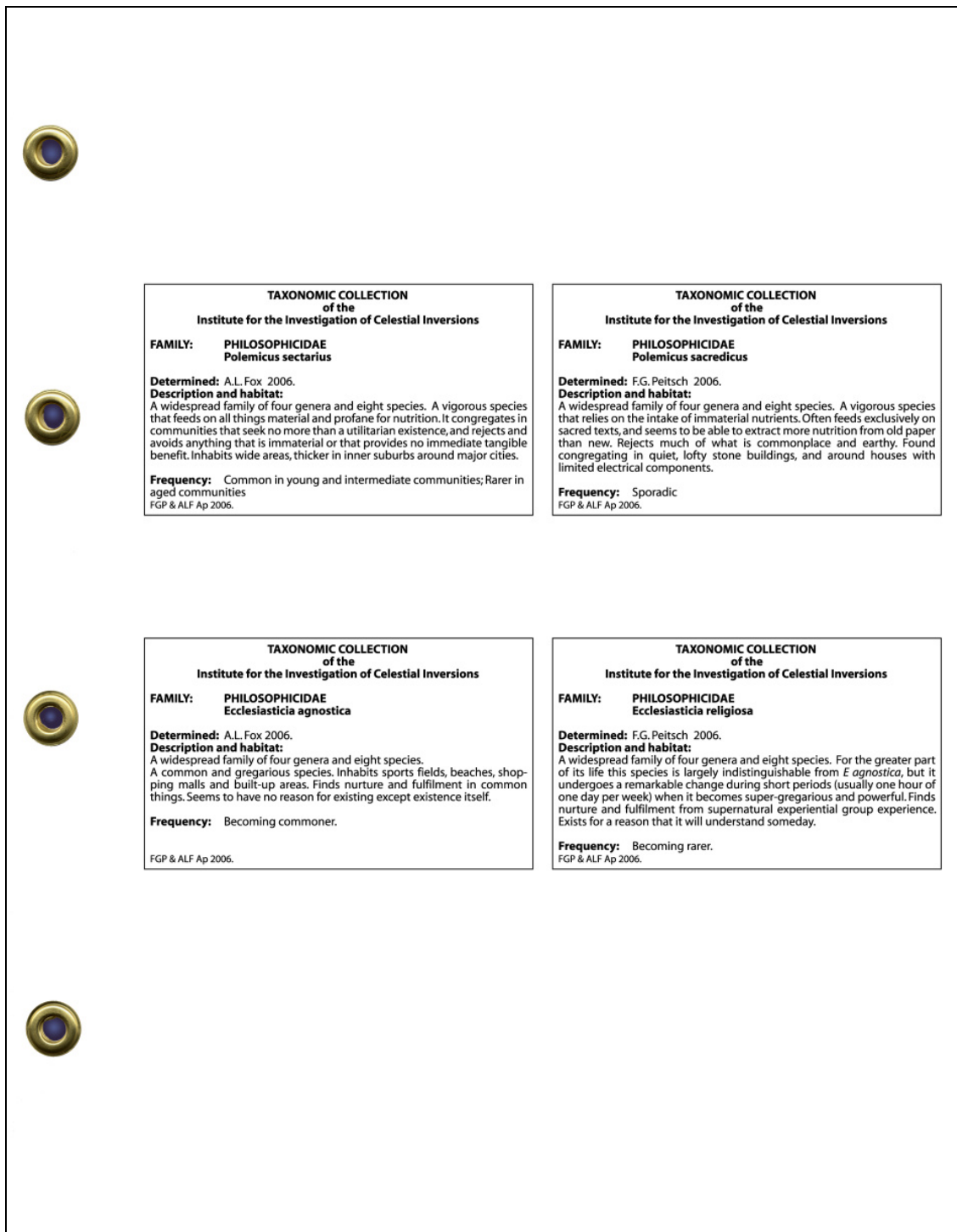


Plate 8: CELESTIAL INVERSIONS Explanation of Sample



Plate 9: CELESTIAL INVERSIONS DISPLAY

Despite these layered overtones, as the angel wings were the only vestige of clichéd religious art to be found within my current artistic output, they appeared out of place. Now however, they have taken on a different persona, matching Elizabeth Gower's (Zimmer & Teuma 2002) contemporary assemblies of birds, butterflies, and fish (Figure 20, p. 116). In addition, Heather Ellyard's (2006) *Inventories and Commentaries part 2 transparent and white*, presenting basic chemical elements as plaster shards in installation, echo the classifying attributes of the CELESTIAL INVERSIONS BOOK.

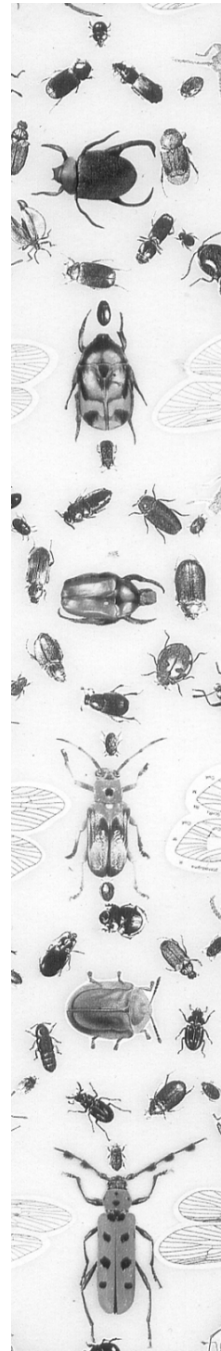
Figure 20: Chance or Design (Detail) (Gower 1995)

CHAPEL

The spiritual self's space and place within the family.

What is my space and place? Where am I?

Moving from the virtual narthex to link spirituality and community to family, *CHAPEL* (Appendix 1: Thesis Overview CD, p. 175) presents as a small scale *splace*, sized for a few people, a microcosm of society. It represents spirituality at the primary, intimate level of daily nurture and routine. Here is the spiritual self and family in the timeless relationships common to human experience, part of a continuum. I see taking care of one's self as part of the awareness of intrinsic value seen in ourselves as spiritual entities. Often this value comes from one's past family or providers, maybe providence itself. This evidence of providence is found in the Church, and also in the family and family home. Therefore, the two installations in *CHAPEL* are presented as HOMEBODY and FAMILY TRUST.



HOMEBOY (*Plate 10 – 13, pp. 118 - 119*): A portable white wardrobe, half unzipped at the front stands in the centre of a darkened room. A ten minute looped projection onto the wardrobe back allows the material to become a translucent screen. The artist, dressed in off-white casual clothes, with an off-white stole-like scarf, stands inside a temporary wardrobe or closet which she haltingly unzips to the world. Once in place, she slowly gestures iconically, ritualistically, rotating – as a little ballerina in a young girl's wind-up jewellery box. The audio gives out localized noise, not silent but voiceless. In these, the work intends to deliver contradictory messages: private yet exposed; admonishing yet blessing; adored yet unnoticed – a woman's self-perceived role? The distinctive smell of camphor impregnates the installation as it would a cedar clothes storage chest (*Appendix 2: Soundscape/Visual Productions DVD and Notes, p. 175*).

Background and Process: Found at a Garage Sale near my home several years ago, I liked the flimsy collapsible wardrobe's artistic promise of temporarily needed space and its disposability. Its purchase naturally followed my established interest in old cots and my growing stored collection of discarded beds and sets of drawers, awaiting reconstruction as art.



Plate 10: HOMEBODY still (1)



Plate 11: HOMEBODY still (2)



Plate 12: HOMEBODY still (3)



Plate 13: HOMEBODY still (4)

HOMEBODY set within *CHAPEL*, situates me bodily into my art practice; a style of art expression I have admired since reading some of Anne Marsh's (1988) documentation of early performance art. As a consideration of *splace*, I am interested in both 'the sleeping place' and 'the storage place' as positing 'being'. This idea closely links with a 'lack of storage space' and the 'transference of sleeping space'. These issues became apparent to me as I watched my children move bedrooms, pensively sorting their accumulated 'earthly goods' while shifting from one room to another in our house, as age, gender and space determined (Figure 21, p. 120). It was also poignantly captured in the sleeping shapes of my nieces and nephew visiting my parents' soon-to be-sold home of sixty years, as mattresses on floors removed from dispossessed beds.

Figure 21: Shifting Rooms (Peitsch 2005 - 2006)

HOMEBODY references artists who use furniture to great artistic effect, for example, Greer Honeywill's (2003) calico kitchen cabinet, Mira Gojack's (2005) methodically tooth-picked wardrobe and sliced chairs, and Dominico De Clario's (2005b) boxy bedroom placeholders. Their crossings of art with home are full of intrigue and amusement.

An early antecedent to my linking of *splace* and spirituality, occurred when I visited Ben Franklin's immortalized house in Philadelphia, USA, where an outline of steel girders rose above its earthen ruins. This construction holds ominous guard over hallowed but invisible community *splace*, inadvertently foreshadowing the spindly white aluminium frame ready for the flimsy material shell of my temporary wardrobe; mine holding the promise of enclosed *splace*, but clearly belying its permanence.



Figure 22: Untitled #216 (Sherman 1989)

As another precursor linking *splace* and spirituality, in 1995 I visited the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art in New York to find a miniature installation beckoning from under the floor, with a gnawed peep hole for that purpose. This tiny subterranean projected person encircled by flames calling out repeatedly 'Help me, help me! Can anyone hear me?' was quietly humorous, in a self conscious way. I was impressed with the



startling appeal of the enclosed virtual human image. Similarly, the virtual human is portrayed in Bill Viola's (Townsend & Viola 2004) work of imperceptibly moving ritual stillnesses. These creations inspired the somewhat retarded movements of HOMEBODY, reminiscent of Viola's work. Further, it was a conscious decision to record HOMEBODY with residual sound rather than silence, in order to augment detached *splace*.

A visit in 1998 to the National Gallery of Victoria's *Beyond Belief: Modern Art and the Religious Imagination* (Crumlin, Woodward & National Gallery of Victoria. 1998), furthered my understanding of the virtual human as related in HOMEBODY. Cindy Sherman's photo of her life-sized portrayal of the Madonna (Figure 22, p. 121), dressing herself in period costume, with exposed, unreal breast and gowned baby doll in arm, gave me a consideration of the icon (Figure 23, p. 121) as artistic currency for the artist herself.



Figure 23: Linaiuoli Tabernacle: Virgin and Child Making the Blessing (Angelico 1433)

Another influence leading to the development of HOMEBODY occurred when I attended Claire Renkin's art and spirituality theology classes at Yarra Theological Union. Claire was an animated lecturer who wholeheartedly enlivened her dusty, gilt subject matter. In her classes, she actually 'wore' her images as she passed in front of the two slide projectors, attempting to point out this detail or that turn of hand. She herself, actually 'became' renaissance *splace*. I loved the look of the altering art as it clothed her lively form. This experience settled itself into my imagination and contributed to the thought of projecting onto or into the white wardrobe of HOMEBODY.

Influenced by Claire's classes, I was lulled by the wave of imaged gesturing renaissance hands and attitudes drawn to my attention; each variation holding simple meaning – blessing, teaching, nurturing, preaching, beckoning, receiving, humbled – as reference material in the making, and mixing in with a memory of the figurative drawings of detached signalling hands by Irene Barberis (2000), and Monty Python's (Davies, JH et al. 1999) teasing floating digits. Here, *Splace* was indicated by the simple but significant everyday.

The synthesis of these influences, HOMEBODY, hints at a private world seeking an icon, relating to the women of the Renaissance who were



relegated to the back of the cathedrals clutching their beautiful 'Books of Hours' as an everyday aide to devotion. Renaissance women picked their own favourite saints for artists to portray in the prayer books; just as recently Julie Dowling (1996) chose to emulate her indigenous relatives (Figure 24, p. 122), or Cameron Stelzer (2001) made his own 'Lego' saints.

Figure 24: Insider (Dowling 1996)

Perhaps my own search for an icon led me to step away from the ordinary and into the wardrobe, when attending 'Performing Our Imagination'(Denning 2004) inspired

me to 'Put the theatre before the theory'. I then confidently began using narrative of the self, performance art, poetic representation and mixed genres in my research journey (*Window 7: Subject and Object*, p. 181 & *Window 8: HOMEBODY*, p. 181).

All the creative forms influencing HOMEBODY have exacted a distancing, helping to experience the self as 'other', as is encouraged in post modern ethnography (Denzin & Lincoln 1994, pp. 520-1). Writing and visualizing from this vantage point presupposes a difficult journey into the unknown. The French philosopher, Cixous (1994, p. 204) describes this as travelling through 'our own marshes, our own mud...it is deep in my body, further down, behind thought.' In artistic terms, it is 'transcending the visible in one's own way, making visible the invisible' (Küng 1981, p. 37 *inclusive language added*). Furthermore, performance artist Jill Orr (1979) using her own earthen-covered body as *splace*, and Astra Howard (Schwarz 2005) projecting herself uncomfortably from her detached *splace*, effectively link spirituality, the everyday and family roles. They somehow lead me in the desire for my own personal, historical *splace*.

FAMILY TRUST (*Plate 14*, p. 124): On the wall by the exit of *CHAPEL* - noticed upon leaving the gallery space, is an unlit, aged, bejewelled, small wooden display shelf, reminiscent of the Renaissance requiem holding rolled tapestries (*Appendix 1: Thesis Overview CD*, p. 175). Time cannot be held, but FAMILY TRUST makes an attempt to do so. The lavishly decorated little cabinet is not precious or old. It only appears to be. The cabinet's contents of stored, tapestries are exposed, gathering dust, fading, naively structured, subject to elucidation or loss, immanently portable and impermanent, yet containing time. Tapestry in weaving cannot be rushed, as the intricate miniature tapestries of Cresside Collette (2004) convincingly show. Unaffected by time passing, the tapestries themselves contradictorily exist outside of time, yet hold much time.



Plate 14: *FAMILY TRUST*

Background and Process: A personal historical *splace* is evident for some in the family and public shrines found on most street corners in Italy. These quaint presences only improve with age. The dust and grime of the centuries add a sense of stability and timelessness. Flowers, both fermented and fresh, remind the passer-by of continuity hallowing the place. While in Italy, I took numerous photos of these spiritual *splaces* with great interest. Vecchietta has many fine examples of altar pieces on exhibition (*Figure 25, p. 125*). Requiems nestle under some altars, holding dead saints. The disturbing discoloured bones of sainted martyrs and spiritual leaders, grimly witnesses silenced pasts, but, being immortal now, point to settled futures. There is an odd sense of completion in waiting skeletons, released from fear as if the worst has already occurred, time playing no more tricks.



Figure 25: Madonna and Saints (Vecchietta)

‘Time immortal’ is a factor in *splace*, a long-lasting construct of meaning. T.S. Eliot considers time in the first of *Four Quartets* (1968, p. 13) as he pronounces ‘If all time is eternally present all time is unredeemable... What might have been and what has been point to one end, which is always present.’ Robin

Grove (2006) lecturing on Eliot's poetry alleged 'Your future is contained in your past.' I consider the reverse to be equally true, '*Your past is contained in your future.*' Therefore, time in *splace* is simultaneously of great account and of no account, as its finish brings you to exactly the same place.

For me, actual family history does hold time. It is old and precious. It does not only *appear* to be. To know something of where we come from, who raised us, what influenced us, provides the basis to decide how to extend from this reality. It is like a fiction book, where having written from the middle of the story, the author will eventually go back to work out the beginning, which in turn informs the middle. Knowing both aspects develops a meaningful ending. Looking for the construction of the meaning of life, Heather Ellyard (2006) uses art as inquiry, with a tight series of paintings from history mixed with poignant words such as 'If I am without name, then who am I?'. This search can illuminate community *splace* and spirituality.

