



Thank You

Thank you to all the artists who readily grasped the opportunity to make an artistic comment on the subject.

Jenny Bell
Alison Clouston & Boyd
Margarita Georgiadis
George Gittoes
Pamela Griffith
Jasper Knight
Knitting Nannas
Jon Lewis
Lucinda McDonald
Clare Milledge
Max Miller
Louise Owen
J D Reforma

Foreword

I am always amazed to think that what we rely on today for much of our energy supply are substances which formed 300 million years ago through decomposing plant and animal matter – literally fossils that formed into fuel in the earth.

Australia's immense supply of fossil fuels is both a blessing and a curse. The exploitation and use of our natural resources presents a complicated predicament for Australians. Our energy reserves have come to assume a fundamental place in our economy but that place is being questioned by a growing number of Australians. People are asking questions about whether the traditional path of exploiting our natural world to its fullest extent is in fact the right path. Many Australians are calling for a balanced and scientific approach to the extraction of our natural resources, and nowhere is this more evident than in the current debate over coal mining and coal seam gas (CSG) production. The extraction of these resources does not only present serious immediate environmental risks. Rather, in the face of catastrophic global warming, the long-term reliance on such fossil fuels is a grave concern.

CSG is a form of methane which is derived from coal seams. This form of gas is concentrated along the east coast of Australia. It has been extracted in large areas across Queensland, northern New South Wales and Victoria.

The recent discoveries of CSG in the Southern Highlands have brought all the issues surrounding this particular resource to our doorstep. As has occurred in other areas impacted by CSG, ordinary people in our communities have become increasingly literate and articulate about the issues. In the Southern Highlands, grassroots organisations have sprung up which lobby and rally against CSG developments.

Unlikely partnerships have formed between farmers and environmentalists, between members of the National party and the Greens. The voices of scientists, hydrogeological engineers, lawyers and artists have all been audible, expressing different opinions on this most divisive topic.

So, what are these concerns that have prompted such unlikely partnerships, and such strong opinions in local communities? They relate the trifecta of political maelstroms – serious environmental, social and economic consequences.

On an environmental level, the widespread extraction of CSG raises a number of potentially catastrophic consequences. In order to extract the gas, the earth is drilled through the water table and into the coal seam which lies below. In some cases, the earth is hydraulically fractured or 'fracked', meaning that a concoction of chemicals, sand and water is blasted into the coal seam in order to release pockets of tightly held gas. The coal seam is then drained of its water in a process of 'dewatering'. The gas is released to the surface and captured. The danger in this practice is that the exact impacts on the underlying aquifers are simply unknown. Diversion of groundwater systems is a real possibility. Depletion will occur, as water is drained away and as water leaks into newly created channels away from the main flows.

A further problem is that by drilling through the water table into the coal seam, there are serious risks of contaminating the delicately preserved ground-water with the chemicals and the gas itself. The potential for serious problems is easy to comprehend, but the exact consequences of each proposed well are not clear. Independent hydrogeologists, who appreciate the complexity and intricate nature of our groundwater systems, have stated that the science and research are simply too premature to be able to keep pace with the technology and industry demand for extracting CSG. Many scientists believe that the extraction of CSG is an environmental experiment which should be researched and analysed over a long-term period before it is allowed to be practised on a broad scale.

These environmental consequences could potentially affect a large part of the country, since our underlying network of aquifers and groundwater systems is linked. Much of the east coast's underground water supply is from the Great Artesian Basin, whose tributaries and channels are already being affected by CSG drilling.

On the social side of this large experiment, the greatest issues have been matters of equality. Farmers who rely on groundwater supplies for their crops and their stock are anxious. Some have already suffered from increasing soil salinity and poor cattle health as the water table drops following the extraction of large volumes of groundwater. Health concerns have also been raised; in Tara, Queensland, farmers have warned that the methane or chemicals that escape from the wells on their land have caused their children's ears to bleed, as well as chronic headaches and rashes. ¹

Perhaps the greatest issue which CSG forces us to confront is the matter of intergenerational equity. We are toying with our future groundwater reserves, risking a precious component of our children and grandchildren's livelihoods.

