

Window on an Era
Geelong: A Post-Industrial City

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Bachelor of Visual Art
Diploma of Education (Secondary)

Master of Arts (Visual Arts)
Partial fulfilment of the requirements

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May 2007

ABSTRACT

Non-economical industrial sites are being demolished in Geelong, making way for alternative economic development. Whilst progress is inevitable, I question the wisdom of short-term financial gain over the long-term loss of identity. The association of industrial buildings with the concept of cultural heritage, art and architecture does not seem so incongruous in other parts of the world.

Cities built on the foundations of Industry are in economic decline in the western world, and the preservation of industrial complexes highlights the evolution into a post-industrial world. With the eradication of a city's industrial architecture, unique windows into the past are closed; hence possibilities to make comparisons with the present and envisage the future are irrevocably lost.

This thesis explores a historical conversation in art, analysing the work of a group of artists who debate the significance of industrial decay and its inspirational relevance for artistic creation. As an artist I explore the potential artistic value of industrial complexes and illustrate the significance and consequences of demolished and abandoned industrial sites.

Aware of the potential for further loss of industrial sites in Geelong, I have found unique examples of preserved industrial buildings, discovering opportunities within them endless in the contrasts of light, shape, colour and space.

I have gathered resources for the development of the accompanying artworks from two industries in Geelong; the Classweave Mill (North Shore) and the former Geelong Cement Limited (Fyansford). Helping to preserve this unique industrial patrimonium, will contribute to the bridging of generational gaps and to connect the past, present and future.

STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

Except where explicit reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma. No other person's work has been relied upon or used without due acknowledgement in the main text and the bibliography of the thesis.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisors Associate Professor Allan Mann and Senior Lecturer Anne Saunders for their ongoing support and encouragement for the duration of my Masters. Professor Allan Mann's contribution to the thematic formation of the exegesis has been invaluable and Anne Saunders studio critique kept me up to the challenge continuously.

I would like to also thank the following people for their insight and support. My conversations and meetings with Associate Professor Jim Sillitoe were inspirational and helped in the process of refining my ideas. Doug Wright's response to the studio works was integral and helped refine methods of studio production and at various stages of the project my conversations with Loris Button were also of inspiration.

Thank you to those at The Geelong Art Gallery, especially the Director Geoffrey Edwards and Curators Brian Hubber and Lisa Sullivan; and also for the expertise of my framer Karl Lukacs and his insight on the processes of Cibachrome photography.

Finally my husband Dany Devrome who encouraged me to trust my intuition and to think outside the square.

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PREFACE

It was June the 6th 2004. I picked up my 78 model cannon SLR camera and set out to document the demolition of the Fyansford Cement Works on the outskirts of Geelong, Victoria. I thought I was unique, setting out to watch three of the largest chimney stacks in Australia, be demolished. To my surprise, crowds of people stood before the tall imposing columns, which had become so familiar and dominating in the landscape, that their anticipated demolition had attracted a large throng

On Hunt Street, north of the stacks on a rise, people of all ages had crowded to witness the demolition. I became aware of the mixed emotions of sadness, and acceptance of change amongst the crowd. From my position, I looked down on the three monolithic giants. The landscape surrounding the stacks emphasised the scale of these massive structures.

A succession of explosive charges ignited at the base of the chimney, creating apocalyptic sounds, disturbing the silence of the landscape. The three stacks, reduced by human intervention were transformed into fragile matter. Once the dust and debris had settled in the base of the valley, the columns lay solemnly in their last resting place.

The Fyansford Cement Works existed between 1890 -1990. The construction of the stacks began in 1958 and took 10 years to complete, replacing those of earlier origin and architecture.

The following illustration (*fig 1*) is a photograph of the stacks, taken just prior to their demolition. On the day of the demolition I was granted permission to enter the site to take photographs of the fallen stacks at close range. The photographs taken were an elaboration of the demolition and created the foundations for this research project.

CHAPTER ONE

A Window to the Past – Setting the Scene

Since the factories are no longer functioning, they have slipped into my territory, the realm of non functionality, the world of aesthetics.¹

This exegesis embodies the basis of my concept, philosophy and methodology; it also documents events that occurred over a three year duration, which contributed to the overall project *Window on an Era*.

In the preceding weeks, anticipating the demolition of the Fyansford Cement Works, I began to photographically document the industrial site. I shot a number of black and white films capturing the abandoned, worn and decayed nature inherently characteristic of abandoned industrial architecture.

The demolition was a historical event for the Fyansford township and the greater Geelong community. It marked a ‘change’ in the history of Geelong’s Industry, evoking memories of the past, yet harking towards the future.

A sense of ‘experienced place’² was highlighted by the crowds that attended on the day. The chimneys were so monumental in scale, that they had made a psychological imprint in the minds of the local people.

Stirred by these abandoned structures, the act of demolition challenged me to question the historical significance of industrial Geelong and the possibilities for artistic representation. Thus began my journey into the world of industrial archaeology that led to a deeper appreciation of history, preservation, architecture and art and the importance and consequences of destroyed industrial sites.

¹ Kelly, Mark 1999 ‘Urban Gothic’ in *Eco-Tec Architecture of the in-Between*, eds Marras, Amerigo, and Helene Frichot. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999.

² Bachelard, Gaston. "The Poetics of Space" (1964). Bachelard emphasises the embeddedness of lived experience in architectural spaces.

The exhibition *Industrial Evolution*³ was part of this research. It displayed 27 of my photographs, titled Deconstruction - X and - Y series. The following photograph (fig 2) is one of the 19 Cibachrome photographs displayed as a part of the installation that was exhibited in the basement of an empty industrial building of the Mill Markets in greater Geelong. This shot was taken on the day of the demolition and documents the fallen and twisted remainders I found on the site. I intentionally intensified the apocalyptic tone of the work through traditional photographic techniques.⁴

Guest speaker Brian Hubber (Curator of the Geelong Fine art Gallery 2004) opened this exhibition by sharing the following account:

When I first came to Geelong in the late 1980's, one of my favourite walks was along the Barwon and around the Fyansford common. The cement works were a hulking companion on these walks. But the sight had been recently humanized by a then recent community writing project. In fact, along the path were a number of poems evoking the spirit of the place – one in particular made reference to the chimneys, not only in words but the very poem was in the shape of the chimneys – such writing is described as concrete poetry – a particularly apt description.

So, the site and the chimneys were very much part of people's psychic landscape – and there is evidence of the great crowds that came to witness the destruction of the chimneys. Now it might be true that many people probably just wanted to see a very large object blown up by huge quantities of high explosives – but I think many were there to witness a change – something from their own personal histories was going to be destroyed and replaced by something else – a lake, parklands, new housing whatever. Change is often so gradual – evolutionary as Kelly has put it – that we rarely get a chance to witness change in such a big way.⁵

Following this exhibition I travelled overseas, to investigate other post-industrial cities. I visited the USA, Belgium, Turkey and Spain. Each of these countries had a huge impact on the direction in which my work later evolved, particularly the archaeological sites, significant exhibitions and industrial centres that I visited.

³ Displayed Sep 2004, the Mill Markets, North Geelong

⁴ Methods discussed in detail in chap 4

⁵ Speaker's notes obtained on the evening

Anish Kapoor's sophisticated drawings of voids and nothingness displayed in a preserved industrial coal mine⁶, New York's sheer industrial scale and pace, an archaeological site *Italica* in southern Spain, and Byzantine as well as iconoclastic drawings on the walls of caves in Cappadocia, Turkey were all experiences which have indirectly yet significantly influenced my Masters oeuvre.