The search for life's meaning may also lead to more mystery. Kate Derum (2003) created fully enclosed clear-glazed eclectic wall-boxes containing 'suspended time' in her rolled tapestries. Her hidden tapestries taught me about 'no apparent return for time invested', giving metaphor to the visible unknown and the known invisible. Here, history is both apparent and unapparent.

My history in Australia is similarly apparent and unapparent – unable to contain my childhood or teenage years, yet allowing that I have lived this time. Moving to Melbourne from Adelaide, now I even have no history of my early years of marriage without children, yet I lived this time too. Almost no-one, apart from my husband, can reflect this time back to me through shared experience or memory; it is seemingly unredeemable. In the eternal sense, these experiences are never gone and forever gone, even as they occur. Only a sense of my eternal *splace* commemorates this almost intangible loss. I found that this commemoration of loss has strikingly been used by artists Julie

Gough (2005) and Kate McMillan (2004). I want to recognize and celebrate my own treasured history, even knowing it to be only a fantasized portrayal. Thus, I will establish a connectedness to the eternal now as experienced in community.

NAVE

The spiritual self's relationship to community.

What is my community? Why am I here?

Besides bringing a need to connect with one's origin, being truly human brings a want to connect with others (Elahi 1997). Such is the image suggested by the concept 'nave' which refers to the large corporate spiritual centre, the body of the cathedral, the place of community, and group activity; where sacraments are given and taken - representing spirituality at the pluralistic level in community *splace*. Here, *Nave* (Appendix 1: Thesis Overview CD, p. 175) is the 'spiritual self and connectedness' use the analogy of 'nave'. Nave consists of five installations: STACKHOUSE; HAUSTAFELN; MANSE; PEAKS; and LOW WALLS.

STACKHOUSE (Plate 15 & 16, p. 129): Six houses (1m wide x 3m long x 1m high) built from old backyard pine fence palings, in three modular sections, are stacked pyramid style - three on the bottom, two straddling these, and one perched on top - conspicuously angled as ends of long boxes as viewed upon entering the room. These weather-worn fence palings extend the backyard theme. A dynamic soundscape is installed to resonate from within the houses from different hidden locations.

Background: STACKHOUSE is best described as a story about connected space entitled:

The Gathering of the Fence Palings:

Our fence in Riverview Court was due for replacement. This was becoming obvious to all. I was well disposed to initiate the refurbishment as I had ulterior motives for the wooden palings. I coveted the wood for its lived history and re-usfulness as an art project. I could have used anyone's old fence, but the vital authenticity promised here was impossible to ignore. It is fascinating that Australians are attached to fences, not only to delineate, but to accentuate place. This outlining of front and back yards seems vital to neighbourly harmony. The fences pre-exist the houses on many streets - this in a country where there is 'a great beyond', often hidden by a fence, even in the outback.

The contributing fence used in STACKHOUSE was common to four neighbours, meaning that negotiating a new fence, without incident, would prove to be no small feat. With difficulty and investment of time, I collected quotes from three companies and nervously approached the kindest neighbour first. I was aware that the mere expectation of our family of eight moving in had traumatized the court and that we were welcomed here with the words, 'We all get along here because we keep to ourselves.'

This dictum of being isolated within your own home proved to be true in the best and worst ways. Nine years later we are still 'keeping to ourselves', as are they. The elderly widows here could pass away unnoticed, as they wish. Here we have not experienced a community, only a postal address. Here outside guests rarely visit the locals. Niceties are only exchanged occasionally. This is still an anathema to us, having moved from a town of 1,500 in South Australia, where shopping could take hours because everyone had to acknowledge others with a nod, a wave, and a kind inquiry. There, any gardening attempt at our main street home brought both advice and critique.

I began the negotiation of the proposed border exchange at Riverview Court in Melbourne. Step by step I covered the distance, a diminutive Canadian with a mission - sipping liqueur with the Croatians, supping tea and Kuchen with the German, exchanging gossip with the Russians, and biting my tongue near the Australian. All were amiable. Eventually, all the fencing was contracted and subsequently removed. For several days we lived in the idyllic state of wall-less tolerance, even acceptance.



Plate 15: STACKHOUSE Preparation



Plate 16: STACKHOUSE

The removed thin partition of thirty years left no trace, no hint of its division. For the first time I could see the riverbank from my home. One neighbour presented lemons to squeeze; others kindly offered cappuccinos that steamed invitingly. Mutually offending trees were removed. School-girls visited between the yards as new friends. The air cleared, along with the fence. Temporarily we smiled and chatted warmly. All had lived closely but unconnectedly for many years, nearly in each other's backyards. Then the fence panels returned, higher and more solidly than before, releasing and detaining at once, seemingly a complete success.

In producing STACKHOUSE, it seemed fitting to fashion these heavy windowless partitioned buildings from these seasoned rough palings, the units being officiously mounted on top of each other, or perhaps safely supporting one another. Community proffers and parodies both alternatives.

Process: My interest in home *space* has not been limited to the house itself. I consider the property as locating the house - its completion. Edna Walling (1999), the celebrated Victorian garden designer, preferred to anticipate the garden before building the house. The parameters of the outside, bordered by hedge, fence or invisible perimeter hold as much significance as the house interior. Crisp (1998) writes that human beings long for meaning in their lives and a connection with nature in the places they inhabit, healed by everyday primal forces and seasons.

With many people being urban dwellers and not primarily affected by nature, more has been written about the space enclosed within the house than the space enclosing the house. Considered separately, these are actually incomplete spaces. Outdoor spaces, especially backyards, extend a house and give insight into the inhabitants. I like suburban train rides because, undetected, I can peer into the personal worlds of the usually hidden backyards, seeing unlikely treasures.

Some places themselves take precedence over any buildings they may acquire. Indigenous people have traditionally been more affected by their land than they have affected their land (Crumlin & Knight 1991). This is clearly so in

Australia, but elsewhere as well. In Aboriginal culture, there 'is a deep connection to the land, built over generations, that imbues their psychology and eventually their spirituality and makes them one with the spirit of the land' writes Paula Gunn Allen (*cited in Norris, K 1993, p. 129*). 'Persistence of place' as suggested by Dubos (1972, pp. 111-34), is an attribute of spirit associated with an individual location despite change through time; as one would attribute soul to a person. Such use of the 'everyday' in structures as explored by other artists, is echoed in my work.



Figure 26: Beeswax House (Laib 2005)

For example, the elongated forms of STACKHOUSE remind me of Wolfgang Laib's (2005) smaller stylized beeswax shapes (*Figure 26, p. 131*) which he surrounds with aesthetic cones of pollen and rice. His housing of *splace* is an installation made with pure elements from nature. Nam June Paik (1964) (*Figure 27, p. 132*) stacks ungainly forms using recycled computers and technology parts as a metaphor for current culture and its structures. It is an ecological idea to make something from discarded, useless materials; although my source in STACKHOUSE is organic. Callum Morton, expatriate Canadian artist, has been a builder of *splace* in his recent *Babylonia* (2003) and miniature lit and sounded replica of *Habitat* (2005) - his father's Expo '67 project which I



visited in Montreal as an impressionable twelve year old. His stacking of domestic dwellings is evoked in *STACKHOUSE*, and elaborated on in the writing on *PEAKS*. A domestication of these concepts is personified in the portrayal of aprons.

HAUSTAFELN (*Plate 17, p. 133*): At the distant end of the large gallery space, a 3m x 3m x 3m white pavilion is the frame suspending over eighty deep purple-blue damask 'apron' panels that tie together eight separate ways, creating a tent of sorts, with diagonal dividing inside walls. The domestic 'apron' panels are reminiscent of liturgical vestments, as the pavilion echoes a backyard Hill's hoist.

Figure 27: TV Cello (Paik 1964)

Linking to home and *splace*, my readings lead me to the name *HAUSTAFELN* (*Dunn 1996, p. 43*). It is a German term, my ancestral cultural heritage, for 'household duties'. Martin Luther (*Tappert 1959*) coined the term referring to good family order, form and function as outlined in the example of early church writings. I thought this appropriate for an installation creating the fabric of mutual ties and domestic or community service.



Plate 17: HAUSTAFELN

Background and Process: In the process described earlier in this chapter. I was greatly influenced by the installation of the digitally printed aprons of *CHISHOLM'S HOMES*. As a dress-maker, I cut the patterns for HAUSTAFELN from original old chasubles. I liked the simple curves of the outside edge of the garment and designed the aprons to echo each other's shapes as positive and negative spaces. Interestingly, Hoffner (2006), a Parisian artist exhibiting in Melbourne, replicated one room of her overseas house using narrow wood to delineate the walls in her exhibiting gallery. The uncovered frame of the pavilion presented in HAUSTAFELN also draws a remembrance of a clichéd home (see Appendix 2: *Soundscape/Visual Productions DVD and Notes: HOMEBODY*, p. 176).

Other influences on this installation have been Lyn Plummer's (1996, pp. 157-62) soulful works which depict ritual on unexpected surfaces, sewn together for effect; Hermann Nitsch's blood stained chasuble also left a haunting impression on me, as did Daniel Goldstein's *Icarian II / Incline*; Henri Matisse contributed a feeling for ritual strong design, a hard edged positive and negative flexing of space (Figure 28, p. 135). Nitsch, Goldstein and Matisse were viewed at an exhibition entitled 'Beyond Belief' (Crumlin, Woodward & National Gallery of Victoria. 1998).

I altered the installation design of HAUSTAFELN when it was about to be photographed for my book , *Art and Soul* (2006a) (see Appendix 1: *Thesis Overview CD*, p. 175). Stepped back from the installation, I realized that look was good, but not completely right. There was little time to consider this as the photographer was steadily approaching this work, next on her list.



Figure 28: Black Chasuble (Matisse 1951)

I suddenly knew what I had to do, but there was no point of return. I impulsively cut twenty aprons in half, adding a third half-layer to the existing 'apron' rows. It was precisely the correction needed. Displayed in *THE IMMORTAL NOW* exhibition, the lower halves of the aprons are turned under and sewn to create a top pocket to slip onto the middle crossover poles, supporting a second row of full aprons. The tops are hemmed and connected to the lower outside layers. This further deconstructs their meaning as intact and wearable aprons. A simple aesthetic impulse at first, the cutting in half of the aprons has effectively encouraged richer layers of interpretation of community in the context of home.

MANSE (*Plate 18 & 19, p. 136*): Above eye-level, circumventing the walls of this entire gallery, is the 300mm high x 50m long Latin and English gothic text of Biblical reference: 'For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens' (*Today's parallel Bible, 2 Corinthians 5:1 KJV*); like a wallpaper frieze, in the same blue of HAUSTAFELN, and with several antique, gold highlighted letters.



Plate 18: MANSE (Latin)

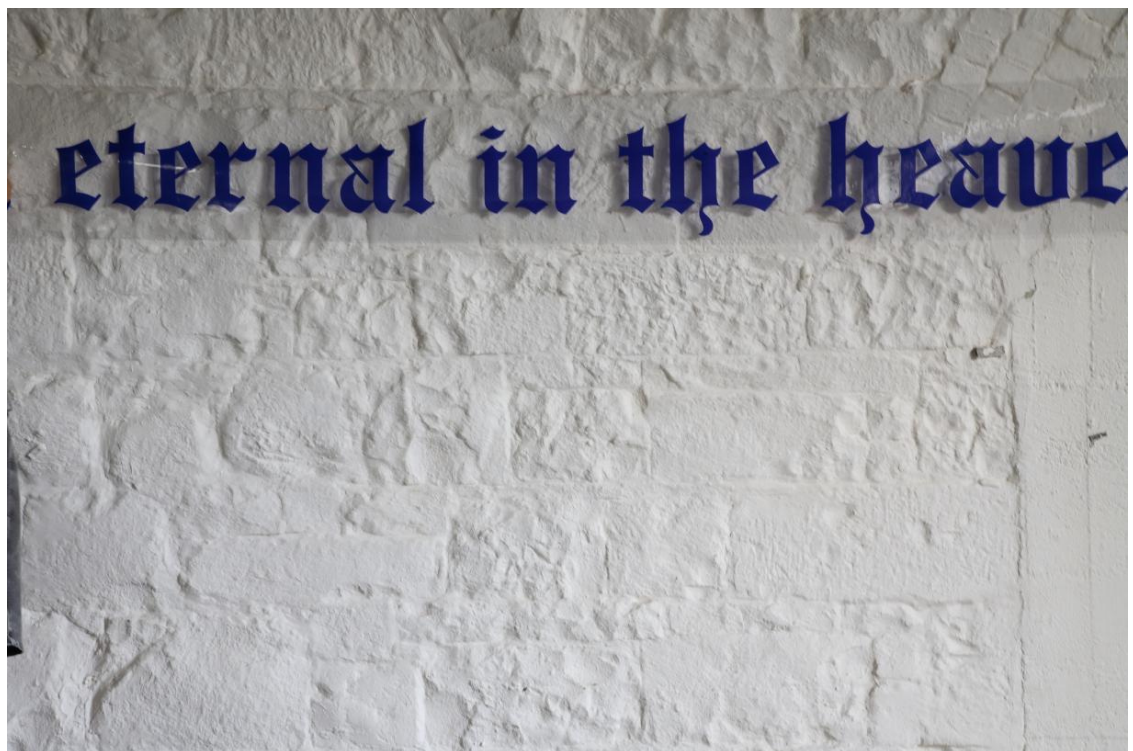


Plate 19: MANSE (English)

In developing this installation, the most significant influence has been 'Ich Habe Angst' by Rosemary Trockel (*Crumlin, Woodward & National Gallery of Victoria. 1998*). Trockel's installation was originally applied directly to the wall behind the altar in a German church. I interpreted it as an admission of human struggle laid bare for possible divine healing. It seems to be at once both a prayer and a taunt directed toward divine being itself. Thus, unrolling and installing the banner called MANSE, temporarily enfolds a sacred *splace*.

Background and Process: In the nineteenth century, 'Manse' referred to the home provided by the church, in which the minister and his family lived. The verse displayed in MANSE had been inscribed on the upper walls of a manse in England. I was attracted to the passage because of its subjects - eternity, house and transience - these all being my research themes. I had read the verse many times in the Bible, but never, on the walls of a house. I found it a novel way to claim spiritual *splace*.

The date of the wall-written text was 1867. Remarkably, this date is contemporary to 1855, when Caroline Chisholm was constructing the ten shakedown for housing transient immigrants, referred to in detail earlier in this chapter. It is also the era of the original settlement in Australia of Lutherans, then religious exiles from Europe.

The Latin gothic print engraved in the manse reminds me of the elaborately scribed and gilded German Bible verses, also in Gothic type, so commonly found dominating the front of many quaint Lutheran churches in Canada and Australia (*Figure 29, p. 138*). Not many Lutherans can read German any more, but the texts remain, a testimony to the church's past. Following the start of the Second World War and subsequent internment of Germans living in Australia, some inscriptions were erased to protect the worshippers. A similar situation exists today where textual inscriptions on Arabic churches or mosques have been removed.



Figure 29: Pulpit, Trinity Lutheran Church, Melbourne (Peitsch 2005 - 2006)

The fact that the verse in MANSE is in Latin, sets it apart from the daily grind, and since it is not immediately comprehensible, it becomes a motto. Not being in English, also keeps it from being dismissed by those who would regard a Bible verse as Christian postulating. In preparing for my exhibition of *THE IMMORTAL NOW*, I hesitated to put the English version on the gallery walls as I liked its original obscurity, but I wanted to indicate the transition from past to present – symbolizing my *space* transferred from my home in Canada to a manse in Australia, and changes in the worship forms of Lutherans.