We are also selling our future generations short by plundering our supply of fossil fuels and selling it on international markets. It has come to light recently that the vast majority of CSG that will be extracted from NSW will be piped to the processing plants at Gladstone, Queensland, and then exported. What is reaped today will no longer be available to our children and grandchildren in times when there may be genuine shortages of natural gas. Instead of using this pivotal moment to attain resource security and plan for the future, we are diving to the finish line to make some quick profits.

Some of those profits will go to the state governments of NSW, Queensland and Victoria in the form of royalties. The royalties may be spent on schools, healthcare or infrastructure. What is less palatable for affected communities, though, is the fact that many CSG projects are foreign-owned, so much of the profit will go offshore.

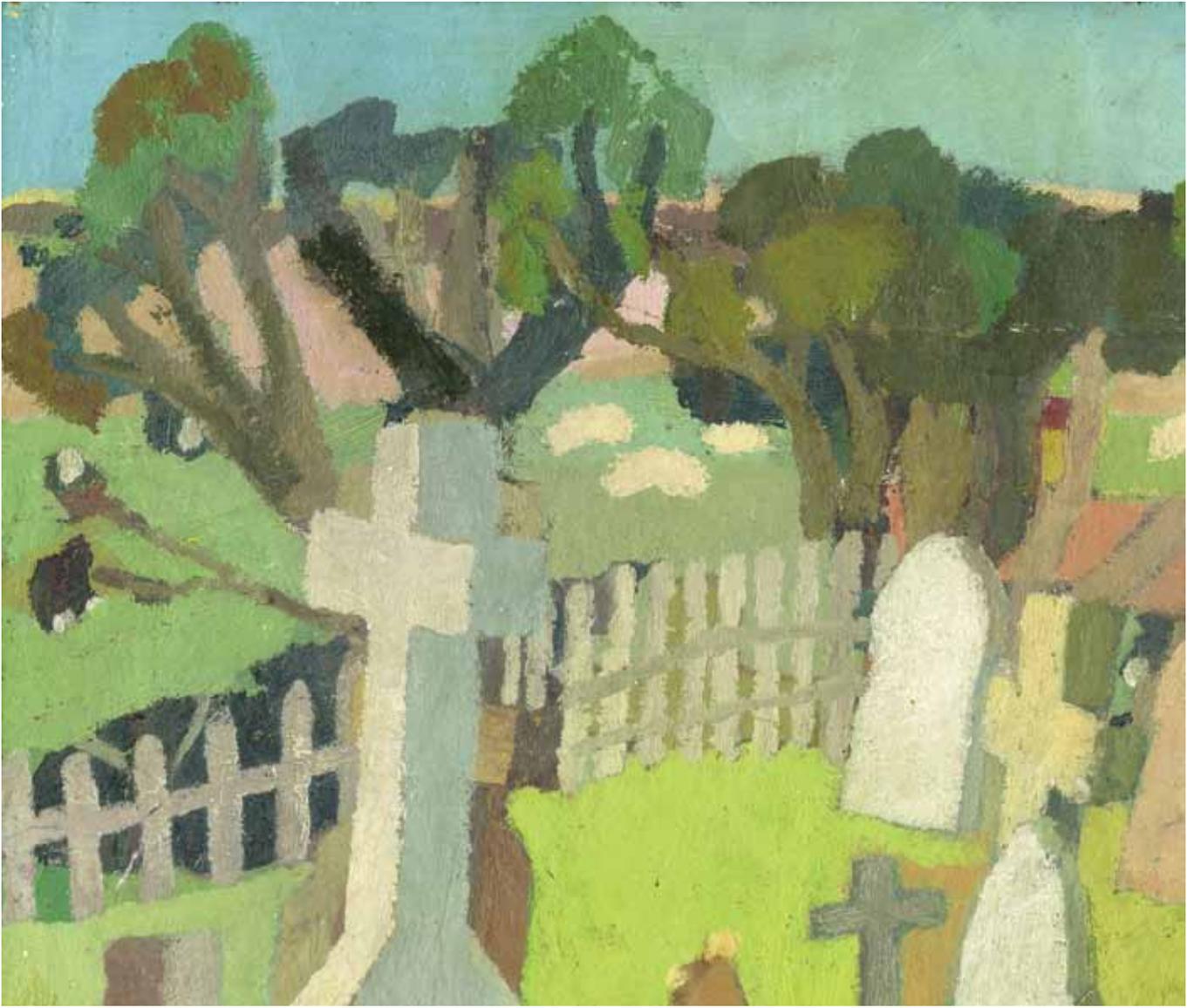
The debate over whether our country should be allowing CSG extraction at the fast rate that it is developing is a fraught one. There are benefits and there are serious risks. Some see the debate as one between vastly mismatched contenders. On the one side are global resource companies with close ties to governments and the resources of powerful PR machines. On the other is a collective of farmers, environmentalists, concerned citizens and scientists. What has become vital to the balancing of these two sides is the ability to voice opinions and cultivate discussion.