On return from my travels I spent nine studio months working in an empty, non-functioning industrial space at the Mill Markets located in the industrial precinct of North Geelong. For me, the Mill Markets Industrial complex created the ideal context to pursue concepts of decayed and abandoned sites. The 1910 circa buildings on this industrial site all had traces of history and evidence of manual architectural construction. I had exhibited the Cement Works photographs at this site, where I discovered the significance of the space and its capacity to enhance the meaning of my works.

I leased one end of the industrial complex; the portion I selected was inside a building that was a large empty shell with a floor space of 300 square metres, and an exposed roof to the height of 20 meters (4 stories). This space provided endless possibilities and inspiration. I gathered and developed ideas and concepts in the form of drawings and photographs which were refined further in my studio at the Arts Academy. The research developed into a body of large scale drawings, exhibited for *Simulacra* at the Geelong Art Gallery and later as a part of the final examination at The University of Ballarat. One of the large scale drawings exhibited as a part of *Simulacra*, titled *Ancient Lights* is shown in (fig 3).

The following extract from the Director Geoffrey Edward's opening remarks was made in response to *Simulacra* at the launch of three exhibitions at The Geelong Gallery on Friday 18 August 2006:

⁶ Exhibition *Melancholia*, Grand Hornu, Belgium 2004

In the display of works in Kelly McNiece's exhibition *Simulacra*, we see how the artist's subtle, somewhat elegiac and softly-spoken pastel abstractions make reference to abandoned industrial architecture – with allusions to sections of steel-framed windows, angular roof trusses and the like, replete with the raking shadows that visually activate such interiors.

For this artist, a certain quality of light and its effects within an empty, cavernous enclosure is the means of captivating a viewer's attention.

Of course, it is a glorious play of raking *afternoon* light across the sweeping hills and plains leading down to Corio Bay that initially captivates viewers of Eugene von Guerard's newly arrived *View of Geelong* – a work also seen in this Gallery for the first time tonight.

The artworks created for *Simulacra* were inspired by the change taking place in industrial Geelong and the inspiration found in empty industrial spaces. As an artist I witnessed and documented the loss of industrial sites in and around the Geelong Barwon Region and I identified this 'change' as a sign of the times; Geelong was indeed becoming a post-industrial city.

These demolished, abandoned and or non-functioning industrial sites have, for me, the capacity to symbolise loss of the past and at the same time provide a sign of what the future may hold. They evoke a certain nostalgia for the past,⁷ a sign of transition and of changing place.

The decay and emptiness which I observed were characteristic of deserted industrial sites. My aim, as with other artists, was to create art which evoked nostalgia for the past and that which had been lost through change.⁸ Furthermore it was an issue of identity and of meaning given through the passage of time. The erasure of such buildings represented loss of a history and past for the people of Geelong.

In the following chapters I will explore the origins of Geelong's industrial history, review artists who have drawn inspiration from industrial sites, and discuss the philosophical concepts residing in this project's work. The artists I have chosen to

⁷ Kundera M, in his novel 'Ignorance' describes the Greek meaning for nostalgia/nostalgie, nostos translated to return and Algos to suffering and....'unappeased yearning to return and longing for country or home.' Pg 5

⁸ Rachel Whiteread's, House 1993 in *House*. Edited by James Lingwood. London Phiadon Press Limited, 1995.

review are post 1970's, a time when older industries started to be replaced by newer more efficient technologies.

Window on an Era began with the vessel-like chimneys demolished at Fyansford, and became an amalgamation of the empty spaces experienced at the Mill Markets or Classweave Mill⁹. These architectural structures and spaces captured light, into their dark interiors and corridors that to my mind began to act like metaphoric windows in time. The shadows eventually became an artistic metaphoric device representing lost memories, histories and experiences of Geelong's industrial past

Few industries of the older generation remain in Geelong; many have been closed, transformed or demolished. They have given way to new methods of production that are more efficient, replacing technologies that have outlived their usefulness and yielding to cheaper labour possibilities available in third world countries.

Geelong is a revitalised post-industrial city¹⁰, sustaining the last of its industries including Shell, Ford and Pivot, all of which are particularly large enterprises. The evolution and transition of industries in Geelong has resulted in the loss of many fine architecturally designed industrial complexes.¹¹

These inevitable technological advances and economic growth are part of the impact and change in a post-industrial city. In the name of progress, buildings which housed older industries have been removed and, whilst many might argue that such buildings are not worth preserving, there are a select few who regard them as a sad loss of Geelong's Industrial heritage and architecture.

Commerce began early in Geelong with the introduction of industries that shaped Australia's economic identity. Geelong became an industrial hub in which woollen mills, tanneries, cement works, motors, fertilizers, salt, distilling, rope, leather, meat manufacture, wheat, gold, paper and the timber trade flourished. During the

⁹ Classweave is the title on the chimney at the site now marketed as The Mill Markets (woollen mill).

¹⁰ Exhibition documenting city plans of the post industrial city of Bilbao, Spain comparisons were made in function of Geelong's bid to secure Guggenheim bid.

¹¹ The famous Bow and Truss Building with its unique 1920's Ceiling now a car park in Bay City Plaza

colonisation, settlement and the influx of industries in Geelong, many people were attracted from abroad to settle in the district.¹²

With the development of early industries, builders, architects and engineers were amongst those who identified the potential ‘prosperity’ in the Geelong/Barwon Region. As a result, some factories that were built are now heritage listed, whilst others, sadly, were lost in the midst and haste of change. Many of the district’s buildings were inspired by great industrial engineers of the 20th Century, and¹³ materials used in the construction of these buildings were imported, for example industrial scale steel girders, trusses and pilasters.¹⁴

The industrial architecture that remains today provides an archaeological map of the industries that developed in these early years of land claim and colonisation. Those which are preserved show traces of well designed structures, built out of materials that are no longer available¹⁵. Similar buildings have been retained internationally, in urban renewal and preservation projects as I discovered whilst on my field-trip.¹⁶

It is evident that industries which are lost are unlikely to be reclaimed or rebuilt. It is here that unique windows into the past are irrevocably lost. In my opinion architecture is a significant basis for cultural, political and social identity; it is a representation of who and what the people have become.¹⁷ This is why I chose to make artwork on a large scale as it mirrored the presence of these predominantly large scale industrial

¹²The title Pivot , ... ‘Given to Geelong in those early years because it was the pivot upon which hinged the commerce of the whole western half of the colony.....a golden promise for the immediate future...the natural gateway of the richest wool and wheat areas in the world’. Geelong Publicity Council, Geelong: its Advantages and Opportunities. Geelong Victoria, Australia (1930), 14.

¹³ Lewis, M. 200 Years of Concrete. Concrete Institute of Australia, Sydney. P 19 Dennys Lascelles Austin Wool Store Geelong 1911-1912, modelled on bridges built by French Architect/engineer Armand Considere (inventor of the reinforcing system) and the sewerage aqueduct over the Barwon River, 1914-15 modelled on Fowler and Bakers Firth of Forth Bridge each engineered by E G Stone.

¹⁴ Personal Studio, The Mill Markets. I had conversations with the owner about the history of the Materials used. Embossing, Great Britain (1890) can be found on the steel girder, truss and pilasters.

¹⁵ Earlier methods of steel construction and brick construction have been replaced by newer methods and technological advances e.g steel girders were once created manually showing traces of human construction now in comparison material specifications have changed and they are computerised.

¹⁶ Grand Hornu Belgium, an Industrial complex for coal mining saved from demolition in the 70’s and transformed into a modern exhibition space is an example of this.

¹⁷ Quattan, L 2006. I Remember: The Arab Times. Pg 1, Sep 24th ‘Architecture testifies to the lifestyle of a people.’

buildings. I also wanted to create art which was monumental and had immediate impact because of its scale when viewed.