The verse on the gallery wall enclosing the space claims it for a special purpose, as with the earlier ‘parlour’ becoming ‘a sacred place’. This is also a theme of my research - the domestic becoming divine. Some interest may exist regarding the fact that the first home already was a ‘church house’ parlour. As I live in a church manse supplied by my husband’s pastoral job, I have some idea of the contentious nature of the pastor’s home being thought of as either private or public.

Originally, I was determined to apply a hand-written text directly to the wall, but cost and time restraints prevented this, so I decided to make it a removable banner. This added the further dimension of transience, relating strongly to the Israelites’ wonderful travelling tabernacle tent, a ‘temple-to-go’, constructed by divine design (The Bible, *Exodus 25:8-9*). Using this banner, I could

thereby temporarily claim any space as sacred upon its installation. The commercial looking, heavy acrylic banner material updated the textual idiom, despite the gothic writing. I find that the idea works well in several ways, seeming to reference Barberis' (2005) highly contemporary hot-pink inflatable crosses.

To build on the idea of the manse being a home that is both communal and spiritual, the following installations are stacked or unfolded. *Peaks* and *LOW WALLS* introduce the idea of connection to the wider community.

PEAKS (*Plate 20, p. 140*): Nine wooden uniform small house roofs stacked systematically on top of each other on narrow shelf.

LOW WALLS (*Plate 21, p. 140*): Several wooden house walls hinged and extended on a narrow shelf.

Background and Process: I will discuss the two installations, *PEAKS* and *LOW WALLS*, together even though they present very different impressions of *splace*. I designed them originally as part of one group called *Extension*. This group of nine four-sided matching wood constructions have increasing heights, creating numerous layers in which the extending wooden-walled houses, hinged and flat, could fold out in two directions. The shortest design is based on my birth home, from which the houses progressively rise in height, like kitchen canisters. As closed houses, they could suspend wooden roofs. Each house has a matching roof, as the final shapes are slightly inconsistent. Each house has a wooden letter on its external front which when all are set out in order, spell 'container'. On the inside are the same letters, except for one, thus spelling out 'contained'. These particular pieces offer this gallery the complete contrast of scale with the larger parts. Being built in wood, balancing precariously, they seem to amplify the theme of community *splace*.

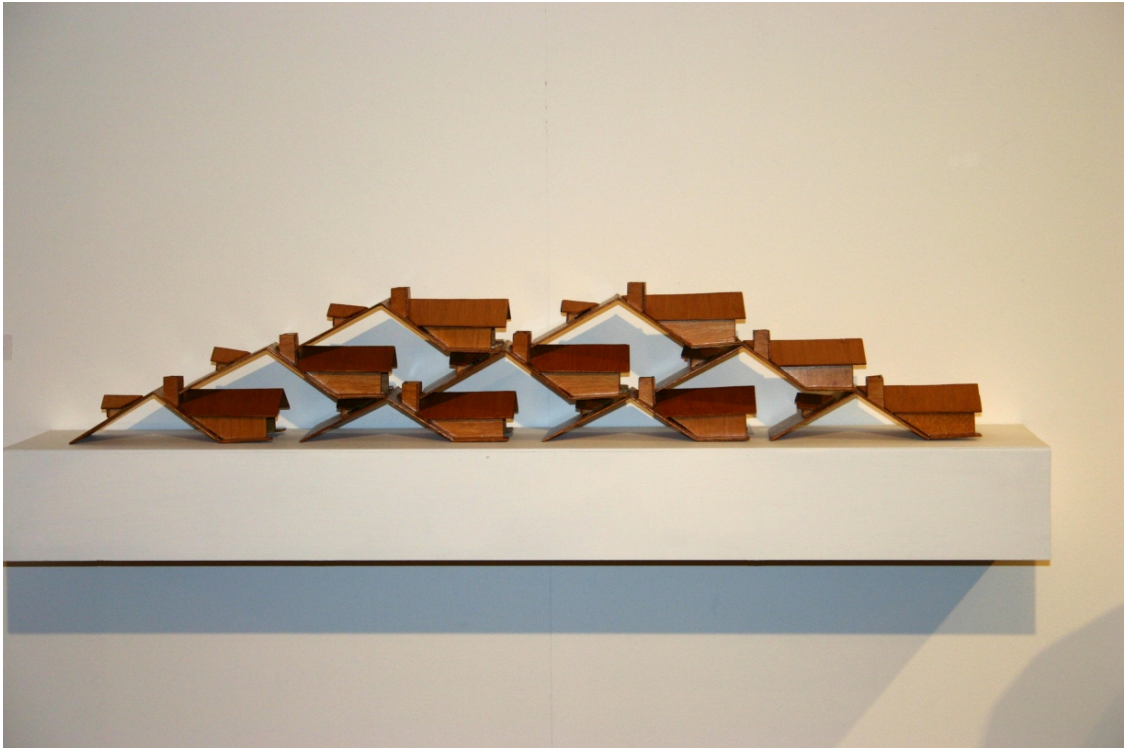


Plate 20: PEAKS



Plate 21: LOW WALLS

Barbara Kruger's text covered photo of a suburban house overlaid with 'container' was the original impetus for the installation (*Peitsch 2002a*). My reading about home representing both 'the container and the 'contained' was a further inspiration. Therefore, to link the sacred of the home to the sacred of the cathedral, seven of the extendable house forms have also been included in *SANCTUARY*, as part of the forth installation, *ALTERED* (*Plate 26, p. 108*).

SANCTUARY

The spiritual self's life journey 'from here to eternity'

What is the immortal now? Who am I?

The sanctuary is the holiest place in the cathedral, set apart for 'the mystery' - the revealed but hidden, the beginning and the end. Here is the spiritual self in the biggest picture. That is, finding where meaning exists 'beyond time' and 'beyond things understood'. Shane Cotton (*Green 2006, pp. 56-61*), Hossein Valamanesh (*2005*) and Rodney Graham (*2004*) are artists of divergent styles who similarly carve a sense of journey with their art, belying a possible search for meaning and personal truth (*Window 14: 2006 /Contemporary Commonwealth/, p. 184*). In accordance with these sentiments, installations in *SANCTUARY* (*Appendix 1: Thesis Overview CD, p. 175*) - *WORDHOUSE*, *ETERNITY*, *PRESENCE* and *ALTERED*, find meaning. As words are important to communicate spiritual experience and meaning, the first focal point of this gallery is *WORDHOUSE*.

WORDHOUSE (*Plate 22 & 23, p. 142*): This is a doll-house sized wooden construction with a simple windowed front, open at the back, with hinged sides like a promethean stage displaying an 'attic', four rooms and a 'staircase'. Each space holds 'furniture' made from deconstructed wooden letters, and placed at ease. The attic word reads both 'IMMORTAL' and 'I'M MORTAL'.



Plate 22: WORDHOUSE



Plate 23: WORDHOUSE (detail)

Background and Process: I always think of heaven as a place to live. There was a time in history when all the details of heaven were clearly decided (McDannell & Bernard 1990). This concept does not appeal to me, as it insinuates that nothing more is to be learned. I hope heaven remains a surprising mystery, but I also respond to Jesus' words 'I go to prepare a place for you' (*Today's parallel Bible, John 14:2 KJV*). The idea of inhabiting a permanent *splace*, even in another dimension, does meet with my conscious desire to belong somewhere.

So, I looked for a place of my own. I noticed the garishly painted homemade doll-house with half-detached shag carpet and out-of-scale lace curtains in an Opportunity Shop while on holiday with my family at Mornington Peninsula. Though ugly, it appealed immediately and I could picture it stripped, sanded and repainted off-white with commercially available wooden letters spelling out 'immortal' in the attic.

Paying the grand investment of twenty-five dollars, we lugged it home where it sat for years. Precisely on the night before I was to begin the renovation, I paged through my husband's new book on Australian dollhouses from the 1850's to 1950's (*Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales. 1999*). There was my dollhouse. It was a version of the 1930's style and doubtlessly an heirloom. Now I had a problem. I could not destroy this piece of history. So my husband carefully replicated the exact structure in order to save the original. The only alteration we made was to hinge the side walls so that the house could open like a proscenium stage with a small attic on top.

While purchasing the letters 'IMMORTAL' for installation in the attic, I became fascinated with the letters themselves. I bought letters to spell out a phrase key to my belief system. This phrase will remain undecipherable to viewers because I deconstructed the letters to make essential furniture for the house. I presented an Artist's Talk on this piece as part of the Blake Prize Travelling

Exhibition in 2004. I asked the gathering to initiate the talk by giving me their outside interpretations of the work. One hour later, I had learned more about WORDHOUSE; particularly in the discovery of alpha and omega signs on the extended walls - something I had previously not observed myself. I find this work is uncannily enigmatic, yet uncommonly familiar.

Similarly, contemporary artist Kathy Temin (2005) presented an installation at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art using a large scale dollhouse, indicating that such portrayals of scale homes are not necessarily uncommon at present. However, my earlier influence was found in Louise Nevelson's (1980) works of built art. Later than this example, in 2003, I was encouraged by Megan Evan's (2003) art, staging a miniature built setting, also portrayed digitally. It appealed to my personal sense of structural fantasy.

My digitally generated interpretation of the immortal now, ETERNITY, exhibited directly behind the actual small house, uses the images of WORDHOUSE and PRESENCE.

ETERNITY (*Plate 24, p. 145*): Two collaged digital prints are held in deep, mirrored frames, closely placed one above the other. The top image presents a blurry, vague portrayal of WORDHOUSE. The bottom image is a clear but upside-down picture of WORDHOUSE, locked into secrecy by actual hinges.

Background and Process: ETERNITY, commissioned for his office by Mike Semmler, President of the Lutheran Church of Australia, was motivated by the paraphrased dictum, 'I want something that pushes the boundaries of religious sensibilities'.

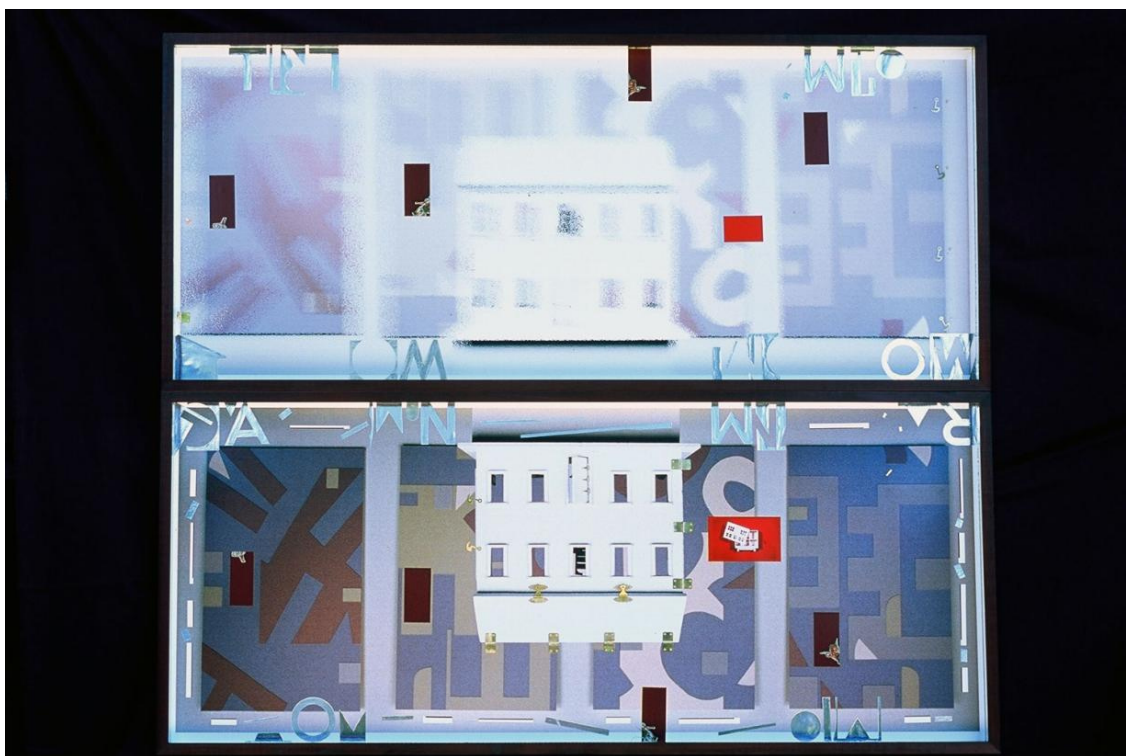


Plate 24: ETERNITY

As such, I avoided any hint of the usual pious Christian symbolism while choosing 'the immortal now' as the theme. I based my research on the Bible verse 'Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.' (The Bible, 1 Corinthians 13:12)

It is disconcerting to look at a picture upside down. We feel disadvantaged as our vantage is distorted. We have an urge to set it right to be read obviously. This was the discomfort I wanted to achieve with ETERNITY. I viewed an exhibition in Toronto by Rodney Graham (2004), a renowned Canadian artist, who hung an entire exhibition of photos of large trees apparently upside down. It offered a new interpretation to a familiar subject.

Thus, ETERNITY presents a fiction of reality represented by the actuality of WORDHOUSE and PRESENCE existing directly behind the viewer to evoke disorientation using an Alice-down-the-rabbit-hole sensation. Like the rabbit hole, much of 'the immortal' is accepted as theological understanding of 'faith', despite historical, traditional or contemporary references. If what is known of the immortal is pieced together, it must still be accepted for its mystery now.

Similarly, juxtaposing reality with staging, Wendy Stavrianos (*Drury & Voigt 1996, pp. 139-56*) painted cathedral-like structures in front of foreboding skies, peopled by searching, sometimes headless figures. The occupants move purposefully as through a stage set, appearing larger than life.

PRESENCE (*Plate 25, p. 147*): Eight very large abstracted panels based on cut-out letters made with layered mat board in muted tones line unlit walls leading to the far end of the long narrow gallery.



Plate 25: PRESENCE (*behind wordhouse*)

Background and Process: In portraying PRESENCE as the fiction of the reality of ETERNITY, mat board panels are spaced evenly along the side walls of narrow Gallery 3. They remind me of church windows which often vibrantly illustrate important scriptural truths, but these are very different, using subtle soft tonings while still carrying a textual significance. Their design, influenced by Barbara Kruger's bold use of text (*Figure 30, p. 148*), began with eight large letters spelling the word 'presence', hand cut from stored mat board panels, and incorporating the off-cuts into the design. All these shapes were distributed onto the backgrounds until each design was satisfying and complete in its own right. The eight panels relate as a unit but each one remains unique and singular. On a journey, you can only view

things from one vantage point at a time, not able to see the entire path.



At first these panels were a deconstruction of '106 West Avenue', my Canadian home, flattened for analysis. They represented the 'presents' and 'presence' of my parents through furniture I had brought back from my birth home. They now become textual clues for the process of transferring me, not only from there to here, but from here to eternity.

Figure 30: Plenty Ought To Be Enough (Kruger 2006)

In presenting the mystery of the divine, the stations of the cross created by Mark Rothko (*Golding 2000*) and Barnett Newman (*Dillenberger 1969, pp. 99-116*)

emphasize the commonness of humanity. They predetermine their artistic interpretations in a minimal presentation using Abstract Expressionism. ALTERED also reflects the philosophical abstract approach.

ALTERED (*Plate 26, p. 150*): Three metre square Styrofoam ‘flotsam’ comprised of white letters and packing materials, poised weightlessly on the wall and distanced from close inspection by a floor-based row of low, hinged, extended wooden houses (*as per EXTENSION, p. 25, 29*), is evocative of altar rails.