This *What Lies Beneath?* exhibition is intended as a forum for exactly that expression and discussion. Our artist's works draw on personal experiences and understandings of the issues surrounding CSG as well as coal mining in our local region. The fine balance of life on earth is an amazing thing, and it is apt that we examine that relationship, from the pre-historic creation of fossil fuels, to today's debates over mining. At a time when there is consensus on the catastrophic dangers of fossil fuel use, it seems appropriate to gather these impressions, conveyed through art, so that we can ponder which way is the best way forward.

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Jane Cush, Director, October 2013

¹ Joanne Shoebridge and Samantha Turnbull, 'Walk Against Coal Seam Gas' 9 August 2012 < <http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2012/08/09/3564173.htm>>



Jenny Bell *Cemetery No 2*, Oil on board, 38 x 45 x 3cm
Jenny Bell is represented by Australian Galleries

Jenny Bell

It is the job of art to contain a bundle of contradictions and to speak to us across time. To echo present preoccupations while being mindful of the past. The future is often foreseen inside the art of the present.

A cemetery in some ways encapsulates the pact that exists between the past, the present and the future.

The extraction of coal seam gas threatens to unsettle this pact.

Water and living soil are the basis of life, we violate them at our peril.

Jenny Bell 2013



Alison Clouston and Boyd *Carbon Dating*, 2013, Aluminium, coal, rubber, original soundtrack and sound system, variable size

Alison Clouston and Boyd

Molecules met molecules, creatures meet creatures, plants cross-pollinate – we all came out of the carboniferous swamps that we now call coal, so leave the family graveyard un-desecrated!



Margarita Georgiadis *Fracture*, 2013, Oil on canvas, 198 x 152cm

Margarita Georgiadis

Since my involvement during 2012, fighting energy company AGL from building one of Australia's largest Gas Fired Power Stations in DaltonNSW, I have felt a strong desire to express the anguish and despair that process had on individuals and our community. The painting "Fracture" encapsulates the intense feeling of hopelessness, anxiety and determination a select few of us experienced at the time, trying to convince the broader community, that the power station

would be disastrous to our wellbeing and that of future generations in the Dalton area and surrounds. I have tried also to express with these works, the sinister ploy used by these power companies, to enforce a "divide and conquer" attitude between an otherwise healthy and happy community. Fracturing of the environment and the fracturing of communities, the term "fracking" says it all.