The Australian Tannery was one (of many) monumental buildings of particular interest, and was built along the Barwon's water edge and established in 1852 in Marshall Town, Geelong. This factory is an example of early Australian industrial architecture. Its repeated arcades and archways that once stood along the Barwon can be related to the repeated shapes, structures and openings characteristic of ancient Greek and Roman architecture.¹⁸ Privately owned, this building was demolished (date unknown) and the site returned to rural fields for grazing cattle, attesting to my opinion that significant architecture of the type described no longer remains as a locator of community identity.

The Geelong Gas Company that was subsequently bought by the Australian railway company V-Line is another example of a building that was demolished due to change and progress. Little information can be found about the history of this structure; however it was quite grand in scale. The site where the former Gas Works stood now remains as a railway yard. Thus few buildings have been preserved in comparison to those that have been lost. Those that have been converted include the Wool Museum and the site of Deakin University on the waterfront in the heart of Geelong. These buildings have been preserved and re-invented and attract thousands of locals and visitors each year.

I began my attempt to bridge the patrimonial gap to the past by creating artworks inspired by Geelong's industrial heritage and by exploring its historical beginnings at the Geelong Heritage Centre. It was important to research the historical beginnings of Geelong, because I wanted my artworks to emanate a sense of time. To do so, it was imperative to learn of Geelong's history in order to achieve a 'sense of lived place' and whilst exploring the historical information I found it significant that my interest in industrial buildings led to a deeper sense of 'experienced place' and 'identity'.

¹⁸ Paul Johnson, *Art: a new history*. See Pont du Gard (first century BC) Three tiers of arches, 150 feet high it testifies to Rome's discovery of engineering beauty pg 83

This in turn led me to uncover a sequence of historical events that contributed to the reason for the geographical placement of Industrial Geelong, which contributed to my understanding of its past. It was Lieutenant Murray, who in 1802 on February the 21st discovered Corio Bay whilst exploring Port Phillip Bay. Subsequently Commander Matthew Flinders, who has been described as one of the '*greatest explorers of the sea*' entered Port Phillip Bay aboard the famous 'Investigator'.¹⁹

The explorers Hume and Hovell arrived on the Northern Shore of Geelong in 1824. Taken by the beauty of the harbour, which is secluded from the larger Port Philip Bay, the surrounding land was considered a desirable landscape for settlement. It is recorded that the explorers met the indigenous peoples who communicated to the explorers that the area was titled, 'Jillong',²⁰

The New South Wales Government soon made land that had been explored here available for sale in Sydney. This selection of land was the means by which they promoted the arrival of the many migrants to Australia. In 1835 Batman²¹ acquired the entire area between Indented Heads and Point Henry, an area which includes the site on which Geelong was established. At a later date this became the property of The Crown, which was purchased for the sum of 7,000 Pounds.²²

In 1841, when the population of Geelong began to grow, Peter McCann (son of Peter McCann 1775 – 1806) and his family arrived in search of good farming land. They had joined an exploratory party after working in Launceston, Tasmania and headed for Port Philip Bay. On May 6th, 1841 they crossed the Moorabool River at Fyansford, '*after approaching over the Barrabool Hills ... managed to whip the Bullocks into pulling their drays up the steep Hill...from there (they) could see right down to Corio Bay.*'²³

¹⁹ Pg 13 Geelong Publicity Council, Geelong: its Advantages and Opportunities. Geelong Victoria, Australia (1930)

²⁰ Ibid.,13.

²¹ Ibid, 14

²² Ibid.,14.

²³ Mc Neill, J. A Journey to Destiny: 100 years of cement manufacturing. Australian Cement Limited, Fyansford, (1990), 12. Emphasis mine

After exploring the land and noticing developments being made in the township, Peter McCann decided to start construction of permanent stone buildings and he is recorded as being responsible for building the first such buildings in Geelong.²⁴ It has been suggested that the McCann's located '*possibly the best deposits of sandstone for building construction in Victoria at Ceres*'²⁵ and promptly purchased the land. Peter McCann then took his son Nicolas McCann into partnership for their anticipated enterprise, Australian Portland Cement Limited. And the rest, as they say, is history.

From the 1850's onwards they explored the Geelong area for other suitable natural materials and were the first to find extractable, usable limestone at Waurin Ponds and Batesford. Peter McCann acquired additional land near Batesford in 1853 and opened a quarry in 1855.²⁶ The McCann family in Geelong established the Cement Works in 1890 in the township of Fyansford, as it had adequate access to the Quarry. The existence of the Fyansford estate proved to be the ideal position to set up the first vertical kilns.²⁷ These kilns were replaced in the 1950's by more modern and efficient technologies that incorporated the recently demolished chimneys, as described earlier.

The Mill Markets, where I established my studio, was originally built as The Commonwealth Mills, in conjunction with the NSW Government. [It had become apparent to the government, after the implementation of compulsory military training in 1909, that they would soon require large amounts of material for making uniforms for the trainee soldiers.²⁸] In 1910 the 'Appropriations Works and Buildings Bill'²⁹ was passed, incorporating clauses that gave the Commonwealth the power to establish factories, for the production and manufacture of material and uniforms of all employees of the Government. The building was completed in 1915 and later titled the Federal Woollen Mills. Built by Architect John Smith Murdoch in Red Brick, it

²⁴Mc Neill, J. A Journey to Destiny: 100 years of cement manufacturing. Australian Cement Limited, Fyansford, (1990), Ibid.,13.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.,14, 15.

²⁸ Amos, D.J. *The Story of the Commonwealth Woollen Mills*. E.J Mc Alister and Co., Adelaide, (1934), 3.

²⁹ Ibid.

was designed in the Free Classical Style and is architecturally identified as the Edwardian/Federation Period.³⁰

Two such factories were built, The Commonwealth Woollen Mills and the Commonwealth Clothing Factory. The clothing factory was the first to be established at Clifton Hill in Collingwood. Thereafter a manager from the woollen industry in Scotland was invited to attend to the operations and planning of the second factory in 1911. The proposed area was announced in 1912, to be on the Northern shores of Geelong – and the inlet Corio Quay. It was considered suitable due to good water supply and access to shipping, making *'it possible to bring barges right up to the Mills'*.³¹

The following is quoted from 'The Geelong City Council: Geelong its Advantages and Opportunities' and demonstrates that Geelong was seen as 'Window of Opportunity' for many immigrants:

The creation of factories now carries a guarantee of future prosperity. Land is available, labour everywhere is clambering for employment, and Australia is ready to foster every industry that plants its roots in the commonwealth. Raw materials for every known trade and industry abound, and fortunes await the men who will extend the plant for treating them.

There is room for the ship builder and the bridge builder, the automobile engineer and the wireless inventor, cutlery factories are unknown, the pottery and chinaware industry is in its infancy, and its output meets but an infinitesimal part of the demand.³²

The various industries referenced in this previous quote contributed significantly to Geelong's social and economic identity. The decline of these industries, that had sustained Geelong's economy, together with and their subsequent disuse and demolition, erases significant traces of the past architecture of the city.

By delving into the histories of each industry, a deeper sense of time and place became apparent to me. Today the cleared site in Fyansford at the base of the valley

³⁰ Victorian Heritage Council: www.heritage.vic.gov.au

³¹ Amos., *The Story of the Commonwealth Woollen Mills* Pg 4.

³² Ibid14. Geelong City Council its advatages and opportunities.

anticipates the new housing development plan. Part of the cement works still exist, located on the ridge facing west, holding a lasting reminder of the past. Especially important is the bluestone headquarters of the Australian Portland Cement Ltd, now the Cement Museum, which will hopefully be preserved for future generations.