Background and Process: My reality of God was altered in Florence in 2004 when I sketched multi-imaged, sometimes two or sometimes three, faces of God found in home chapels (*Figure 31, p. 149*). Such portrayals, commonly found in Renaissance homes, are not specifically Christian, but have origins in much earlier belief systems. As a result, such images have fallen in and out of general favour. I wondered how I could derive a picture of God - not in human form, without ‘religious’ references. The need to project a sense of awful remoteness would have to combine with an attitude of familiar accessibility.



Figure 31: Faces of God (Peitsch 2004)



Plate 26: ALTERED

In my case, *ALTERED* first came into being as a multilayered screen for assembled family slides in the installation *TABLE EIGHT RESEATED* (Peitsch 2002c). This is a multimedia installation, its central feature being the multilayered suspended amalgam of styrofoam packing and plastic white letters. Here I applied the idea of a layered surface as found on large cardboard movie promotional cut-outs that a person bumps into while looking for the correct cinema. Onto this I projected a loop of slides portraying an engaging family mixed with friends in party dress onto a soulful soundscape. The faces and spaces became at once distorted and enlivened. I set two empty chairs between the projector and the screen, inviting viewers to sit and be included by default in the portrayed activity which is outlined on the screen like shadow puppets. On the wall I hung named chairs in disarray –set at an angle to unseat rather than settle (Figure 32, p. 151). However, in the exhibition *HOMEMADE*, the chairs and images have been removed, conceptually altering the original *TABLE EIGHT RESEATED*, leaving only the styrofoam amalgam.



Figure 32: *TABLE EIGHT RESEATED* (Peitsch 2002d)

Reflective of the art of Ben Nicholson (1978) and Rosalie Gascoigne (1997), I noticed the strength of the styrofoam and letter forms, like wall-mounted

debris, without the slide projection. But I did not have the courage to let it stand alone until *HOMEMADE* (Peitsch, F 2005) was installed in the Mildura Art Centre in regional Victoria, as their staff was unable to offer me a technical installation. I found it drew strong attention without the images and chairs; its overall disposability now being of interest. Here simplification successfully added more layers of interpretation in eternal *splace* extending beyond the now - and beyond any particular location.

CHAPTER FOUR: Eternal *Splace*

Introduction to Eternal *Splace*

‘Where am I? Why am I here? Who am I?’ in the immortal now

Unlike the manifestations of material *splace* found in the various community art activities discussed in Chapter Two, in many ways the fine art installations described in Chapter Three do not *explain* the mysteries they may hold within the contexts of home, community and church; rather the installations *express* a mysterious *splace*. Similarly, in this chapter, the concept ‘eternal *splace*’ is somewhat paradoxical. Rather than *explaining* the essence of the mystery, eternal *splace* *expresses* an ontological mystery (Nuske 2006).

Eternal *splace* is the mystery of life and death beyond material presence. Benedictine monks, reports Norris (Norris, K 1999), live with the death of the body all their lives. Jung (1963, p. 224) saw life roundly as ‘something forever coming into being and passing on’. Cixous (1994, p. 59) sees the feminine arts approach to death as ‘singing the abyss’. Each has considered the immortal now, the crossing place between both worlds, temporal and eternal.

The home is considered this crossing place in an ontological sense. John Berger (1984) describes the home as the place where two lines, one vertical and one horizontal, intersect. The vertical plane presents eternal *splace* - leading upwards, a picture of sky as ‘being or life or meaning’, and downward to the underworld as ‘non-being or death or meaninglessness’. The horizontal one represents daily life and all the travelling on the earth. At home, one is closest to everything, meeting life *splace* and death *splace* in close proximity, linking mortal *splace* with immortal *splace*.

NIGHT STACKHOUSE (Image 21, p. 154) is an image for eternal *splace*. Its shelved, coffin-like shapes show no point of entry. Weightlessness removes the abodes from reality; suspended somewhere between the stillness of night

and the enlightenment day, as if forever awaiting the key of interpretation
(Appendix 1: Thesis Overview CD, p. 175).



Image 21: Night STACKHOUSE

My experience of *THE IMMORTAL NOW*

For me, the whole purpose of experiencing spirituality, community and art, is to come to terms with the immortal now. However, *THE IMMORTAL NOW* itself is open for interpretation. To suggest this, each of the themes from my three previous chapters has given a brief consideration of one significant reflection discovered along my research journey.

Figure 33: Cartoon by Judy Horacek (2004)

In Spiritual *S*place

Another noteworthy event occurred on my 2004 visit to Ravenna, Italy. On the tour after being saturated, with countless elaborate altar pieces and mosaics, I settled refreshingly on a mysterious image I later named *REMNANT* (Image 22, p. 155). *REMNANT* is a photo focusing on the



frayed remains of an ancient chasuble. The photo isolates the image as a beautiful abstract, with the original garment source being unperceivable. To me this is the picture of a mystic - one who is aware of her source, yet focussing on an uncertain future (Figure 33, p. 155). Merton (1962) describes a mystic as one searching the mystery. I gravitate towards this mystic (*Underhill* 1930), who lives in the immortal now. The modern mystic seems to be highly creative, giving birth to new connections between spirit, life, and eternal *splace*.



Image 22: *REMNANT*

I see Barbara Hanrahan, a South Australian writer and artist (*Figure 34, p. 156*), as a mystic. Her explicit diaries give a window to her creative soul, where she attempts to understand the ineffable. In her diaries, she holds back nothing, penning her urge to move on with the longing to settle into the landscape, contrasting the desire to stand back and observe while being one with community (*Hanrahan & Lindsay 1998*). Hanrahan is an artist whom I observed



personally working through her art when I was living in Adelaide. Sadly, she suffered cancer at a young age and died at fifty-two, the age I am now. Hanrahan divulges in her private journaling, a journey with a now known ending. I confess that I have stopped reading a short section before the end because she became so real to me as a peer, that I can't allow her to die - if only in the book. The narratives of artists like Hanrahan, have helped me to find my spiritual *splace* in the immortal now.

Figure 34: My Family (Hanrahan 1978)

In Family *Splace*

'Just doing family' is another way I have experienced the immortal now. Conception, gestation and birth are ordinary occurrences, but also extraordinary. Lane (1988) writes that Christians think the incarnation gives everyday commonalities of life new definition, because the holy has once and for all become ordinary in Jesus Christ. In this way, just being human every day embodies holiness.

I created *TABLE EIGHT RESEATED* (Image 23 – 25, pp. 157 - 158), a DVD production with Omega Music, to depict the everyday nativity of my family (See Appendix 2: *Soundscape/Visual Productions DVD and Notes*, p. 175). According to Thomas Moore (Moore 1992), family life consisting of the ordinary and quirky everyday, is where the soul is cared for. In this installations, candid Peitsch family images document one day in its long-gone past, are preserved in the topsy-turvy view of tempered memory. The family's voices compose a soundscape, verse and chorus, pulsing marriage and numbering births, in a morphed cycle of time and ominous change. Using a focused palette in sound and image, the story winds on as if endless; then ends without warning. As with real family time, it is both at once - enduring and fleeting (*Appendix 2: Soundscape/Visual Productions DVD and Notes*, p. 175).



Image 23: Stills from *TABLE EIGHT RESEATED* (1)



Image 24: Stills from *TABLE EIGHT RESEATED* (2)



Image 25: Stills from *TABLE EIGHT RESEATED* (3)

In Artistic *Splace*

I had a chance to face the 'enduring and fleeting' in another artist's work. An excerpt from the précis for *A Second Simplicity*, an exhibition by Domenico De Clario, read:

In 1956, Domenico De Clario and his family immigrated to Australia from Trieste, Italy, leaving behind the one bedroom apartment where he had lived with his parents, grandparents and younger sister. *A Second Simplicity* recreates his home and home-life, at via del Bosco 3, Trieste. On occasions, throughout the exhibition, specially invited guests will share original family meals, converse and reminisce about memory, family, loss and renewal while bathed a jewel-like glow of seven spectrum colours in the recreated structure and interior (*Australian Centre for Contemporary Art flyer, 2006*).

In De Clario's exhibition, a large open-framed wooden structure dominated the gallery (*Figure 35, p. 159*), lit dramatically with exposed, coloured, long fluorescent tubes. People inhabited the structure, sitting at a table, it seemed. Flavourful cooking smells and friendly chatter invited a closer investigation. Hesitating at first, I mounted the stairs leading to the room above - but hot tears stopped me short.

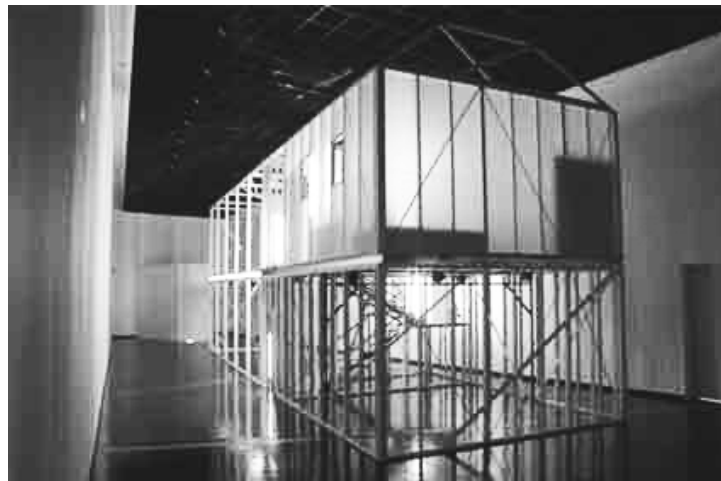


Figure 35: *A Second Simplicity* (Clario 2005b)

I was taken aback by this reaction; such strong emotion tapped by such an austere structure. How was this so? So masculine and severe, this was not a reconstruction of 'my' home. It was not the simulacrum that I would have

created. I was not visiting my birth home. Yet, I was immediately transported (*refer to Image 1: TRANSPORTAL, p. 23*) and caught up in grief for myself. This project somehow housed my own birth home. I wished with all my heart that I could revisit my birth home. That I would find my parents there, meal ready, arms open to me. But it would not be so. Nothing could return it or them to me. This stark house brought back memories I thought I had long ago dismissed.

How could 'art' evoke deep subconscious feelings, call to mind a longing of such intensity? In my own artistic dealing with highly sensitive themes, and clearly trying to avoid sentimentality, I had forgotten that pure emotion could still be a contributing factor, for artist or participant.

I think it was the structure first and then the stairs that arrested me. My Dad was a self-builder. He bought our home without a finished second level; actually it had a half second level as the ceilings were angled under the roof. Dad creatively designed and installed three bedrooms, a study and a bathroom within limited space. In true depression mentality, he innovatively used discarded timber, second-hand flooring and leftover tiles. For years our family of six plus boarders crowded downstairs waiting for the upper level to be made liveable. Being the youngest, I can barely remember the studs for walls, but I must have seen them and walked through them. A few years ago I helped move my parents out of their home of over fifty years (*Peitsch 2000*). My Dad left part of himself, part of his soul in that house. He never recovered. Later, I was told, he would stop by the house ostensibly to pick up the mail but would first stand for a time, quietly crying on the porch. So, I engaged with De Clario at a primary level. In addition to this, I responded to the cognizant 'immigrant' element.

The unclad timber frames and forms invite us to project our own thoughts and memories into the apartment. We become aware of how life is underpinned by essential binaries: emigrant/immigrant, from/to, past/future. Movement is distinct from flow. To migrate is more than to travel, it is to reinvent oneself (*Reid 2005*).

As a child, De Clario used to imagine himself living in a coffee grinder. I imagined myself living in the gothic altar at church, my eyes tracing the run around its pinnacles. There were many things De Clario spoke of in his floor talk with which I identified. Thinking of home, he wrote in his journal, 'Whoever lives in that space could never love it as much as I do'. I feel the same about my first home. De Clario tried to buy the home in Trieste, but could not. I tried to buy my mother's homestead at 106 West Avenue, but could not. He brought his old tricycle to Australia as hand luggage. I brought my little wooden wagon back the same way. He is aware that living in close proximity brought benefits. I noticed that my children disengaged slightly from the time we got a larger meals' table, having moved to a more substantial house.

De Clario spoke of there being 'something redemptive about opening up your life, but not comfortable' which is obligatory to him (*Clario 2005a*). I feel a kinship to this attitude. Once in a 'Word and Image' (*Foulcher 2003*) poetry and art workshop, each participant contributed to a spontaneous three-lined, 'blind' round-robin poem. Someone specially handed me this poem, derived from the workshop:

In many private rooms,
I live my many private lives,
For public consumption.

Its relevance to my artistic and church life quietly astounded me. I have sifted through my life, through my private life – spirituality, relationships, journey – plucking out parts for quiet introspection. Ultimately, these observances, events and constructions are being exposed in my art, to be processed and consumed by others.

Epilogue

Normally, the last chapter of academic writing concludes the research with an overview, summarizing each component of the data, and establishing a conclusion. By contrast, the last chapter in this thesis has ended without such recapitulation. In this way I have allowed the visual art itself to take on that role.

Considering the evolutionary process of my PhD, I recall the extent of the journey covered, survey the volumes of writing that has been read, and observe the breadth of art produced. As Tracey Moffat (1995) found, in all this I have preferred to talk 'around' rather than about my work. I have explored spirituality, families, and art from the perspective of both my community involvement and my personal *splace*, with the many considerations affecting my art. Through this passage of time, I have come to realize that I am continually experiencing the immortal now. Therefore, I am myself a spiritual *splace*, the site for the construction of meaning within my interior self. The creative process is at the same time, the artist - a *splace*, alive and moving on. My art is one *splace* of illumination, where meaning has been constructed. It is where I have attempted to step outside of myself and reflect more deeply about my own personal *splace*; often to gain insight and confidence through sharing the process with the wider community. Therefore, I prefer to conclude my exegesis with the notion of extension. I wish this document to present itself – like my installations – as leading the recipients to their own personal *splace*.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Thesis Overview CD

See accompanying CD

THE IMMORTAL NOW, Additional Installations, CHISHOLM'S HOMES, Flossie Peitsch: Art and Soul

Appendix 2: Soundscape/Visual Productions DVD and Notes

See accompanying DVD

FAITHING, Facing God, TABLE EIGHT RESEATED, HOMEBODY CHISHOLM'S HOMES, Wayside, String Beings

This DVD is a collection of four fine art productions and three community art productions, a collaboration between Omega Music, with Matthias Peitsch, and myself. The DVD will not be viewed at THE IMMORTAL NOW, allowing the resultant viewing to be a decidedly singular and personal experience.

The DVD is designed to accompany the publication Flossie Peitsch: Art and Soul (Macmillan Art Publishing, 2006. ISBN 1-876832-71-1).

FAITHING

Duration: 6 minutes

Though a spiritual journey can be isolating, no one is completely alone. There are other travellers with whom to connect. At times community is supportive, and at other times it is a trial. At all times, joining together seems to require a stepping out. The Peitsch family starts from a safe enclave. Without looking back, each strides into a separate future, donning an 'apron of service' in the process. They are surrounded by a crowd of voices, seemingly from within and without. Each carries nothing but who he or she is.

Facing God

Duration: 7 minutes

The divine has been faced in many ways throughout history, but can this face be perceived by anyone? This query, in the form of Peitsch's self-reflexive poetic narrative, provides the words for *FACING*. People from various cultural backgrounds combine as one questioning voice, layered on images of Italian

and Australian roadside shrines, or semblances thereof, and slipping into abstraction and back. The search for 'the mystery' is itself the mystery.