Margarita Georgiadis

For most of my creative life my art has been a war on war. I went to New York in 1968 as a hard edged, minimalist, abstractionist but when I actually stood in front of such works as Ad Reinhardt's 'Black on Black' canvases I felt there was nowhere further to go and like Duchamp it was time to hang up the brushes and play chess or in my case go surfing. But the Vietnam War was raging and the art scene seemed to be ignoring this inhuman barbarity. In response, I did a painting called 'When it is Over' with a man with his head in his hand. In the the same way Munch's 'The Scream' expresses anxiety my painting said all I needed to say about regret. Regret about being human in a world where nations were

using more and more sophisticated weapons to slaughter one another. Now I have revisited this image and the regret is about the way we are destroying the beauty of the natural world. Only the tiniest flecks of green show through the overpainting. The lines from Joni Mitchell's song 'The Big Yellow Taxi' kept going over in my head as I painted "They paved over Paradise, To put up a Parking Lot" .

I am grateful to Goulbourn Gallery for including me in 'What Lies Beneath' as this was the spark I needed to paint 'When it is Over' which I finished as recently as Nov 7th.

George G

George Gittoes

George Gittoes *When it is over: "They paved over Paradise, To put up a Parking Lot"*, 2013, Oil on canvas, 69 x 135cm
George Gittoes is Represented by Art Equity





Pamela Griffith Golden Vale Panorama, 2012, Acrylic on canvas, 91 cm x 120.5 cms

Pamela Griffith

The Southern Highlands has been an inspiration for a number of my paintings and prints over many years. In particular, I have been a frequent visitor to the National Trust property, "Golden Vale," at Sutton Forest. Beauty is vitally important to the human condition and it troubles me that this agricultural area is subject to coal and coal seam gas exploration leases, which would see test wells pepper the magnificent landscape. Almost two hundred years of human aspiration and toil could be undone in one generation not to mention the damage to the aquifers and environment generally.

Pamela Griffith



Jasper Knight *The inner workings of a man addicted to beer*, 2013, Enamel, masonite and perspex on board, 120cm x 90cm

Jasper Knight



Jon Lewis *Bulio*, 2013, Photograph, 70 x 92 cm

Jon Lewis

There is something religious about nature. . maybe God is there?

Jon Lewis



Lucinda Mc Donald *IS IT SAFE..?*, 2013, Aluminium frame ,coal,glue, liquid nails,resin,polystyrene, 1800mmx 450mm 25kg

Lucinda McDonald

My visual response - in terms of thinking of a sculptural form... was of using the actual coal and coal seams to create a COAL WALL PIECE.

The actual coal seams create dramatic lines in cliff faces along the coast.

Coal is something I find quite an interesting material to work with sculpturally (having made the coal dome sculptures before). It can actually look quite beautiful-in contradiction to the actual thought of the mining and the destruction of land & potentially polluting our water.

So with that contradiction in mind I would make something out of coal in the form of a "coal seam" which would hopefully result in a visually pleasing wall sculpture.

I also decided to do my own small survey & emailed people to get their initial quick response to the subject "coal seam gas"... (one word or two)

Here are some of the words ; Unknown, Unwanted, Out of our control, Contempt ,Greed, Money, Water, Disgust, Tense,Rude, Intimidation, Short term profit, Environmental Devastation, Fracking leads to us Cracking..etc etc.(no positive

responses, yet.!)

Mostly people concerned about the UNKNOWN... and what this could do in the future to our environment & water. Water being an essential part of our lives.

The end result of coal seam gas mining could be disastrous for our environment but as yet not a lot is known so more research has to be done.

Engraving words into coal pieces: this reminded me of the film Marathon Man, when the Laurence Olivier character repeated the words "Is it safe..?"