The Mill Markets industrial complex is a partly occupied site inviting individuals and organisations to make use of the space. I first developed an interest in this site to display the 'Cement Works' photographs, having a held interest in 'Artist Run Spaces'. Currently it houses a sound studio, cabinet makers, a historical society and a market, selling antiques, memorabilia and clothing. It is leased for storage, and is used as a space for performance rehearsal.

It was through the viewfinder of my camera, that I developed an appreciation for the industrial architecture surrounding Corio Bay and Geelong. By documenting the demolished site at Fyansford, I began to identify the loss of industries as a sign of change and progress. The photographs I exhibited struck an emotional cord with the Geelong community. The photographs depicted twisted, dismantled industrial materials apocalyptically intensified through the camera lens. A level of sadness and loss was heightened as people reminisced with me and other visitors to the exhibition about their forefathers, a time of hardship and labour and of the site as a symbol of human manual construction. The space in which the photographs were exhibited also had traces of the past and manually constructed forms, as people who had worked there left inscriptions on the walls and pilasters, thus adding a sense of the real history of people to my exhibited works.

This is the background to my research project; what follows will elaborate my investigative journey.

CHAPTER TWO

Artists Confronting Demolished and Abandoned Industry

“Leonardo da Vinci advised painters who lacked inspiration when faced with nature, to contemplate with a reflective eye the crack in an old wall. For there is a map of the universe in the lines that time draws on these old walls” ³³

Industrial buildings are normally perceived as ugly and threatening places. This view is emphasised by their sheer architectural scale and unavoidable elements of decay and darkness. As an artist I found that an industrial building had a mythology of its own. The abandoned, demolished and empty facades and interiors of ‘industrial sites’ provide endless possibilities which are charged with metaphor and myth.³⁴ On factory walls remnants of the past can be found. An industrial site, uninhabited, deserted, or demolished, cannot escape its own history, and contemplating the deconstruction of such a site, I was intrigued by the, sense of ambiguity between past and future.³⁵

From my experience working ‘on site’ and with the incorporation of the importance of ‘experienced place’ and use of space, I discovered a group of artists who inspired the further development and formation of my own ideas and concepts.³⁶ They include Robert Smithton, Gordon Matta-Clark, Rachel Whiteread and Anselm Kiefer. I was drawn to these artists for a number of reasons; however, above all each of them had dealt with some aspect of the industrial subject and its architecture.

As I began to research their art, it became apparent that the nature of the ‘industrial site’ (in state of decay) was a vehicle through which one could represent and explore artistic, philosophical and scientific concepts such as time, space, and entropy. I discovered that art inspired by industrial buildings could evoke a certain melancholy,

³³ Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Boston, 1964. Pg 144

³⁴ Gilmour, John. C. *Fire on Earth: Anselm Kiefer and the Postmodern World*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990. Pg 137 “If we think of myths in the proper way, they may be regarded as ways of remembering the human past.since they provide a narrative about the past that helps to explain the present situation of people. From this point of view it is important to grasp the structures of the whole cycle of time, contrary to the modern view of history.”

³⁵ Lee, Pamela M., and Gordon Matta-Clark. *Object to Be Destroyed the Work of Gordon Matta-Clark*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000.the “Ambiguity of place”pg 34

³⁶ Ibid. Pg35 Lee emphasises the importance of “Place making” and the capacity of architecture and its embeddedness at a given site.

catalysed by the condition of loss, and by fusing these elements capture the historicity of a site. This certainly became the case in my own art. The 'industrial subject' had overshadowed these artists' concepts and art due to the assumption that architecture, in the state of decay, mimics the ephemeral quality of nature.³⁷ Lee, in her monograph of Matta-Clark, describes '*...the historicity of place as a network of overlapping, architectural tissue.*'³⁸

It was in the 1970's that artists found inspiration in decayed industry of an older era. They identified decayed and or demolished architecture as a signpost of the times and of change, just as I found potential in the change taking place at Fyansford. Artists identified that the advance in new technologies represented change politically and socially; and used the deterioration of industrial architecture as a vehicle to represent this change.³⁹

Advances in technology stimulated debate about urban development; artists reclaimed industrial buildings, which because of regression had become classed as lower socio-economic areas. Buildings, left behind because of technological progress, were transformed into art hubs; art and studio space.⁴⁰ This representation of change and loss of the past due to technological advance will be discussed further, forming the thematic of this chapter. In addition to this, in the text I will describe how the artistic achievements of the already mentioned artists contributed to my own desire to create art which emulated the passage of time based on the 'industrial site'.

In the following excerpt, Lee (2000) refers to the economic and urban changes taking place, architecturally, in the U.S.A of the late 1960's. Lee claims that the work of

³⁷Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois; Rosalind. "A User's Guide to Entropy." 78, no. Autumn (1996): 38 -88. Pg 25 "If the architect takes himself for a sculptor, he masks his own role in capitalist society, which is to build rabbit warrens to the order of a real-estate developer. There was a sovereign contempt in Matta-Clark's attitude toward architects: what I do you could never achieve since that presupposes accepting ephemerality, where as you believe yourselves to be building for eternity. But architecture has only one destiny and that is sooner or later to go down the chute, because it's waste. His own project was to underscore this state of things, not to underscore it."

³⁸ Lee. *Object to be Destroyed*. pg 36

³⁹ Here he directly echoes the disabused ethic that had prevailed in New York since the mid-1960. The simple geometric shapes used by the minimalist generation, in the hands of artists as different in outlook as Donald Judd to Robert Morris, mimicked the scale and materials of architecture so as to call as much attention to the walls and buildings that surround them as to their own internal form pg 20 Gordon Matta-Clark

⁴⁰ Gordon Matta-Clark et al., "Gordon Matta-Clark," (2003). Pg 12 "I've taken a decaying sad reminder of a previous industrial era and renovated it"

Matta-Clark was a political voice and artistic demonstration against unconsidered change, and further suggests that this demonstration and change created a genre of artists working with the industrial subject:

If not wholly a casual reaction against industrialization and the swelling populations of labourers who fuelled the cities growth, this movement was certainly a partial function of these phenomena. But it was in the aftermath of world war 11 that the American suburb underwent its most infamous explosion, represented by the sprawls of Levittown and other housing experiments. It the mass produced boxes of popular stereotype crystallised the image of the suburbs a cultural wasteland for many. ⁴¹

Matta-Clark was particularly in revolt against the urban sprawl mainly because of the aesthetic of the architecture. I believe Matta-Clark was an 'idealist' who desired the creation of grand architecture of the past, and I will illustrate this conjecture further in the text.

With continual economic progress and urban development it is likely that older forms of architecture are lost, and in particular this will include industrial architecture. This argument creates a debate about the importance of industrial architecture and the impact and consequences of its eradication. With the loss of industrial architecture and older forms of production generational gaps are consequently formed and people hence forth live with little knowledge of their predecessors, or their architecture.

The transformation of certain industrial sites into art, with or without 'age value', has become recognised as a timeless mechanism which has the capacity to transport the viewer through past, present and future. This concept was pioneered by Smithson who introduced concepts of entropy to art; he argued that everything (especially architecture) ultimately evolves toward a point of ruination.⁴² This perspective had a strong resonant with the signs I had observed at both of the sites I have focussed upon.

⁴¹ Pamela M. Lee and Gordon Matta-Clark, *Object to Be Destroyed the Work of Gordon Matta-Clark, Object to Be Destroyed* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000). 23

⁴² Ibid. pg 46 'In an interview with Smithson titled "entropy made visible," he gave voice to a "kind of entropic architecture" illustrated with various buildings on the verge of collapse....'