TABLE EIGHT RESEATED

Duration: 17 minutes

According to Thomas Moore, family life – consisting of the ordinary and quirky everyday is where the soul is cared for. Created in 2001, this soundscape first ran as a loop, supplementary to gallery installations. The slide images were presented with the click of an old projector, in a darkened room. The story of the birth of the Peitsch family documented in this way is a long epic, taking its time in telling. Candid Peitsch family images documenting its long-gone past are preserved as tempered memory. The family's voices compose a soundscape, with verse and chorus pulsing marriage and numbering births in a morphed cycle of change. Using a focused palette of sound and image, the story winds on tediously– then ends without warning. As with real family time, which is at once enduring and fleeting.

HOMEBODY

Duration: 14 minute loop

Peitsch, attired liturgically in white, stands inside a temporary wardrobe or closet which she haltingly unzips to the world. Once in place, she slowly gestures –iconically, ritualistically, rotating – as if a ballerina in a young girl's wind-up jewellery box. The audio is localized noise, not silent but voiceless. The sense is contradictory – private yet exposed, willing yet relegated, engendering yet receiving, admonishing yet blessing, adored yet unnoticed.

CHISHOLM'S HOMES: Shaking Down the Miracle

Duration: 5 minutes

This animated video re-enactment of Caroline Chisholm's Victorian achievements has a distinctly Monty Python-ish approach with sailing ships chased by sea monsters reaching land and a noticeably bored looking kangaroo. The 'passengers' bounce their way into a new life by trailing Caroline — who appears to be planting houses. This is a fun approach to history, despite its historicity. The soundscape wraps around the images, folding in the names of 'Shakedown' locations while declaring, 'You are here to make a difference. The future belongs to you'. This was a community art project.

String Beings

Duration: 6 minutes

A community art project of animated line-drawn portraits interacting with an energetic, textured soundscape and punctuated by abstracted impressions of

the surroundings. It was developed under the pressured production period of several seminar hours, as an end-of-conference, group-participation project.

Wayside

Duration: 7 minutes

A school-based public art project, *Wayside* documents a process of canvas painting and 3D production involving the input, effort and designs of 130 students over a six month period. Like a quiet shrine, the permanent gallery offers local people a reprieve from the pressures of shopping and a peaceful 'time-away zone' in which to be contemplative.

Appendix 3: Biographical Windows into Personal Space

Window 1: Home and Heart

Home and religion have always been connected in my mind. In fact, they have been inseparable. From little on I went to church with my Lutheran family. I had been baptized, went to Sunday School, was confirmed in my faith, nearly married in the church, which is another story, and even, married a Lutheran minister. Then I left home and Canada. I came to Australia to teach in Lutheran schools and belonged here because my religion was here first. My religion had given me a home away from my home, a home for my heart.

But this heart can still be homeless, in particular ways. I discovered that Lutherans in Australia relate to each other by actually being blood relatives or in-laws. This makes me an 'outsider'. I realized that the indigenous people have claims to the land with a special 'oneness' relationship, which relegated me the 'invader'. My Christian God became the 'other' which made me an 'alien'. My birth home disappeared, which left me groundless. My sisters' families grew up - leaving me to be a 'stranger'. My parents died which found me 'orphaned'. My own children are settling here which makes me the 'foreigner'. I struggle unhappily with all of this which deems me 'faithless'. Now it would seem I have little spirituality and no abiding home.

Window 2: Church as Family

The family has been seen as the domestic church. Essential beliefs are passed on at private levels in both these contexts. One author vehemently resists the reverse equation, which suggests that the church is family (*Selby 1996*). He laments the consequences of anyone expecting the church to behave like kinship, working resolutely for the larger good. He uses personal examples of the ill effects the church has had on pastoral families by expecting their pastor to be their 'always-on-call' priest.

My husband being a pastor, mine is a clergy family and I agree with Selby. On many needful occasions, the church has not been 'family' to us, neglecting our wellbeing. This is more evident because we have no extended family to otherwise help us. However, I am very aware that the congregational members wish us to be, unreservedly, family towards them.

Window 3: A Wedding Story

Though I hadn't met either the bride or groom, curious, I wanted to go to the wedding. It promised to be completely memorable and valuable research concerning 'the place where families and spirituality cross over'. Soon I was to

see such a holy place. Being a Japanese/Australian union, it also spoke to my faithful intention 'to explore the building of a harmonious multi-cultural society'

I remember my own wedding had occurred in a non-sanctioned but favourite family place, in a four hundred acre maple stand deep in Canada with square dancing, moose stew, a barrel of apple cider and all. My own minister thought it an inappropriate place and had refused to marry us, until the church elders pressured him. That was over thirty years ago. Two hundred people and the press came for its oddity. I had not before thought of it as the precursor to my current study.

Rick and Tama's (names are changed) wedding proved to be all I hoped for this day. The invitation had given an indication that everyone would be in for a treat. 'Cyber Bunny and Wooka Boy present a Slot Car Wedding', it said, a hand written and illustrated, raggedly photocopied flyer. My husband being the celebrant, we arrived early. Tom knew Rick from their mutual interest in slot cars. As a clergyman, Tom was duly asked to perform the ceremony.

It was not your usual sacred temple. A first look at the unlikely setting was to simply marvel at such a choice. The home could be described as a 'Renovator's Delight'. The grass grew where it wished and the garden hadn't arrived. Still, there was a canopy with bouncing party lights and an oil heater doggedly staving off some cold and rain. Feet numbed to our knees, we clutched soft drinks nestling together, first on one foot then the other, as the sky threatened. I picked my way toward the house looking for the amenities, only to walk in on the bride dressing in the lounge, a stunning beauty in her white Kimono. I awkwardly introduced myself. She was attended by her mother, a coiffured, tailored Japanese guest to Australia. The diminutive bridesmaids played with their hair and flowers, wobbling on their platform shoes. They were about ten years old, a daughter of the groom and her twin-like friend. The food waiting to be served was perched precariously throughout the house; with the clothes-mounded bathroom floor, a forgotten entity.

The corrugated shed outside had been the centre of industry, freshly painted inside and out. Red stencilled Japanese and Australian symbols danced on the walls. The bar doubled as an altar of sorts. The crowd, having moved inside the shed, hushed as the bride entered the shrine passing under a red arch. All stood close. Something about the couple holding each other's hands, directed with the words, 'These are the hands that will caress you through the years, touching your body, heart and soul' put a catch in our throats. The bride's mother wept silently throughout. I was privileged to be part of this intimate, precious event. This home-holy wedding gives particular form to my research.

Window 4: My Mother's Splace

Recently returned to Canada for my mother's funeral, I was acutely aware that my sense of belonging in Kitchener was altering completely. Would I ever again revisit? None of my sisters lived near there. In fact, the only place I had to stay was in my Mom's room at the nursing home for two weeks while I sorted her things. I looked out of her window. I slept in her bed. I was awake through the night as she had been. I sorted through her letters, read her books, smiled at the staff as she would have. I used her phone. I ate at her spot at the table. I met her friends. I played cards in her group. I said goodbye forever as she had not been able to. It was a journey of her last days of which I had been almost no part. After being in her *splace*, existing in her world and routines, in this corporeal *splace*, I somehow felt closer to my mother but knew she was not there. Perhaps this allowed me to be more accepting of her travel to the incorporeal *splace* where I could not follow. My sense of home *splace* was forever changed by the death of my mother and the closure of the family home several years earlier, as well as by my poignant engagement with her recent *splace*.

But there was more than that. Being in Canada this time I couldn't settle myself to frame photos as a last attempt to capture home. I suppose throwing away so many photos taken and developed by my amateur photographer father had helped toss that idea. On an earlier visit to Canada when I had helped my parents downsize, I had thought I would be freely drawing in my sketchbook to document the move. This had turned out to be impossible because exhaustion and sentiment had taken their toll. Now, I could not even capture this *splace* on film?

Window 5: Family Roles

Not to take myself too seriously, I remember feeling remorse and terror on my ninth birthday, expecting the best of my life to be over. I also perceived my wedding to be the end, imagining all the adventure to be gone. It is possible that I could be theatrical by nature.

Window 6: Decades of Loss

Ahead of me is reaping, reaffirming, reclaiming, re-emerging, refocusing, reforming, regressing, regrouping, rejecting, relinquishing, retaining, retraining, rethinking, returning, repositioning, reprocessing, re-projecting, resetting, resettling, resorting, and something that I resist completely, resting. It is a struggle for me to face all this, not regretting or resenting.

Window 7: Subject and Object

An artist is exposed to personal criticism on many levels whenever and wherever they exhibit, it comes with the territory. An artist can be labelled as political active, politically correct or politically controlled, controversial or status quo, cutting-edge or traditional, popular or elite, successful or not, based on her artistic reputation, approach and outcomes. As a consequence, her lifestyle and personal behaviour become as much an issue as her art. I have had decades of 'exposing my soul' through art, at great cost to my personal privacy – and my family's. Knowing this, I am surprised to find myself poised as the subject matter in *HOMEBOY*.

Window 8: *HOMEBOY*

At the Denning workshop, I preliminarily spoke about the performance art as not 'about research' but 'as research'. I wanted to experiment with this derived animation, contextualized with audience and interaction. I directed the viewers to come up to the wardrobe as I rotated in it, looking inside and out in an unselfconscious curious manner. They were to sniff a passed bag of camphor to enhance the sense of wardrobe. Slides of my work projected languidly but dimly in the half lit lecture room. The Soundscape from *TABLE EIGHT* added in another sense. I started with the wardrobe closed, peeking out, opening it tentatively, then starting my repertoire of slow hand gestures into motion, rotating unsteadily in the process. I thought of the musical turnings of the pink ballerina in a little girl's jewellery box, dutifully moving when exposed. Finally, I re-zipped the wardrobe and stood still.

The response to the presentation was my next surprise. The collected participants, all scholars and professional thinkers in their own right, dramatists among them, begged for an explanation of what it was all about. I resisted politely, saying that a response was what I expected to hear from them. I did not want to over-ride their own interpretations. This was contested. The viewers were irritated. I relented to my peers and said that the plastic zipped covering, when off its frame, seemed a little like a body-bag and... not finishing, as the retorts flew. 'I thought it was a closet and you were "coming out of the closet"', one said. 'This is just what I meant,' I said. 'To have any thought is good', but it was too late. The viewers were already miffed. The discussion continued but I left disgruntled and feeling foolish, ungenerous, having left my audience wanting and uneasy. No one had realized the pluck it had taken to do this at this time, untried in performance art as I was.

Much later, I realized all this was actually successful. I had tipped the audience from tidy perceptions. They had to mull over their own reactions and biases in response to what they saw. No final answer was given. I had to have the courage to allow this and exit, without applause. In accepting this result, I had turned another corner.

I pared down the installation for the Span exhibition, keeping just enough for effect. The required 'virtual performance' suggests further metaphor.

Window 9: No Violence Zone

I now accept in myself, an absolute repugnance of portrayals of violence. As a child I remember living in a famous meat producing city, driving along in the family car. When a stock truck of cows or pigs passed me and one creature looked directly in my eyes, I felt miserable and whispered goodbye to them all. Then as a teenager I was quite cavalier about TV violence and even sought it, especially wanting to shock my prudish widowed Auntie who would then tattle to my mother. I only knew that occultist references were a problem to my impressionable psyche so would not have considered watching 'The Exorcist' then or later.

Today, I can hardly watch the news or the average evening crime serials that the family follows. Portrayals of human trauma and evil strike home for me. I become almost physically ill or at least completely distracted for a time. Not since I have had children of my own or faced potentially tragic personal ordeals have I been able to stomach visual brutality or horror, startling portrayals of life at its worst.

This reaction extends to art imaging as well. It is not about naivety or denial; it is about my personal visual processing of life. I am not afraid to recognize and name malevolence but I have faced evil personified. I choose to diminish its effect rather than expand it. I tackle profound issues in my own art but shock for voltage value is not one of my tools. I compassionately take the higher ground. This could work against me in some ways, in the voraciously voyeuristic, jolt junkied, climaxing climate of existing society.

Window 10: Behind the Socks

I walked along the windy ridge of the Sorrento back beach, early morning, golden sunshine, a new day promising, no regrets of yesterday's events, except maybe the extra glass of Lyceum Red. Then I saw it. Still bright green, though saturated and sand encased.....the left sock. A mother somewhere is wondering 'Where is that child's other sock?' Despite her diligence, this sock escaped its owner and its owner's guardian to take on a new life as a solitary sock on a lone knoll. What was to become of it now? Happily for me, it came home to become part of my PhD.

Window 11: *NESTBENCH*

NESTBENCH is a collaboration with my Dad. When I was a young girl, my Dad, a process worker for more than fifty years, would work creatively in his basement workshop at every opportunity. He thought everything should have

its place, so he spent much of his time tenderly crafting these places. This inventive workbench was for his recycled nail collection. While watching it being made, I used to imagine the bench being the place for many things; none of them nails. After my parents died, I shipped this wooden treasure, without the nails, to Melbourne as part of my inheritance.

It still suggests a place for things. The towered partitioned bench reminds me of the layers of windows in Melbourne's tall residential buildings, each a nesting box for a family. Feathering the nests with richly dyed down makes places where 'birds of a feather can stick together'. Some boxes hold pillow feathers which came from my Mom's chickens and geese. Wooden figures from my parents' defunct phone number take up residence in the boxes, some with a 'nest egg'.

Dad would have been amazed at this use of his workbench, amused and, shyly, very proud to see such interest in it.

Window 12: *HOUSEWARMING*

The clothes-horse, as we called it in Canada, could stand in place over the furnace hot air vent for six or seven months straight. There were countless snow soaked mittens and socks to dry each night. I know a family of six in Melbourne who dry everything on the clothes rack. Their rack is a household structure. I decided to make our broken rack look like the structure of a house. Turned upside down, it adjusted easily. Then I wrapped woollen strands around its frame reminiscent of a Mexican Indian traditional weaving called Ojo de Dios, or Eye of God (website). The father of a new born baby weaves the central eye on two crossed sticks. Each year after that another eye is added. My weaving wool drawing God's eye to house from the inside out became *HOUSEWARMING*.

Window 13: *TRINITY VEST*

I easily see my femininity as a good part of God's creation. It is natural to me. As a visual aide to a devotion I prepared for a state-wide women's convention held at our church, I designed *TRINITY VEST*. This is a sewn item of clothing made from three second-hand vintage woollen vests, worn occasionally by my boys but now relegated to the dusty extremities of their wardrobes. It holds room for three small people. Planted audience volunteers donned the 'tri-person' garment with me and we walked off together, a practical demonstration of the three-in-one Christian God.

Looking at the photos later, I realized I had portrayed an entirely female God, an incidental theological stand perhaps. But this is not an unprecedented interpretation. There is a famous icon of the trinity as three distinctively feminine looking visiting angels as trinity.

Window 14: 2006 /Contemporary Commonwealth/

I attended the Two-Day Symposium of presentations and floor talks by artists held in conjunction with 2006 /Contemporary Commonwealth/ Part of Festival Melbourne 2006 and the 2006 Commonwealth Games; a collaboration between the Australian Centre for the Moving Image and the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2006; groundbreaking mixed medium exhibitions featuring the art of numerous commonwealth artists balanced with Australian artists.

With the common denominator of the Commonwealth and artists inventively exploring my themes of space/ place, dislocation, family and spirituality, I felt completely 'at home' artistically, perhaps for the first time. At last, a discourse I belonged to. I felt a strong kinship with the artists, as if we were somehow long lost cousins. I casually spoke to several artists, inquiring, off the record, about their spiritual beliefs, first explaining my research and personal interest in the topic. The artists were very generous and candid in their responses; not always perceiving the clear connection with what they said about spirituality and families and what was so engaging in their art. Their personal journeys a serious search for meaning in life were not unlike mine in many ways. Their art is a passionate attempt to conceptually articulate this process, primarily for themselves. I realize clearly that I can not report this information specifically in my PhD, having had no on-the-spot ethical clearance. But their responses led me to feel personally felt bolstered in my own research and on an important task to identify my spirituality in relation to my art, and visa versa. There is room for a much more specific but related study into this topic, 'Australian artists and their spirituality', at a future time. While my questions were invasive, I was accepted completely as a peer by these artists. I carefully did not mention that I am a 'Christian' interested in their particular spirituality. Sadly, I know that this would have keyed a defensive response. I also realized despondently that it is unlikely that I would ever be chosen to represent Canada or Australia in an international exhibition such as this; if not for other reasons, because I am not working in the country of my birth. I wondered if becoming an Australian citizen would alter this. The displacement which fuels my art effectively dislodges me professionally. Contrarily, dislocation articulates 'a belonging of self on a global scale', a citizen of an itinerant world.