Clare Milledge, *Hierarchies of Form*, 2011, *Oil on glass, frame 83 x 63 cm*
Clare Milledge is represented by The Commercial Gallery, Sydney

Clare Milledge

I do not believe that the provision of an artist's statement to be read alongside my work assists the viewer. I appreciate that this is not necessarily the case for many other artists and their works, for many it is beneficial and I respect this. However, my work is heavily reliant on the viewer drawing connections between forms rather than me pointing them out. I want the viewer to make their own mind

up about what it is they see and to form their own vision, unimpeded or aided by any text that might imply a correct vision. That is, there is no hierarchy of visions or what might be termed understandings. Each experience is as valuable as another. For this reason I will not be providing any further text.

Clare Milledge



Image: Max Miller, *From Mt. Gingenbullen*, 2013, Colour etching, watercolour, hard ground & aquatint 21 x 49 cm, Max Miller is represented by Art Atrium

Max Miller

The Sydney Catchment Authority are already set to take water from the Southern Highlands aquifer, which feeds the springs for headwaters of the Nepean River, and this is to be sent to Sydney to replenish their dwindling water supply. Now they are asking to mine for gas as well, which is a known as a great user and polluter of water.

The mining corporation in W.A. at the Burrup Peninsular, promised to protect the ancient rock engraving when mining this sensitive area, but wrecked forever these ancient works. Mining interests in Queensland have promised not to destroy world Heritage areas of the Great Barrier Reef while working their mines, and yet dumped coal sludge into the ocean.

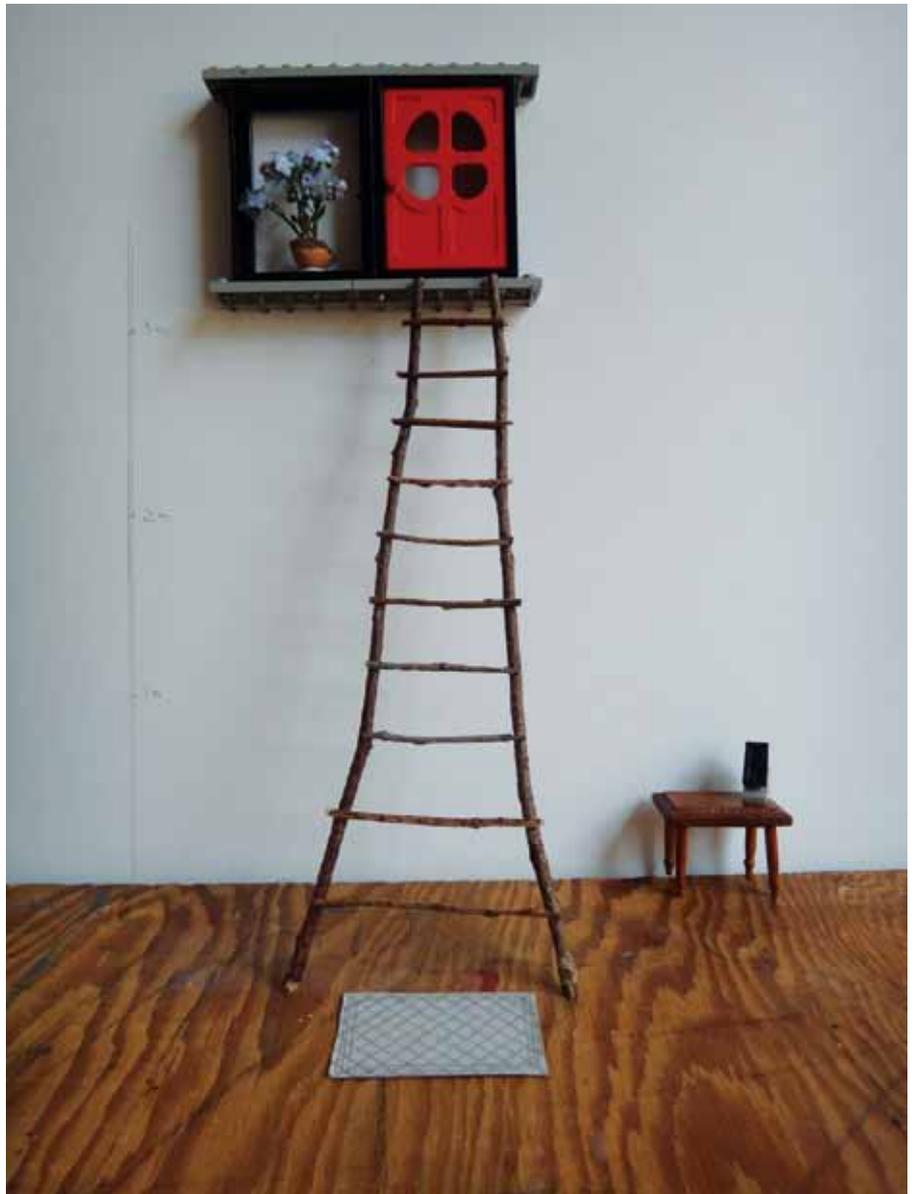
Previously, Janie and I have taken our beautiful autistic son to the