Smithton was particularly interested in architecture and the element of its inevitable decay through the passage of time and process of evolution.⁴³ Furthermore dealing with entropy suggested the opposite of evolution, accentuating the building's degradation. During this particular time, Smithton coined the phrase '*Time decay or de-evolution*'.⁴⁴

'*Partially Buried Woodshed*', 1970 (fig 4) is an example of Smithton's early industrial works, exploring the nature of entropy in art by capturing the moment to which a building undergoes its demise. In, 'A Users Guide to Entropy' (Krauss & Bois, 1996) the following point is made about Smithton's action and the nature of the artwork '*Partially Buried Woodshed*':

non-monument' the process Smithton calls 'de-architecturalisation' a dump truck poured earth onto the roof of an old woodshed to the point where its ridge beam cracked. Architecture is the material and entropy is the instrument (the way gravity served Pollock as an instrument): Smithton merely accentuates this.⁴⁵

I identified with the similarity that Smithton's work had with my photographs exhibited in *Industrial Evolution*. The demolished remains of the Fyansford Cement Works emphasised the twisted and decayed nature of the remains with the only difference being that I captured the entropic quality by chance whereas Smithton captured it by action. I also evoked a further sense of time and historicity by exhibiting it in the underground cellar of a woollen mill that once served the purpose of curing the wool crop.

In the following observation Smithton creates a metaphorical window which invites us to contemplate the sense of timelessness of a site:

⁴³ Ibid.pg 46 "The notion that the object is made at the moment of the buildings ruination- the works simultaneous self – effacement as it comes into presence – suggests that it actually rises into ruin" Smithton" 1970 *Partially Buried Woodshed*

⁴⁴ Ibid.pg 39-40 Smithton entropy the progressive disintegration of form "Time decay or de-evolution"

⁴⁵ Yve-Alain Bois; Rosalind Krauss, "A User's Guide to Entropy," 78, no. Autumn (1996). Pg 22

I walked down a parking lot that covered the old railway tracks which at one time ran through the middle of Passaic. That monumental parking lot divided the city in half, turning it into a mirror and a reflection – but the mirror kept changing places with the reflection. One never knew what side of the mirror one was on. There was nothing interesting or strange about that flat monument, yet it echoed a kind of clichéd idea of infinity.⁴⁶

Based on this statement about ‘experienced place’ and infinity I began to understand the conceptual and evocative format of Smithton’s work. It challenged and at the same time resembled my idea of time in empty industrial spaces. While working in the studio I had experienced the unavoidable timelessness of my studio, because of its grand scale and the dilapidated site’s empty state.

The timelessness I found was evoked by the sunlight streaming through a large window at the end of the building; and because it was no longer functioning as a factory, I was able to contemplate the loss of a bygone era. Here I began to understand the historicity of the site, together with the sense of the physical presence of its past inhabitants from marks on the walls, ceilings and floors. In my own work my objective became to capture the contrasts of light, cast within the space, its architectural structure, and the presence felt. These elements for me had the potential to represent various conceptual ambiguities.

In the following literary parody, Smithton creates a juxtaposition of two sites. In doing so, he further emphasises the ambiguity of place in contrast to lack of place, and highlights a sense of paradox:

The interest came a little like a schoolboy joke: travelling to Mexico (a trip that gave rise to his famous “mirror displacements in the Yucatán”). Smithton brought back not photos of the ruins of the “Vanished America”.....but views from the ramshackle hotel in the process of partial renovation, where he stayed in Palenque (it was above all the concurrence in the same building of reconstruction and signs of decrepitude – since the natural ravages seem to be accentuated by the activity of the masons – that interested him. A few years later the “private joke” became public to an assembly of architecture students who came to hear him speak on the famous Mayan ruins of Yucatán, Smithton delivered a meticulous (parodic) analysis of the hotel.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Ibid., p4

⁴⁷ Ibid., p 21

Sense of real ‘experienced place’ is accentuated here with the comparison of these two sites. Smithton sets out to emphasise the state of things by capturing images of the present which he casts in sharp comparison to the Yucatán ruins.

Great architecture or ruins of the past can be described as monumental. They are significant because they represent the past, and they provide a *Window on an Era* through which one can conceptualise the historical context. Monuments are often created as a point of departure from the past in order to look toward the future. In the same sense, public art can be by nature monumental. However, what Smithton creates are non-monuments, and in doing so he accentuates the value of a monument; he makes conceptual and ambiguous comments about the nature of time and value of significant architecture.⁴⁸

The concepts of Matta-Clark and his artworks’ relevance to *Window on an Era* can be illustrated in the following observation made by Lee (2000), “*because Matta-Clark’s work presupposes its own destruction, it internalizes this historical loss, this entropic remove. In doing so it is a monument to the very pretensions of the monument, becoming itself siteless in the process.*”⁴⁹

In the beginning I found the industrial subject and my experience working as an artist in an empty industrial shell, personally and artistically challenging. In the winter months I observed the wind moving dust and debris through the archaic empty interior, echoing the sound of hollowness. This experience suggested artistic avenues of loss and melancholy to explore and also elaborated concepts I had discovered through the documentation of the destruction of the cement works. However, out of the dismantled nature of each industrial site, strikingly and ironically I found beauty in the light of the afternoon winter’s sun. The following observation made by artist

⁴⁸ Ibid. pg 105. Lee (2000) Refers to Alois Reigl’s essay ‘The Modern Cult of Monuments’. “Every work of art is at once, and without exception, a historical monument,” he observed a thing that implicitly bears its historicity. Thus he makes plain that all “historical” monuments are ultimately contained under the category of “age value” – an object of history whose various signs of age guarantee its function as such a valued thing. No matter how mundane or formally uninteresting, anything might attain the status of monument by these terms.”

⁴⁹ Ibid Pg 55

Joel Shapiro in reference to Matta-Clark's artwork 'Day's End' (1975) (*fig 5*) is indicative of the ambiguity of my own experience:

"The place was dangerous to the viewer... it was spectacular. It was large. He was creating some kind of edge – flirting with some sort of abyss."⁵⁰

'Day's End' was created in an abandoned pier located in Greenwich Village, New York. Matta-Clark used his architecturally transformative skill to produce a cyclic work emulating time, by cutting sections off the entire building. What was left, it has been described, was a fusion of light, air and water within an empty industrial shell.⁵¹

Matta-Clark refers to 'Day's End' as his '*studio retreat*' and emphasises that his interests include the architectural and historical qualities of the building as well as its physical presence, outlined as follows:

My 'studio retreat' consisted of appropriating a nearly perfectly intact..... turn – of – the – century wharf building of a steel truss construction having basilical light and proportions whilst being a heavy industrial hanger⁵²

I was interested in Matta-Clark's comparison of 'pier 52' to the light of a basilica. He compares architecture of a passing industrial age to great architecture of the past, and for him it was a 'window in time'. This is further supported and extended by Thomas Crow (2003) "...*pier 52, with its new rose window ..., took advantage of the fortuitous proximity of great twin smokestacks in order to constitute the counterpart to a great cathedral, Day's End literally radiated a transcendent light not unknown to the great gothic builders.*"⁵³

Crow confirms Matta-Clark's interest in the architectural aesthetic. He brings to light Matta-Clark's capacity to capture the present and to create a timeless artwork worthy of historical interpretation. Matta -Clark's works were developed from demolished

⁵⁰ Matta-Clark et al., "Gordon Matta-Clark." interview pg 187

⁵¹ Matta-Clark, Gordon, Christian Kravagna, Corinne Diserens, Judith Russi Kirshner, and Thomas E. Crow. "Gordon Matta-Clark." *Gordon Matta-Clark* (2003). "The brilliant August sunset coursed through a gap creating a physical presence...Light, air, sky and water. Everything was alive with motion and light." Hovagimyan pg 11 Legend and Myth