Window 15: The Eve of the Eve of Christmas

Narrative Prose

Flossie Peitsch, 23/12/05.

AHAAA! I am pleased to report that this Christmas I got out of the spring cleaning jobs, the grocery shopping (mostly), the gift shopping and the family ties as I diligently invested myself in my PhD research at the university. It has

been a relief in many ways. Mostly, I think I just wished for a break from trying to sort out my life with them, my family.

I even went so far as to instigate a barbeque for Christmas Dinner, breaking the almost thirty-year run of traditional Canadian fair, roast turkey with all the trimmings. Our guests, mostly Australian, have no expectation of this sort of meal anyway and usually ask 'So, what food are you serving? Turkey again?' There was only one earlier 'barbeque' year when a Tom and I had a quiet Christmas with little Matthias and a littler Philip. We remember it as our favourite Christmas of all time. It pored a steamy torrent as Tom cooked, sheltering under our carport. The two boys hopped on their wheels and tore like fiends around the church parking lot through the soaking puddles. We laughed a lot with them.

This year it will be different. As has become our practice, twenty odd people will drift to our house. These people are mostly like us – no immediate family to gravitate to, no others vying for their presence. Alone together we understand. This year I want to relax and join in the fun. I don't want to be the caterer. I want someone else bear the stress of getting everything right. I want to play card games and settle back with the champagne. I need to be catered to. I will allow myself, graciously I hope, to be supported by others. It leaves Tom to his 'take charge' role and I am completely grateful.

It is only now, sitting in my office today, that I have begun to think that I should somehow take note of Christmas before I avoid it altogether. Last year I discovered that I had lost my homeland through my Mom's death. It was my sisters who needed to call me, as I seemed immobilized. I only wanted to survive the day and not look ahead or behind. This year, I am celebrating the anniversary of that loss. No longer in shock I am quietly engaging on my terms. I will even interpret the ancient English poem at the Christmas Eve Service.

I do marvel at my ability to think of this sadness despite all the good I am experiencing within my family this year, at this time. But then, Christmas is a time of contrasts. I will accept myself, and not judge harshly. What else is there to do?

This writing seems so ordinary. Who would want to think about me? I thought I might at least scribe profoundly having seeped myself in Thomas Moore's poignant careful writings these many past weeks. But no, it is just the silent journaling of a travelling, sorrowing soul.

Never the less, I suppose that is the essence of Moore's writings.

And I see I have already been brave with myself to seek the divine even at Christmas, to trust the incarnation in myself as Mary did long ago.

Window 16: He's Gone

Narrative Prose

Flossie Peitsch, 20/06/05.

He's gone. It's too real now. I've had my lunch and I wait for the inquiring phone call. 'How's your morning been?' But it won't happen today or seemingly, forever. Then suddenly a call, the hiss of an overseas connection, I say 'Hello' excitedly. How did he get to a phone so soon? Where is he calling from? Then the distinctive voice of a telemarketer asks, 'Am I calling the Lutheran Church of Australia?' It is the church work phone but I say 'No' abruptly and hang up. What a harsh disappointment.

Why am I crying here in the corner of the kitchen floor? Why does my world seem suddenly dissolved? Why can't I stay ambivalent towards the man who is travelling to America for three months on the cycling adventure of a lifetime, financed by my inheritance?

I didn't cry at the airport. Maybe I was considering my new role as a single parent. It is never nice to be left behind, even if it is logical. Certainly his sheer enthusiasm for departure was disconcerting. Separation should have been at least a little more sobering for him.

Still now, in all my life, I've never felt so alone. We have parted for lengthy periods other times. Then I've been the one going for business or funerals and I've always shown mixed feelings. Or Tom has taken his rightful turn to travel to the 'other side' to visit parents. Before, I have had my Mom and Dad to phone, who always wanted to listen to me talk about the children and everything. Not now. They are both dead and gone, not at all immortal to me.

Now my best friend has taken himself on a holiday without me, and he likes it. I hadn't wanted to give in to love a husband in the first place. That disgruntled thought should pluck me along. But it passes. I am left bereft, thinking our time together will never long enough. Thirty years have passed as if nothing.

I am especially mortal now.

Window 17: Excerpt from a Letter to My Sisters

Flossie Peitsch

Easter Sunday, 9a.m. 16/04/06.

He is Risen! Risen indeed!

In past days, I have been quite faithful in writing to Mom and Dad each week to catch them up on my family's news. I knew they looked for my regular letters so it was good incentive to sit for an hour and recap. The last few years, especially when Mom was on her own, I found myself carefully editing the information that I passed on. The letters became almost a complete fabrication of our lives and anyone else reading them would have certainly have been impressed with my trouble-free children and my carefree life in their midst. This was hardly ever the case but I knew I couldn't trouble my Mom with my traumas anymore. I have so missed her receiving this news and know that Mom and Dad will never be replaced as our primary support people. I always knew that they prayed for us and were always keen to know the latest developments. They called us on our birthdays and on special days.

There is no one else who has this interest in us as a family. I don't blame anyone. I know others do not think of us so often because God knows I don't think regularly about other people's families, but not because they mean so little to me. Others mean a lot to me but I do not have the brain or heart capacity to extend my correspondence or thoughts beyond those under my nose. I do not expect others know when I am praying for them or to depend on me except maybe my own children. This is just how life is at the moment. I may eventually run out of friends or family who can accept this neglect, but there it is.

I have been thinking a lot about Dad at this time of year. He always loved the Lenten hymns and I can remember hearing his strong singing voice and sometimes holding his hands in church. He passed away in the Canadian autumn. I recall flying over Toronto and seeing the last of the coloured leaves. By the time I left Canada four weeks later there was only the grey drab of approaching winter. Snow didn't appear before I left for Australia.

Mom died almost two years ago today on April 17th I think. Now I remember walking the beach on Easter Monday that year and feeling terribly anxious all day. I had yet to call Mom and find out she had had a heart attack. She died before I got home to see her but we did speak on the phone. It was autumn here as I left to help bury her.

Of course, I think of them in spring to because it was spring respectively there and here when they died. I suppose I just think of them often. But Easter and autumn seem to bring about a more pensive state of mind. It's a time to reconsider one's own ending perhaps.

I so miss them but have finally let them go to God. I think I was holding on to the loss of them as a way of keeping them alive. It was very exhausting to do this and not very faithful of me. I finally worked out that where they are 'with God' in whatever form that is, is none of my business – it is God's business! So I have had to let God take over from here. As if there is any other way!

Anyway, I had that break-through in my thinking this year. Now I'm not nearly so sad. I wrote a poem about this acknowledgement called '*Being at Loss*' which I am happy to pass on to you if you wish, but you need to ask. I don't want to thrust it on anyone. Some people have thought it was just a 'collection of words'. I guess the poem wasn't meant for them.

Now to set the scene... I am at my laptop up in our dining room. I am keeping Ezra company while being nice to myself and writing to you. This is a luxury that doesn't happen at all this year, or much before I guess. But today I need to talk to you. Many thoughts in my head, as you can tell. Four of us...Patience, Ezra, Tom and I have been to the dawn Easter Vigil service that is the culmination of the Good Friday pilgrimage to the stations of the cross that are permanently located at churches in the Melbourne central business district. It is a walk that attracts over 4,000 participants. They sing and walk and there is a short meditation at each spot. We haven't attended as our church always has a service at the same time. Our church has the last station, the resurrection so on Easter morning we start at the thirteenth spot and then cross the river (very symbolic) to St Johns for the combined service. Then we have champagne and hot cross buns and fresh brewed coffee, of which I have become quite a fan. It's a result of all those free breakfast-with-room cappuccinos in Italy that sustained me for six weeks. Eating was so expensive there.

I took Ez home because he has been unwell the last few days. Now he is content killing people on the Net in computer games. Ah me, exactly what I wish for him, especially on Easter Sunday. NOT! The other boys are all away at the great Victorian Easter Camp. Every Lutheran congregation is robbed of its sixteen- twenty-five year olds for this annual camp, the place to be. They even turn people down as the camp fills rapidly. This means that we have effectively not had a family Easter for ten years. I know that I must change my thinking about this and look at the bright side. Sometimes I have had other people around instead but I am not into that this year.

Much Love,

Florence

Window 18: Yesterday was my Son's Confirmation

By Flossie Peitsch, 16/05/05

Yesterday was my son's Confirmation, the day of public acceptance of the faith into which he was baptized as a baby. If we were a Jewish home this would have been his Bar mitzvah. If we were Aboriginal it would have been the Initiation Ceremony. It is a significant day as a personal life passage and

for church and family. This is especially so since it coincided with Pentecost, the celebration of a remembered New Testament event, the day of conversion and tongues of fire in the early church.

Invitations by Thadd accidentally left date off, his choice of people, RSVP

Bought the proverbial 'black suit', wished for by my boy. Imagine that!

Cleaned and recleaned the house, a three day task cobwebs, finger marks, hired 30 chairs, ordered food, plus cooked for two days, to market, to grocery store, to party store

Found the floor in teenagers' room, found the desk in the little girl's room, Wiped off the finger marks on the light switches, made our beds tidied the garden, put flowers by the vanity, everyone helped, everyone had jobs, great anticipation, much excitement

Planned the strategy for serving food, and managing the guests' children

This was important and everything had to be just right, the best.

Expected some 60 people for Tea.

No family to celebrate with but many people to invite, being that my husband is the pastor at our church. Picked up some friends on the way to church and arrived early. Phew, all on track...

Then the service. Three Confirmands, all fifteen. Each one read a statement on God in their lives, from the heart, unedited. Spoke of the difficult times when they would pray to God and the times they forgot to thank Him. Ready to go on the journey life ahead of them, God beside them. All raised as Christians in fact, the young people are the Chairperson's son, the Organist's daughter and the Pastor's son. An elite group to be sure.

I took the photos. Thadd stood a tall six foot two. Very serious, intense look, quiet, a bud of a man. How can he make this promise to a way of life? To a belief system? The same way that I did at his age, in innocence and faith, trusting the God his parents base their lives on, not all the answers, not even all the questions, still, committing.

I remember when he was baptized at a few tender weeks of age. That was a big day too. My Mom and Dad came from Canada. Sponsors attended. Specially decorated fruitcake with his Bible verse. Baby cards and presents all on display. It was a happy beginning, relief and anticipation, looking ahead. Now only his elder two brothers attend, no one else from before. Even one brother missing. Now a stranger took our family photo.

On to the party at home...people arrived, congratulations given and then many left, other things, other places to be, many tired from their weekend run. Happy to come, glad to be there, happy to leave. A very nice day.

I worked with the food in the kitchen, tracking the table, serving, tidying. Some offered help, were needed, then moved on. Many left just before the meal or before the dessert. Mountains of food left, much of it perishable. How was I supposed to know that they only meant to 'drop in' and not stay to eat? How were they supposed to know that they were our family and not 'substitutes'?

Before the clean-up came my tears. Hot, angry and despairing, all out, mixed-up together. Why such great loss and sorrow? It caught me by surprise. Thadd's special day was over and I felt it was somehow missed at church and at home. Unfair of course but acutely felt none the less. Not to hold our guests to account, I realized that no numbers would have been enough. This was about a mother's pain of letting go. I had the feeling that almost no one watched this event with my eyes; almost no one had only eyes for my boy. Perhaps it is hard not to think he is merely a fourth son, after all.

How often will this happen? Once more when he marries? Will I tolerate it any better? Will I feel any more supported? Would having 'real family' make it any easier? I don't honestly think so. I can't pretend to myself.

I always thought that I'd be ready for these life changes and struggles, accepting them with grace, courage and decorum. At other times I'm afraid that I won't have any emotion left for these events. That the losses and trials already passed through will leave me like my Mom became, an unmoved observer.

If I have a choice, though not very bravely, I think I will always choose to feel.

Appendix 4: A Kindred Spirit - Caroline Chisholm

Even during her lifetime, 1808 – 1877, Caroline was very famous. Her portrait appeared on the Australian \$5.00 note until 1992. I had passed along her visage for nearly twenty years without giving her work any special thought. Chisholm was an advocate for immigrant's rights, especially for women, and families. This accomplishment was driven by Chisholm's Christian spirituality and great desire to help families and new immigrants. It was her belief that the best influences on the developing country were marriage and family life (*Bogle 1993; Hoban 1984; Knights & Keilor Historical Society. 1992; Stevens-Chambers 2004*).

In addition to our mutual dedication to the issues of spirituality, family and home, I feel a great personal affinity with Chisholm. Many of her life choices and directions are mirrored in my own. As with me, Caroline was the youngest of a large family with doting older sisters. She was baptized into the family faith as a baby and worshipped regularly developing a strong spirituality and sense of justice. She had a stable family life and happy confident childhood. Her play was involved, adventurous, taking her to faraway imaginative places and sometimes getting her into trouble. Her family often took in strangers in need and shared what they had. She amazed her family with her odd questions about life and dismayed them with her lack of interest in the local boys. A 'foreigner' caught her eye and she married at just over twenty. Work immediately took them from home and so she left all familiar community. Some family members were alienated by the change of religion and culture she experienced. At this time she took drawing lessons showing considerable artistic aptitude. All this pertains to my life too.

Caroline lost her first pregnancy, possibly causing a depression and augmenting loneliness (*Stevens-Chambers 2004*). Despite further losses, ill babies and her own health concerns following birth, she mothered six children. She had a great heart for her family and later, when others questioned her ability to raise her own children while seeing to her vocation, took criticism of this situation hard. I have experienced this too.

Her husband, Archibald, was away from home for extended periods. He encouraged her in her special field of work while he was gone (*Bogle 1993*) and had full confidence in her abilities. Nonetheless, many would understand the daily stains of being a single parent while trying to meet outside commitments. I do. The time wears long and wearisome.

In the critical world of her day, Caroline was said to be using a masculine brain (*Hoban 1984; Stevens-Chambers 2004*). She was very organized herself and concerned with good planning for successful projects, even at great personal cost. She used her intelligence to alter society's views for the welfare of all. She did not accept that the world must continue as it is. She respected and

spoke for all people's rights, including the 'original holders of this soil' (*Bogle 1993*). Chisholm was non-sectarian in her work, not even accepting government payments at times to ensure her objective viewpoint:

Caroline strove to show that her own faith in God was part of something that all should hold in common, and she was fond of using expression like 'God's Providence' and references to His 'fatherly concern' which emphasized the universality and breadth of belief in Him. The cause of emigration was, she felt, in a profound sense God's work, but she had never seen it as remotely connected with Catholic mission effort. It was simply a practical charitable project, making the blessings of God's providence available to all in need (*Hoban 1984*).