Whitsunday's for holidays and the first time we joined a cruise to view the coral, from a glass bottom boat, what we saw was tearful – white broken layer of bleached coral almost everywhere they took us.

Can we trust government bodies to allow the large mining consortiums to look after mining in a pristine area with minimal impact, or our beautiful Southern Highlands with its rich farming soil and rainforests? If we destroy our water table, what will happen to the springs that feed the land?

“We don't OWN the land, the land owns us”. Shouldn't we be seen to care for Australia and protect for our children's children the beauty of the special country for the land's future?

Max Miller



Louise Owen *The Writing's on the Wall*, (maquette), Mixed-media, sound, dimensions variable

Louise Owen

Navigating the creative process to and from the heart, the mind, the eye, the ear and the hand, is very important to my art-making practice. It is the idea that informs the materials and the approach I use. I am interested in exploring associations that are subjective and archetypal, environmental and cathartic. This work specifically relates to my investigations regarding the impacts of Coal Seam Gas and long-wall tunnel mining on our environment.

Louise Owen



JD Reforma *The Source*, 2013, Various brands of bottled spring water, custom MDF plinth, LED lights, dimensions variable. Commissioned by Mosman Art Gallery. Photography: Susannah Wimberley

JD Reforma

In his new work, *The Source*, JD Reforma has produced a large scale sculptural light installation utilising bottled spring water. It is the third in a suite of new works in which the artist investigates and unravels the social symbolism of water – its aesthetic qualities and its role within popular culture – and its contemporary associations with the notions of leisure and lifestyle.

The Source is a response to 'Litre of Light': a global open-source movement that aims to provide ecologically and economically sustainable indoor lighting to underprivileged households, particularly in third-world and developing communities where electricity is either expensive or unavailable. It consists of a simple mechanism: a PET bottle filled with chlorinated water is inserted into the corrugated roof of a house – half in, half out – thus acting as a lens through which natural daylight is diffused as workable, indoor lighting.



Image: Clare Twomey with *The Knitting*, 2012, Knitted acrylic yarn, 30 – 40m

The Knitting Nannas

This scarf, now known as *The Knitting*, was started in October 2012, as part of the Knitting Nannas Against Gas's ongoing protest against CSG exploration and mining in the prime agricultural land of the Northern Rivers of NSW. Despite large rallies, surveys and a local government poll conducted by the State Electoral Commission, our State MP, Thomas George, has refused to represent his electors in Parliament. I started knitting the scarf at a knit-in outside his office, having promised him to continue working on it until he either represented our position in Parliament, or he lost his seat. KNAG have been staging a weekly knit-in outside his office since August 2012, after several of us made a tour of the gasfields in southern Queensland.

The Knitting has been used as a roadblock for a drill rig, where it was heartlessly run over. It has been used as warning tape around drill sites, protests at the Metgasco gas company's local headquarters and tying up, "knotting the gate" (as a pun on the Lock the Gate phrase).

Clare Twomey

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