⁵² Ibid.p 8 Gordon Matta Clark

⁵³ Ibid.p19

buildings; unused, and abandoned; he coined the term ‘anarchitecture’ and supported Smithton’s notion of entropy in the deconstruction of a building.⁵⁴

The following statement made by Matta-Clark at a symposium in Antwerp (1977) suggests that a ‘building’ or ‘site’ forms its unique identity on occurrences or layers created through the passage of time. He also suggests that art of this kind is dependent on one’s conceptualisation of the space:

There is a kind of complexity that comes from taking an otherwise completely normal, conventional, albeit anonymous situation and redefining it , retranslating it into overlapping and multiple readings of conditions past and present. Each building generates its own unique situation.⁵⁵

Matta-Clark was an artist and architect who went to great lengths architecturally and artistically, by literally cutting into buildings using engineering machinery as his tools and the site his medium; measurement also formed an important part of his work just as it did for the development of my drawings in *Simulacra*, which are discussed in the following chapter.

Rachel Whiteread used the internal architecture of a building as her material. Townsend, in his essay ‘When we Collide’, describes one of Whiteread’s first architectural pieces: “*Ghost seemed to workas an invocation of the room’s inhabitants whose traces had seeped into its walls and been dissipated in its atmosphere.*”⁵⁶ I interpret this as describing Whiteread’s capacity to solidify time and capture traces of the past. It supports my contention that the empty interior of a building contains remnants of the past. Furthermore, Whiteread states that her work originated from the following thought: ‘*I had an idea of mummifying the sense of silence in a room*’.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Zevi, Adachiara, "The Meteor Gordon Matta-Clark: An Architecture as Action Architecture." *L'Architettura* 44, no. 513-514 (1998): 473.

⁵⁵ Matta-Clark, Gordon, Christian Kravagna, Corinne Diserens, Judith Russi Kirshner, and Thomas E. Crow. "Gordon Matta-Clark." *Gordon Matta-Clark* (2003). pg 19 &187 Interview with Gordon Matter-Clark, Antwerp, Sep 1977

⁵⁶ Townsend, Chris. "The Art of Rachel Whiteread." *The art of Rachel Whiteread* (2004).pg 17

⁵⁷ Ibid., pg 87 ‘Melanie Marino ‘Moving On’

Whiteread's architectural sculptures are of negative spaces and serve to question the importance of the unseen.⁵⁸ She preserves what is not normally preserved; namely derelict industrial buildings or middle class housing. The walls and windows become the negative form of the positive, creating the illusion of containing the presence of those that once lived within the confines of its four walls. I find it interesting that each of the openings act as signs which now contradict each original purpose; a window can no longer be looked through, and a doorway cannot be entered. This, I feel, illustrates Whiteread's objective to mummify the silence of a room and capture presence in the normally perceived negative form of space.

'House' 1992 (*fig 6*), London, was the internal cast of a late Victorian building that was, similar to the cement works, scheduled for demolition. Whiteread sparked a controversial debate outlined by Townsend (2000) with the following suggestion:

The debate that house provoked were the question of ageing house stock and what to do with it , the process of gentrification in formally solid working class districts of the East End, and the question of who planned urban change.⁵⁹

This political reaction is similar to what Matta-Clark insinuated in his work through sculptural cuttings and splittings of sections of architecture. The concepts are similar yet their methodological approach evokes differing ambiguities about mark making and traces of the past through use of material. What Whiteread explores also relates to the general perception that industrial buildings that no longer function have lost their purpose and are often demolished in the face of economic or technological advance.

Whiteread's reflection quoted by Gross (2004): *"all my room pieces or any architectural pieces I've made – really have to do with observing. There's a sense of puzzlement in just looking at them and thinking: We live in that kind of place. How do we function physically in a place like that? I think about how they affect me physically"*⁶⁰ supports the notion that environment, space and site inevitably impact

⁵⁸ Ibid ,pg 35 "It is the seeing of the unseen that lies at the heart of Whitereads aesthetic project"
Jennifer R Gross essay Remembrance of Things Present

⁵⁹ Ibid., pg 18

⁶⁰ Ibid., pg 41

on the formation of one's sense of self. The multiple layers found within the confines of four walls or on a site, indicate that the traces give meaning to and build upon a sites 'historicity' or 'age value'. Furthermore, who decides what, should be valued. In the name of progress and money a sense of place can be compromised. Townsend further describes Whiteread's work as: '*historically charged, relevant to the immediate moment and seems to speak to the future*'⁶¹ a notion similar to what I have termed, capturing past, present and future within a given site.

Anselm Kiefer bought an abandoned, non-functioning industrial site in 1988; the once industrial brickwork factory in Buchen Hopfingen, Germany. It is described by Gallwitz (2003) as:

The site....was a huge ghostly and melancholy relic of the productive age, a place abandoned by life and labour, with a bottomless clay pit, extended low drying rooms, and a threatening stretch of masonry kilns.

In the sparse, extensive landscape of the region, the old brickworks appeared like a left over ark, like a spaceship of past and present cultures, internally like the realm of the dead, soon like a highly animated place that sheltered the artist's material props and intellectual resources.⁶²

Kiefer found within this space a 'sense of place charged with mythology'. It became a vehicle to which he could represent the mystical tradition of the Jewish Cabala⁶³; and like each of the artists mentioned above, Kiefer identified endless possibilities for art in the sense of capturing the present out of the empty spaces.⁶⁴ From the resources Kiefer obtained, he created a large book of photographs which are an elaboration of the site the artwork, titled *Earthly and Heavenly Palaces* (Fig 7). This image is one of a body of photographic images produced at the Brickworks; and to my mind had a similar cavernous quality to the cellar in which I displayed my work at the woollen mill.

⁶¹ Ibid.,33

⁶² Gallwitz, Klaus, Lisa Saltzman, Peter Nisbet, and Laura Muir. "Anselm Kiefer the Heavenly Palaces, Merkabah." *Heavenly palaces, Merkabah*. (2003).

⁶³ Ibid.,29 In the end it is in fact the seven heavens and the seven palaces of the mystical world of the Jewish Merkabah toward which the painter directs his attention. Gallwitz

⁶⁴ Ibid. *But in Cambridge, the thirteen chapters of the book preserve the still secret transformation of an abandoned functional building into a place of continuing inspiration.

A suitably apt description of the brickworks and resemblance to the cellar in Geelong is outlined as follows:

It is devoid of objects, containing none of the ephemera of daily or past life that would typically litter a cellar floor. It does not fulfil its expected function of the storehouse of familial history, of familial memory, like an attic. Rather this space would seem to hold no memories, emptied of its past and suffused only with the dim, raking light of the present. the empty cellar becomes a repository of materiality and meaning.⁶⁵

Here, Saltzman (2003) suggests that the aspect of light filtering into the industrial space (similar to my own experience) created a prevailing sense of presence as it revokes no memory. Again the paradoxical quality of these empty spaces is emphasised by where nothing and at the same time something, can be found.

I began to describe earlier in the chapter, how my experience at the Woollen Mill had challenging aspects, especially because of its grand dominating scale and unavoidable emptiness. My experience was of a similar paradoxical nature to Saltzman in that the Woollen Mill was like a large cavity, where, one felt a sense of ‘void’ and ‘abyss’ and a level of scathed darkness prevailed; yet amid a hollowed silence, I conceptualised past, present and future as I witnessed the day’s passing of the sun.