These are some of the tasks Chisholm enacted:

- Cleaned up disused barracks (of rats) to establish the Female Immigrants' Home
- Educated women into household duties to better their independence and marketable skills
- Spoke out against Bounty passage of young single women to Australia
- Cajoled the government of England and Australia into seeing to the welfare of all people under their jurisdiction
- Set up an employment registry to assist immigrants to find jobs and to assist employers to find workers
- Accompanied women inland in bullock drays (crossed the Blue Mountains with 150 women) to help out on farms
- Saw that contracts were signed
- Set up employment exchanges in several country towns
- Set up shelter sheds on Gold Digging Route in Victoria to reunite miners' families
- In England was "The Emigrant's Friend", enabling starving and poor people to relocate in Australia
- Returned to England with letters and long lists of names in order to reunite women and children of convicts freed in Australia
- Established the Family Colonization Loan Society facilitating low-priced passage for immigrants to Australia

Appendix 5: Exhibitions Relevant to THE IMMORTAL NOW

True to Nelson's (1999) anticipation, there has been an increased interest in 'Spirituality'. This popularity is furthered by numerous exhibitions on the topic. Listed, in chronological order, are some exhibitions I have contributed to or strongly engaged with during the research period; having attended all but one:

- 1) **Beyond Belief: Modern Art and the Religious Imagination**, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 1998, Curator: Rosemary Crumlin.
- 2) **HEAVEN**, Kunsthalle Dusseldorf, Germany, 1999, Curator: Doreet LeVitte Harten.
- 3) **Beyond the everyday: the art of Elizabeth Gower**, a Glen Eira City council exhibition, Melbourne, 2002
- 4) **Sidney Nolan: Desert and Drought; Colin McCahon: A Question of Faith**; Rover Thomas: I Want to Paint, concurrent exhibitions at National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2003, various curators; with related art forum 'OF PLACE AND SPACE: exploring art and spirituality' coordinated by Flossie Peitsch.
- 5) **L A N D M A R K S: Sounds for the Soul**, Flinders University City Gallery, Adelaide, 2004, artist: Margaret Worth.
- 6) **Quest for the Spirit**, Adelaide Festival Fringe, Adelaide, 2004, Curator: Jenny Teasdale.
- 7) **Rodney Graham: A Little Thought**, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada, 2004.
- 8) **The Blake Prize for Religious Art Touring Exhibition**, Various Australian capitol cities annually, 2004.
- 9) **Holy, Holy, Holy**. Flinders University City Gallery, Adelaide, 2004, Curator: Vivonne Thwaites. Indigenous art reflecting on early settlement and its effect.
- 10) **The Needham Religious Art Prize**, Mount Gambier, 2004, 2006.
- 11) **Arti & ARCHITETTURA**, Genova Palazzo Ducale, Genoa, Italy, 2004, A curi di: Germano Celant. An international survey of all types of art relating to architecture from 1968 to 2004.

- 12) **INTERSECTIONS reading this space: Christianity, Judaism, Islam**, Jewish Museum of Australia, Melbourne, 2005, Curator: Irene Barberis.
- 13) **The Look of Faith**, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, 2005, Curator: David Burnett.
- 14) **Bill Viola: The Passions**, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2005.
- 15) **National Sculpture Prize & Exhibition 2005**, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Curator: Elena Taylor. in the future.
- 16) **Plenty Ought to Be Enough**, Barbara Kruger, ACCA, Melbourne, 2005.
- 17) **Wolfgang Laib**, Australian Contemporary Centre for the Arts, Melbourne, 2005; National gallery of NSW, Sydney, 2006, Curator: Anthony Bond. Minimal work from 1977 – 1996.
- 18) **2006 /Contemporary Commonwealth/** Part of Festival Melbourne2006 and the 2006 Commonwealth Games, A collaboration between the Australian Centre for the Moving Image and the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2006. Groundbreaking mixed medium exhibitions featuring the art of numerous commonwealth artists balanced with Australian artists.
- 19) **Crisis, Catharsis & Contemplation**, St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne, 2006, Curator: David Rastas.

Appendix 6: Artists Relevant to *THE IMMORTAL NOW*

Following is an eclectic list of some prominent and some obscure artists whose art has been pertinent in some way, to *THE IMMORTAL NOW*.

The Immortal Now as Cathedral: Renaissance cathedrals, Early Christian church buildings, Antoni Gaudi

The Immortal Now as Chapel: Henri Matisse, Marc Chagall, Barnett Newman, Mark Rothko, Louise Nevelson, Renaissance Books of Hours

The Immortal Now as Splace: Domineco De Clario, Jill Orr, Louise Bourgeois, Hossein Valamanesh, Mira Gojak, Hany Armanious, Tracey Moffatt, Kate McMillan

The Immortal Now as Abstruse: Robert Rauschenburg, Andy Warhole, William Ferguson

The Immortal Now as Habitat: Kathy Temin, Callum Morton, Nadine Christiansen, Greer Honeywill, Astra Howard, Todd Hido, Dan Graham, James Casebere, Ruth Johnstone, Do-Ho Suh, Dominico de Clario, Rosslie Piggott

The Immortal Now as Indigenous: r e a, Berni Searle, aH Xian, Shane Cotton, Lorraine Connelly-Northey, Gunybi Ganambarr, Mirlkitjunga Millie Skeen, Gloria Tamarre Petyarre, Tim Johnson

The Immortal Now as Form: John Coburg, Patrick Heron, Ben Nicholson, Sebastian Di Mauro, John Nixon, Piet Mondrian

The Immortal Now as Language: Susan Norrie, Colin McCahon, Rose Nolan, Rosalie Gascoigne, Mikala Dwyer, Mike Parr, Kazuo Katase, Patrick Negri

The Immortal Now as Landscape: Rita Irwin, Geoff Dyer, Mary Tonkin, Albert Namatijira, Sydney Nolan, Meg Benwell, Paul Borg

The Immortal Now as Ritual: Wolfgang Laib, Bill Viola, William Kentridge, Inga Hunter, Lyn Plummer

The Immortal Now as Action: William Kentridge, Megan Evans, Susan Norrie

The Immortal Now as Icon: Cindy Sherman, Andres Serrano, Cameron Stelzer, Irene Barberis, Elizabeth Gower, Warren Breninger, Fiona White, Julie Dowling, Nan June Paik

The Immortal Now as Fantasy: Claes Oldenburg, Mirka Mora, Barbara Hanrahan, Kandinsky

The Immortal Now as Beauty: Cresside Collette

The Immortal Now as Commemoration: Julie Gough, Mary O'Neil, Kate Briscoe

The Immortal Now as Journey: Kate Derum, Megan Evans, Rodney Graham, Marion Borgelt, Anne Judell, Ted Snell

The Immortal Now as Relationship: Andrew Sibley, Karsten Bott, Zanette Kahler, Margaret Michaelis

Appendix 7: My Art and the Preservation of Hope

A Successful Artist

This section is set aside to write about some of the wider concerns of being an artist I have experienced during the process of my PhD research and, in fact, much earlier. I will touch on some contentious issues of general concern to artistic research which have not been commonly voiced. An artist may accept that they are the only ones who struggle with certain situations; an overriding feeling that if they were a better artist, these concerns would not be a problem. At times, this is how I feel but I do know better than to think like this.

Having initiated a Creative Post Graduate Peer Group for my university and maintaining it for two years, has resulted in a broader view 'uncovering the paradoxes and vanities of our situation' (*Nelson 2000, p. 34*). Since PhD research is about art practice too, it should investigate how to become a successful artist and how to remain so (*Nelson 2000*).

In some ways it has served as an advantage for me to be at a university without a distinctive artistic population. My closest university colleagues are teachers, historians, engineers and administrators. My School of Education peers are very interested in what I do and my odd research methods and outcomes. It is new territory or a new approach for many of them.

Coming from a secular culture I am repeatedly affected/drawn to your work, Flossie, because of your 'down to earth' relating to life - a sensitive, intelligent and sensual approach which resonates with who I am and where I am. I think it has such power, in fact, because you draw/extract this art from your essence, your spirituality. It has an undeniable warmth and vitality that I have rarely experienced in others' art. I know of many artists' work but your art stands alone in its effect/pull on me (*Dakich 2006*).

An unprompted but considered comment like this goes far to counteract the recurring feelings of being inconsequential and overlooked in the art world, at least on a personal level. Though portentousness is the stereotypical quality credited the artist, there is in contrast more likely to be discouragement and a crippling self-critical attitude. This develops after years of heartfelt investment with seemingly no professional improvement or return.

I trained as an art teacher to secure the illusive income which most artists lack. It gave me rewards as a teacher but not as an artist. Once I was no longer required to be the bread-winner in my family, I embarked on full time art. An impressionist watercolourist moving to an ever more abstract expressionist style, I handled my media with significant skill, much to my

satisfaction. I gained a state reputation of sorts, sold hundreds of low priced paintings but I was an unknown in 'real' art circles. I scorned commercial art. Looking for a higher profile, I became aware that no government grants would be awarded to such staid traditional art, certainly not in watercolour. I was not considered on the 'cutting edge'. This was a warranted comment, from those who had political sway.

Becoming more minimal and less accessible in style, I lost the host of admirers I once had. Eventually, the Adelaide gallery which supported my early work became critical that my paintings were now not selling, saying that people would not pay for so much white paper. Soon I became blasé about my own watercolours because the results came too easily; I had achieved the skills in the media that I admired but there seemed no purpose to it. There was no further challenge and no reward.

In 1996 I felt I was either finished with art completely or that I would have to enter the fro from a new direction. So I returned to university to study art. I set out to learn the contemporary language of art. I discovered postmodernism had come and gone. I found I had apparently wasted years being an outmoded artist.

Through a move to Melbourne, in regards to my husband's job, I found my own capacity to cultivate new ground. It was good timing. Offered a new start, I avoided commercial galleries and packed away my watercolours. In earlier artist residencies, I had become drawn to textile and construction. Given an opportunity to work in tapestry now seemed like child's play and the creative seeds re-germinated.

In a large fine art university of developed artists, I never felt sanctioned as 'one of the chosen', though I completed my BFA with Honours, and my Masters of Fine Art as an installation artist. This achievement led me to believe that I am a 'real' artist. I was beginning to take root in the art world. More study would be wonderful. Upon application, several PhD positions were offered to me; but The Australian Postgraduate Award (full time scholarship) Victoria University offered, was ideal.

My PhD has facilitated my artistic flourishing. In these past three and a half years I have devoured the academic atmosphere, thriving on the freedom, confidence and advice given by my supervisors. I have the acuity to I recognize that my fine art has matured greatly.

Still, there is a nagging sentiment that I have missed out on the major art scene. I want to be an artist of consequence. I feel I have much to contribute. A PhD carries little weight in the art field unless you wish to administrate or advise. My medium now is contemporary, but my themes are still questionable. 'Spirituality' is currently highly topical, but not from my particular

Christian viewpoint. Also, 'Families' have not been at the heart of art research since Victorian days, unless to be negated.

There is the expectation that art has loftier and more radical objectives. A telling argument construing why there is no market for art, while suggesting to me why my art has been out of sync with cutting-edge work follows:

The problem is that art has successively alienated most of the public in what seems a scornful repudiation of middle-class values. I do not mean that art abrasively expresses contempt for the icons of bourgeois life, like home and the family dog. That is petty and the public is certain...that art deals with loftier objectives than to flatter the everyday. The only expectation that the public has – and which contemporary art resolutely rejects – is the paradigm of tradition (*Nelson 2000, p. 30*).

Drolly, my research references not only to the home, but specifically the family dog (*See Dogmatics poetic narrative, Chapter One, p. 80*). Because my art does not overtly censure the family or Christianity for western society's ills, my art could be seen as bourgeois and traditional, 'everyday' in a bad way. Therefore, some people who are not alienated by my installation art may be alienated by my approach to the subject matter.

Market Driven

I do not want to be an artist in a void. For me the art market, not referring to 'money' here but to 'art consumption', needs to be a consideration. I see importance to wherever I am eventually placed culturally, commercially or critically.

HOMEMADE exhibited in Mildura in 2005, was noticed by a curator positioned in a national gallery. This curator changed his main presentation at the Arts Festival in preference to an hour long critique of my art. The critique was glowing, personal, and the first recognition paid to my art by anyone in such a position. It seemed so opportune, only to lead nowhere. Sadly, the curator allowed me to credit him with none of his enthused remarks, in written form. When *HOMEMADE* was later exhibited in Sydney, another national curator said he would visit the shows of no one with whom he was not already familiar. The only hope presented itself when I was when told 'to market myself', by a sympathetic Museum of Contemporary Art curator, who deemed to sight my visual CD.

Even so, the difficulty of marketing myself seemed insurmountable, publicity not having been a new concept to me. I had been resourceful for many years. I knew, too well, the expenditure of money and effort for art production, invitations, media sourcing, transport, installation, equipment hire, and gallery rental. Soon my university support and scholarship funding was to be

depleted. There were no future exhibitions scheduled. I had no prospect of high paying jobs in the offering. I had no professional inside connections, no supportive art community. There was much more to accomplish, but how and in what dimension was it to be? At this time I was not disheartened but pensive, being realistic about my artistic future. Then came the opportunity for a major publication.

Flossie Peitsch: Art and Soul

Upon asking one of my supervisors if my work warranted a publication, I was advised that a PhD should certainly have one. I am not partial to exhibition catalogues, costly and disposable as they are. I endeavoured to originate something more. One printer I spoke to put me in contact with a well known editor for Macmillan Art Publications, arguably the largest and most prestigious producer of art books in Australia. I expected some advice on costings and printers but instead was given the offer to have Macmillan produce a book on my recent art, to be available for the upcoming PhD Exhibition Openings (Appendix 1: Thesis Overview CD, p. 175).

This was difficult for me to comprehend at first. I had not had a significant reputation to speak of; only my art to speak for itself. A book, designed, printed and distributed professionally by a respected publisher, would be an excellent outcome. Endorsing my art production in the market, it would possibly surpass the achievement of my potential university degree. It would put me into a different category among artists and curators.

This publication is not to be considered apart from my PhD investigation. I had plenty of research to generate. I had to gather the complete text and all the images in only ten weeks, a mammoth task. It meant approaching various acclaimed essayists to write about my work in a much diminished time frame. It meant completing my installation art and photographing it, months prior to schedule. It meant personally raising the considerable publication subsidy.

I embarked passionately, not theorizing what it would set into action, but prepared to speculate. By the end of May, all the material was submitted in a timely fashion. Entitled 'Flossie Peitsch: Art and Soul', it is on schedule to be launched in Melbourne in November at the Opening of the Span Galleries PhD thesis Exhibition. Here is one contributing magazine editor's resulting email:

Flossie, what a fantastic accomplishment! You ought to feel justifiably proud of yourself. I'm glad to have been able to contribute in a tiny way. You deserve all your success.
GO GIRL!

With love and breathless admiration
Linda Macqueen

The concrete offer to be published by Macmillan presented to writers was a good incentive. With each subsequent essay of thirteen returning, full of insight into my work and generous adulation, I began to see my own output in a new light. I believed that I do have something to offer the art world. Only for a moment did I fear my new reputation had been self-contrived and that it was therefore, invalid. But I was only following the original direction of the realistic curator who had advised me to 'promote myself'. Following, is this curator's succinct, poignant, and, apart from the publication, otherwise in-extractable, prepared text:

Another Approach

By Russell Storer

To consider the spiritual in art suggests a search for essences, origins, grand statements perhaps; something outside. It's rarely located inside, in the everyday or domestic space, although this is where spirituality may well be practiced in daily life. Perhaps it's considered too mundane, far from the impressive narratives of religious art, or lacking in symbolic value. The work of Flossie Peitsch attempts to locate in this intimate space a sense of the spiritual, with a searching tenor unusual in much contemporary art. Although using the architecture of the church as a structuring principle for her various installations, collages and sculptural works, Peitsch does not confine spirituality to organised religion. Using the materials, images and objects of the family home, the artist reaffirms the strength and comfort that can emanate from domestic life.