Each of these artists gained momentum in their art by seizing the present.⁶⁶ They argued that the very process of a building’s degradation or dilapidation had endless potential for either comment on entropy and the nature of time; a sense of loss of identity due to lack of significant architecture; the capacity for a site or space to emanate a physical and even spiritual presence either by left over remnants on the floors and/or walls; or by the raking sun moving through a space as if it were an ancient pagan ruin. Furthermore they created debate about this significance and consequences of the degradation of architecture relevant to their time and place. Just as I identified the importance of the industrial architecture in Geelong, its preservation and its erasure as it influenced my experience as an artist.

⁶⁵ Saltzman, Lisa, and Anselm Kiefer. "Anselm Kiefer and Art after Auschwitz." *Anselm Kiefer and art after Auschwitz* (1999).

⁶⁶ Townsend., ‘The ideal she wishes us to apprehend is *carpiem*, the seizing of the present. ‘

In the following chapter I will describe my experience of industrial site at further length and identify the philosophical concepts significant to my research, and elaborating the methodological approach to my art. I will also describe experiences pertaining to my research overseas.

CHAPTER THREE

Studio and Experienced Space

“We can deny the past but we cannot escape its torment because the past is a speaking shadow that keeps pace with the truth of what we are, step for step, until we die”⁶⁷

In the previous chapters I have elaborated on achieving a sense of ‘experienced place’ in an artwork derived from industrial architecture. This has been the challenge; to evoke a sense of presence inspired by the two industrial sites that I have gathered information from. I introduced the argument, that with the loss of significant industrial architecture ‘windows to the past’ are erased and people have little knowledge of their predecessors. One could suggest that an era will escape our understanding with the loss of its built environment. This exploration of art has not only been a documentation of real lived time and real people who set out in force to build an industrial city but about architecture rich with ‘age value’ that has been lost.

I identified the change taking place in Geelong and embraced the opportunity to document the passing of an era. My sense of intuition led to a greater artistic journey than I had originally anticipated. The demolition of the Fyansford cement works became a greater exploration of art, the industrial subject and its architecture.

I began to photographically document Geelong’s industrial heritage before it was erased; here I created an invaluable resource of visual information, which could be explored aesthetically. Initially the research included pre – demolition of the cement works, the meatworks, Shell, Ford and the Gas Company and the International Harvester on Corio Quay. With this research I began to distinguish and identify some of the older buildings (pre-1950) such as the distillery and woollen mills (Mill Markets) which I leased as a studio, *Appendix 1*.

⁶⁷ Roberts. ‘Shanterham’. pg 581

The photographs I developed for the exhibition 'Industrial Evolution' were taken post- demolition of the cement works. The enlarged black and white photographs titled 'deconstruction-Y' were taken on the day of the event and the smaller Cibachrome photographs, 'deconstruction-X', were taken on the following day. In total I displayed 27 photographs in the underground cellar of the woollen mill *Appendix 11*, which, emphasised the post industrial as the subject matter itself was the aftermath of demolition.

On the day of the demolition I was granted permission by the site manager to return on the following day. I was aware of the processes of Cibachrome photography and had access to a Cibachrome darkroom. I decided to shoot a slide film on that day. Cibachrome photography is renowned for having longevity beyond that of a normal photograph, given that it is stored in the right conditions. Issues such as longevity were important to me as I wanted to create art that stood the passage of time.

I was overwhelmed by the amount of subject matter I found. Similar to the words of Picasso himself: *'The most everyday object, is a vessel, a vehicle for my thoughts'*⁶⁸, I found masses of rubble, fallen debris, large scale twisted and tangled forms, ferruginous reo (linear in form), cable, bent wire and concrete as though it had literally been torn apart by a natural disaster. Large circular corridors were like open wounds at the base of the stacks; sharp contrasts of light and dark; with shadows forming in the interior spaces, like a haunting reminder of their once-felt presence. I approached the site with the intention to intensify the light and dark shades by using a yellow filter on my camera.

I felt a sense of real achievement in the Cibachrome darkroom because unlike black and white photography the entire process needed to be completed in absolute darkness. I also explored photographic processes invented at the turn of the century by Man Ray.⁶⁹ The 'Third Kiss' (*fig 8*) I exhibited at the woollen mill was the result of this exploration, similar to the accidental nature in which the monograph was created; I was exploring the possibility of a negative exposed onto positive Cibachrome paper

⁶⁸Quinn. *Picasso: The Objects*

⁶⁹Man Ray Exhibition 2005 National Gallery of Victoria

and in the process by chance exposed light onto the paper, resulting in an eerie ‘other worldly’ landscape together with the excavator that led the stacks to their fate.

The cavernous space, where I exhibited the photographs, was a large underground interior that smelled of lanolin. It had three supporting pillars in the centre that would have once functioned as a chute for the wool. Along one side of the space there were architecturally framed openings, within which I displayed key photographs (*fig 9*). I placed special white lights in these enclosures to accentuate the golden glow of my photographs and the beauty of the building’s interior structure. Many local people, members of Geelong’s art community, friends and family arrived to celebrate the show. People were clearly intrigued by the sense of history and dramatic photographs that I had created, as I later learned from their conversations and comments.

With reference to my photographs; Lisa Saltzman describes the artistic value of the photograph in relation to the underground cellar Anselm Kiefer worked in, when she said: *much as a cellar functions as both a site of storage and a structure of support, buttressing the visible architectural form that rises above it, so to does a photograph serve as a site of storage, a repository for visual information.*⁷⁰

The following excerpt by Gombrich emphasises the battle of technology versus nature, a battle that I identified in the previous chapter and identified at the demolition site at Fyansford. The once massive structures that represented a productive age were reduced to unstructured form and resembled the ephemeral quality of nature.

Gombrich said: *“If this game has a function in society, it may be that it helps us to ‘humanize’ the intricate and ugly shapes with which industrial civilization surrounds us. We even learn to see twisted wires or complex machinery as the product of human action....The deserts of city and factory are turned into tangle woods.”*⁷¹

⁷⁰ Gallwitz, Klaus, Lisa Saltzman, Peter Nisbet, and Laura Muir. "Anselm Kiefer the Heavenly Palaces, Merkabah." *Heavenly palaces, Merkabah*. (2003).

⁷¹ Gombrich, E. H. "Art and Illusion a Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation." *Art and illusion* 4th ed. (1972). Pg 244

I titled my exhibition of the cement works '*Industrial Evolution*'. Evolution is usually associated with 'natural law' and the scientific theory of the evolution of the universe.⁷² I was captivated by the 'tangle wood' nature of the demolished site on the 6th of June 2004; it strangely resembled nature itself.⁷³ I discovered that the industrial subject evoked a phenomenal sense of paradox. Whilst it resembled 'second nature' at the same time it represented decay and loss of industrial architecture. Decay which is defined as entropy, being the science of the gradual degradation of the earth, the opposite of evolution.⁷⁴

From here my folio work also needed to evolve and develop. My objective for the exhibition '*Industrial Evolution*' was to gather resources which would become, a 'repository for meaning'. The drawings I produced for '*Simulacra*' were inspired by the interior architecture of my studio space at the woollen mill. At either end of the hollow interior were large industrial scale windows (*fig 10*) and I began to document the space in the form of drawings and photographs.

After making initial observations, I decided to produce a series of large scale architectural drawings. The window had become significant to my experience. The sun would filter through the muted industrial glass and cast shadows in the space. This echoed the passage of day and for me evoked a sense of physical presence. I then decided to measure the window to scale, and draw an architectural plan of it. Once completed, I sectioned the plan into reduced abstract drawings. The result was 1/64 the fraction of the original window size.⁷⁵ From this reductive exercise I created six large architecturally geometric drawings, titled 'Ancient Lights' (*fig 11*).