It is of course a pertinent moment to consider the home front, given the increasing public rhetoric attached to the family. Both sides of politics use it as a byword for the average citizen, while at the same time painting it as a unit under threat, from terrorism, immigration, workplace agreements, gay marriage, rising interest rates or high petrol prices. The idea of family is under scrutiny as perhaps never before, with Australia's rapidly changing demographics radically transforming its traditional model, a situation engendering hope and anxiety in equal measure. The artistic representation of family in recent decades has often taken the form of scathing critique, blasting open the doors that may hide all kinds of violence and suffering.

Peitsch's work takes another approach. She does not define a particular form of family, nor provide a critical analysis of its structures, but instead uses its symbols as a basis for play and enquiry. A renewed sense of wonder may be found in constructions such as *ALTERED*, *PRESENCE* or *WORDHOUSE*. Each features letters scattered like children's toys, asking that new meanings be created as if learning a language for the first time. Both *ALTERED* and *WORDHOUSE* also utilise the motif of a house, on an intimate scale, conveying a sense of familiarity and security. The formal simplicity and gentle humour of these three works provide a quiet space for looking, musing and meditation, encouraging a journey of exploration and discovery. Peitsch has positioned these works under the title of '*SANCTUARY*' in her conceptual framework, indicating a desire for a destination, somewhere in which questions may be answered and wounds may be healed.

Appendix 8: Selected Research Sessions Initiated by *THE IMMORTAL NOW*

- OF PLACE AND SPACE: Exploring Art and Spirituality (2003)
- I, We, They, It: Finding Voice in Creative Research Symposium (2004)
- Researching Art and Soul Forum (Peitsch & Peitsch 2006)

OF PLACE AND SPACE: Exploring Art and Spirituality (2003)

Flossie Peitsch
Project Coordinator
Education & Public Programs

OF PLACE AND SPACE: exploring art and spirituality

For centuries artists from diverse cultures have engaged art as a vehicle for spirituality. How has the connectedness to "place" and recognition of a sense of spiritual belonging been expressed in artists' work? Can art locate spirituality today? Take the opportunity to hear the views of an inspiring panel as they present their ideas and discuss with you, art and spirituality in relation to the works of Rover Thomas, Sidney Nolan and Colin McCahon.

FACILITATOR:

John Cleary: Sydney based broadcaster; Religious Unit, Radio National

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

Rosemary Crumlin: Art historian, author and curator

Friedhelm Mennekes: Author and Lecturer in art/theology/sociology in Germany, Mainz and USA

Linde Ivimey: Melbourne-based sculptor with work based on saints and relics from a feminist, pagan viewpoint

PARTICIPATING NGV CURATORS:

Judith Ryan: Senior Curator Indigenous Art

Geoffrey Smith: Curator of Australian Art (19th Century – Early Modernism) and curator of *Sidney Nolan: Desert and Drought* exhibition

FORUM STRUCTURE:

- 15/20-minute presentation by each keynote speaker
- Panel discussion led by forum facilitator
- Plenary session involving audience
- Curator/s to speak to one painting from their curatorial area.

Sunday 3 August
3.00pm - 5.00pm
Theatre, Ground Level,
The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia
Federation Square
Event Code: P0306
Cost: \$15/\$10

I, We, They, It: Finding Voice in Creative Research Symposium (2004)

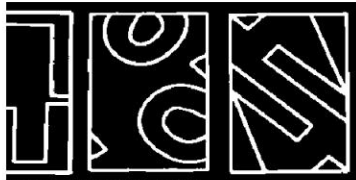
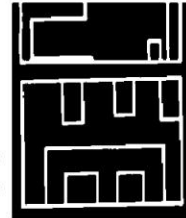


Image 'Presence', Artist Flossie Peitsch

I, We, They, It: Finding Voice in Creative Research



All Day Symposium
Thursday 7th October 2004
Victoria University

*Presented by Postgraduate Research Unit and CreativePGs
Sponsored by Victoria University*

The Creative Thesis may be established within research higher degrees but there is still much debate and disagreement around this degree. There is also a move in the mainstream research degree to find a voice that engages the whole of us. *If we are to change the world with our research we will have to do more than engage the intellect.*

Consider:

- Must creativity be abandoned to commit to academe?
- Can the written text be deleted?
- Can research include emotional, spiritual, sensory aspects?
- Where is the author's voice in traditional research?
- Where is the author's voice in creative research?

This one-day Symposium has gathered together an impressive range of informed opinion to address, debate and consider the issues and challenges around the creative thesis; both the arts based creative thesis and the more conventional thesis that aims to find a creative voice.

The day hosts keynote speakers, panel sessions of submitted papers, and ample opportunity for debate, creative input, discussion and great fun.

Appealing to the whole person, the day includes **gourmet food** and **refreshments**, **Omega: Music, FLO-ART**, and concludes with **wine, live music, dramatic role-play, a smorgasbord dinner, and tête-à-tête**.

For further information contact
Postgraduate Research Unit
Email: Nicole.Drage@vu.edu.au
Elaine.Martin@vu.edu.au
Telephone: (03) 9688 4521
Fax: (03) 9688 4559

Symposium Location
Conference Centre
Victoria University
Sunshine Campus
460 Ballarat Road
Sunshine

Researching Art and Soul Forum (Peitsch & Peitsch 2006)



THE IMMORTAL

Nov 21– Dec 2, 2006 Artist's Talk
Thurs Nov 30th 5:30 – 6:30

FLOSSIE PEITSCH

Tues Nov 21st 5-7pm, Opening & Book Launch
Dr Barbara Bolt **Mirka Mora**
Macmillan Publication
Flossie Peitsch: Art and Soul

Victoria University's Office for
Postgraduate Research presents...

Researching Art and Soul Forum
Sunday November 26th, 2006. 2pm – 3:30pm

FREE EVENT
Preceded by Artist's Talk: 1:30pm – 2pm

Is there soul to art or art to soul? 'A university degree do-
th (not) the artist make!' Don't miss this roundtable discus-
sion with academic/artist/curator notorieties, including
an audience discussion.

Participants: Prof Elaine Martin, *VU OPR*
Prof Maureen Ryan *VU*, Dr Megan Evans *Artist*
Paul Borg *Artist*, Mike Stubbs *ACMI Head*
of Exhibitions, Karen Dymke *Perfor-*
mer-in-Residence

NOW

 **Span Galleries**
Span Galleries – 2, 3 and Multimedia Room
45 Flinders Lane, Melbourne VIC
(Car park nearby)
Hours: Tues – Fri 11am to 5pm, Sat 11am to 4pm

 **VICTORIA UNIVERSITY**

Installation Art
Photograph: Jane Poynter

Image: Stackhouse, 2006, *Recycled Fence Paling*

Appendix 9: Selected Publicity Generated by *THE IMMORTAL NOW*

- Art From on High (Boyd-Macrae 2004)
- Following in Caroline's footsteps (Kock 2005)
- Get away for dream time (Canaway 2006)
- Art and Soul in Sculptor's Latest Project (Sinclair 2006)
- The Left Sock: A Research Journey (Peitsch 2006b)

Art From on High (Boyd-Macrae 2004)

Following in Caroline's footsteps (Kock 2005)

Get away for dream time (Canaway 2006)

Art and Soul in Sculptor's Latest Project (Sinclair 2006)

The Left Sock: A Research Journey (Peitsch 2006b)

Appendix 10: Selected Curriculum Vitae

Born: Kitchener, Ontario, Canada

Education

2006	November Completion of PhD, Victoria University, Melbourne, VIC
2003	PhD candidate, Victoria University, Melbourne, VIC,
2003	Australian Postgraduate Award Scholarship
2002	Master of Fine Arts, Monash University, Faculty of Art and Design, Mel, VIC,
1999	Bachelors of Fine Art (Hons), Monash University, Faculty of Art and Design, Melbourne, VIC, Degree
1974	Bachelor of Arts, Concordia University, Chicago, Illinois, USA

Professional Experience

Visual art practice includes installation, watercolours, mixed media, tapestry, sculpture
Community art projects include Artist-in-Residencies, workshops, public art

2006	Curator, FLO-ART exhibition, Footscray Community Arts Centre
2005	Seminar Lecturer, Home Economics Institute of Australia, NSW 'Art and Commemoration', Australian National University, Canberra, ACT Chisholm's Homes' community art project involving 700 participants for 2D/3D/digital/audio art production, interstate tour in 2006; Website found at http://www.livingmuseum.org.au/chisholms%20homes/index.html
2004	Opener, Warrnambool Easter art Festival Toured Italy and Canada for PhD research Directed Symposium for VU 'I, We They, It': Finding Voice in Creative Research Elected Postgraduate Rep for Faculty Research and Graduate Studies Committee, VU Elective Presentation, Australian Conference for Lutheran Education II, Adelaide, SA Elective presentation, LCA National Worship Conference, Brisbane, Qld
2003	Project Coordinator, Art Forum, NGV National Gallery of Victoria, Ian Potter Centre, Federation Square, Melbourne, VIC Sessional Lecturer at Victoria University of Technology, Melbourne, VIC Panel Presentation, 'Alchemies', Curtin University, Perth, WA Session Presentation, 'Word and Image', Sydney, NSW
1995 - 2005	Extensive travel overseas in Europe, USA and Canada for art research
1994	Project Manager for "Boatload of Dreams" Multi-media art portraying journey

- of WW2 displaced persons
- 1992-99 Holden Village, Seattle, Washington, USA; United Trades and Labour Council of SA; SA Country Artists Trust, Lobethal SA; Country Area School's Development Program SA Government, Lobethal. *Project Grants*: SA Country Artist's Trust Grant, Loxton, SA; SA Country Schools ; Extension Program Grant, Waikerie, SA; Foundation SA Grant, Adelaide; Central Regional Cultural Authority, Loxton, SA; Foundation SA, Adelaide.

Solo Exhibitions

- 2006 The Immortal Now, Span Galleries, Melbourne, VIC
 2005 HOMEMADE, Australian Catholic University. Sydney, NSW
 HOMEMADE, Mildura Cultural Arts Centre, Mildura, VIC
 2003 "EIGHTPLUS", Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, Ballarat, VIC
 2002 "EIGHTPLUS", Gabriel Gallery, Melbourne, VIC
 "EIGHT", Span Galleries, Melbourne, VIC
 2000 "Table Eight on the Floor"; Chapel Off Chapel, Melbourne, VIC
 1999 "Horizons"; Cato Conference Centre, Melbourne VIC
 1997 "Horizons"; St Johns Southgate, Melbourne VIC
 1995 "Your Family and Mine"; St Peters Gallery, Manhattan, New York City, NY, USA
 1981-99 Public, Private and Institutional Galleries in Australia, Canada and USA: Touring Exhibition to Canberra, Darwin, Adelaide, Alice Springs, Sydney, Perth, Chicago. St Louis, Detroit, Atlanta, Toronto

Group Exhibitions

- 2006 Chisholm's Homes, Adelaide, SA
 2005 Chisholm's Homes, Melbourne, VIC
 2004 Blake Prize and Travelling Exhibition, Sydney NSW
 Needham Religious Art Prize. Mt Gambier, S.A.
 Wyndham City Contemporary Art Prize, VIC
 2003 'Alchemies', Curtin University, Perth W.A.
 2001 "Work: cut, paste, create, burn", Faculty Gallery, Monash University, Mel VIC
 2000 "Decade"; Faculty Gallery, Monash University, Melbourne, VIC
 1999 "Evidence"; Faculty Gallery, Monash University, Melbourne, VIC

Commissions

- 2006 WAYSIDE, Williamstown Public Art Project
 2005 Ecclesiastical Stole; Lutheran Church of Australia
 2004 A Splace For Me, Altona Meadows Public Art Mural, VIC
 SCADE Project, 3 School Murals, VIC
 Installation, Lutheran Church of Australia, President's Office

2002	Altona Mural, Hobsons Bay City Council, Melbourne, VIC
2001	Federation Mural; Holy Eucharist Catholic Primary School, Melbourne, VIC
1997	Ecclesiastical Chasubles; Lutheran Church of Australia
1995	'Discovery' Stainless steel outdoor sculpture, Novar Gardens, SA
1995	"Through the Mill"; Onkaparinga Woollen Mills, SA

Publications

Flossie Peitsch	The Left Sock: A Research Journey, TAFTA, 2006
Flossie Peitsch	Flossie Peitsch: Art and Soul, Macmillan Art Publishers, 2006
Judith Booth (ed)	Creative Research, 2006
Clare Schulz (ed)	Jubilee Grapevine, Perth, 2006
Flossie Peitsch	Chisholm's Homes website, 2006
Glenn Pass (ed)	Alchemies: Community exchanges, 2004
Jesse Broadhurst (ed)	Offset Press, 2004
Ian Whitehall (ed)	A quivering of Arrows, 2003
Flossie Peitsch	Eight: A Studio Investigation of the Family, 2002
Flossie Peitsch	Your Family and Mine, 1995

Bibliography

Jane Canaway	Get away for dream time, 2006
Briar Sinclair	Art and Soul in Sculptor's Latest Project, 2006
Christine De Kock	Following in Caroline's footsteps, 2005
Claire Boyd-McCrae	Art From on High, The Age, 2005
Clare Boyd-Macrae	Art From on High, 2004
Morna Sturrock	Gesher, 2004
Cresside Collette	Embroidery, London, UK, 2003
Cresside Collette	Textile Fibre Forum, 2003
Alison Barclay	Herald Sun, 2003
Melanie Dove	The Age, 2002
Alison Barclay	Herald Sun, 2002
Copia	Setting the American Table, 2002
Greer Honeywill	International Tapestry Journal, 2000
Greer Honeywill	Textile Fibre Forum, 2000
Alison Barclay	Herald Sun, 2000
Frederick Ted Castle	New York Art Critic, 1995
Art in Australia	March 1992
Max Germaine	Women Artists in Australia, 1991
Max Germaine	Artists and Galleries of Australia, 1991
Jean Campbell	Australian Watercolour Painters, 1989, Craftsman House

References for Appendices

- 2003, paper presented to OF PLACE AND SPACE: Exploring Art and Spirituality
The Ian Potter Centre, National Gallery Victoria, Australia.
- 2004, paper presented to I, We, They, It: Finding Voice in Creative Research
Symposium, Victoria University Conference Centre, Sunshine, 7 October,
2004.
- Bogle, J 1993, *Caroline Chisholm : the emigrant's friend*, Gracewing,
Leominster, Herefordshire.
- Boyd-Macrae, C 2004, 'Art from on high', *The Age*, June 21, 2004, pp. 2-3.
- Canaway, J 2006, 'Get away for dream time', *The Mail*, Wednesday, May 24,
2006, p. 17.
- Dakich, E 2006, Response to spirituality in art to F Peitsch.
- Hoban, M 1984, *Caroline Chisholm : a biography : fifty-one pieces of wedding
cake*, Polding Press, Melbourne.
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sheds*, Keilor Historical Society, Keilor [Vic.].
- Kock, CD 2005, 'Following in Caroline's footsteps', *Star*, Tuesday, 1 November,
2005, p. 11.
- Nelson, R 1999, 'The Prestige Of Art: a history of the sacramental roots of
contemporary artistic values'.
- Nelson, R 2000, 'Theory Workshop', Monash University.
- Peitsch, F & Peitsch, P 2006, 'The Immortal Now (Advert)', *Eyeline*, Kelvin
Grove, QLD, Australia, no. 61, p. 11.
- Selby, P 1996, 'Is the Church a Family?' in SC Barton (ed.), *The Family in
theological perspective*, T&T Clark, Edinburgh, pp. 151-68.
- Stevens-Chambers, B 2004, *Friend and foe : Caroline Chisholm and the women
of Kyneton 1849-2004*, Springfield & Hart, Kyneton, Vic.