I felt it was important to form a relationship between the photographs taken at the cement works and the drawings of the woollen mill. I had intentionally intensified the yellowing apocalyptic tone of the photographs, by incorporating a similar flavescent

⁷² Peck, M Scott *The Road Less Travelled: A new psychology of love, and traditional values* Pg 285

⁷³ Reigl "....even a violent human intervention into the natural life of the monument may over time strike us as evocative....Seen from a distance, the effect of human destruction, which appears so violent and disturbing at close range, can be experienced as the orderly and necessary workings of nature itself" 108 Lee, *Object to be Destroyed* p 55

⁷⁴ Peck, M Scott *The Road Less Travelled: A new psychology of love, and traditional values* Pg 285

⁷⁵ Ibid p12 'everything' Matta-Clark Noted, "was progressively divided so that the remaining last piece was 1/32 of the whole."

yellow. I wanted to create a sense of light and dark shadow and mimic the melancholic mood of the environment.

Here I researched techniques such as chiaroscuro and sfumato.⁷⁶ Typically industrial sites are smoky and foggy by character. The techniques of Sfumato, Italian for smoked, I felt accentuated this quality. Chiaroscuro was developed through the use of light and dark. Because of the transient nature of the sites I chose to explore chiaroscuro and found that it captured the extreme contrasts found within the studio space.

I found that these techniques had the potential to achieve the blurred effect of light entering the darkened spaces of my studio. The blurred and soft effect I believe also achieved that sense of ambiguity that I was aiming for. I began the drawings with charcoal because of its industrial potential and properties, having a grimy and weighty quality. I found interesting interpretations of the alchemical properties of black by Gilmour⁷⁷, and found that black had a heavy and weighty quality like the grandeur of industrial architecture.

Once I had determined the material, I began working on developing a method. I developed a process where I created an entire layer; on completing this erasure I applied another layer on top. The effect I achieved was exactly what I anticipated and conceptually related to my research; the process created the illusion of space yet a disquieting sense of space-less-ness, as the erasures were fine and shallow. The

⁷⁶ CHIAROSCURO (ital. light-dark). As generally used, chiaroscuro (or the French clair –obscur) means the balance of light and shadow in a picture, and the skill shown by the painter in the management of shadows. The word tends to be used mainly of painters like Rembrandt or Caravaggio whose works are predominantly dark in tone.

SFUMATO (ital. evaporated, cleared like mist) is a word used to describe the transitions of colour or, especially, tone from light to dark by stages so gradual as to be imperceptible.... Leonardo da Vinci ...In his notes on painting he says that light and shade should blend 'without lines or borders, in the manner of smoke. A Dictionary of Art and Artists.

⁷⁷ Gilmour, John. C. *Fire on Earth: Anselm Kiefer and the Postmodern World*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990. Pg 132 'the symbolism of colour in alchemy. In the nigredo (black) phase, the alchemist symbolizes both death and the colour that substances assume when they reach their molten, chaotic state when broken down by fire. Kiefer's own use harks back to this tradition ...

'Nigredo, the blackening process, was comparable to chaos, the massa confusa that existed before the separation of the elements; it is a state in which matter is reduced to an almost liquid condition or has become a 'quality of the prima material.'

layering of the heavy black charcoal also mimicked the grime and soot found in these industrial spaces.

Drawing as an art form, has a unique capacity to evoke a sense of presence. Erasure as a method has a palpable characteristic which lends itself to drawing. A simple mark and erasure reveals traces of energy developed or modified physically. For me the method of erasure had the capacity to infuse light and dark, I found by erasing the black charcoal or yellow pastel the light would reflect from the paper in a different way. Drawing traditionally has been associated with development of an idea or drafting of concepts, a form of documentation and experimentation explored by such Renaissance artists as Albrecht Durer⁷⁸. Drawing is also used in the drafting stages of Architecture.

In a contemporary sense this tradition has continued, and developed as technology has advanced. For example methods of erasure are used on a immense scale by South African Artist William Kentridge⁷⁹ for the creation of short films. He makes use of the erasure to enhance the physical presence of his characters and environments. But it is the capacity of a drawing to capture the vernacular quality of a place that I reviewed the artists mentioned in the previous chapter and their individual interests in form and the metaphysical qualities of architecture.

Because my work was essentially reductive and abstract and that much of the effect was achieved by my physical action of erasure I found it resembled processes that the Action Painters of the 1950's had adopted, only my material form was drawn.⁸⁰

Whilst my aim was to develop reductive abstract works, I could not however escape the desire to represent what I observed. By adopting the use of minimal forms and the

⁷⁸ Durer, Albrecht. Wing of a Hooded Crow. 1512 Watercolour on Velum with Gold, Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Viena, Austria.

⁷⁹ William Kentridge: Drawing the Passing, Houghton, South Africa David Krut 1999

⁸⁰ Action painting: Splashing and dribbling paint onto canvas. The basic assumption is that the unconscious will take over and produce a work of art. The technique is claimed to go back to Leonardo, who suggested using stains on walls as a starting point for designing (cf. BLOT): the essential difference is that Leonardo used the method solely as a means of stimulating the creative imagination and not as an end in itself. Action painting should not be confused with the intellectual type of abstract art in which some thought is necessary, but its advocates claim that the beauty of the 'calligraphy' – i.e. the movement of the artist's wrists – constitutes its justification, as well as distinguishing it from tachisme A Dictionary of Art and Artists.

technique sfumato, I found that I was able to achieve both. *Leonardo da Vinci, the inventor of the deliberately blurred image, the sfumato, or veiled form, that cuts down the information on the canvas and thereby stimulates the mechanisms of projection*⁸¹. Furthermore these techniques had for me the potential to evoke the ambiguities I had discovered in the architectural structures. I aimed to achieve the space between material, immaterial, interior, exterior, representation, non-representation light and dark through an evocative blurred image.

I titled the drawings 'Ancient Lights'. An ancient light by legal definition is a window that a neighbour may not deprive of light by building beside it based on its 'age value'. This concept in itself embodies laws to do with urban development and planning.

The 'shadow' became a sign for the ambiguity between the seen and unseen, between light and dark that was the beginning of my conceptualisation of the last drawing for this body of work titled 'epoir' (fig 12). The shadow was a sign of hope (looking toward the future) a basic shape I established by incorporating the use of the Golden Section⁸². The shadow for me also seemed to speak of the past as it represented metaphorically lost memories or time. I overlayed the robust form over a geometric plan of the Golden Section, this further represented loss of great architecture of the past developed by Vitruvius in ancient Greece and rediscovered by da Vinci during the Renaissance.⁸³ Further to this my aim was to create a mark, trace, or shadow of the past.

I decided to title the exhibition at the Geelong Fine Art Gallery 'Simulacra'. I became aware of its significance through research of the artists discussed in the previous chapter. Krauss describes the philosophy of simulacra in 'A User's Guide to Entropy':

When Plato introduces the notion of the simulacrum in the sophist, he describes it as a copy that, though identical, has paradoxically become non-resemblant. Since all earthly objects are

⁸¹ E.H Gombrich. "The Story of Art." Pg 185

⁸² The goldern section was re introduced by da Vinici during the renaissance based on methods used in ancient Greek architecture and documented in the de architectura. Gombrich The Story of Art

⁸³ Johnson, Paul A new history of art pg 68 Vitruvius a practising architect and engineer who lived about the time of Christ in his treatise De Architectura provides a long list of works by greek experts on every aspect of architecture. Including the use of illusionistic devices to achieve a desired effect.

copies of forms it is not the fact that being a copy that is simulacral, but that of being an untrue, non resemblant copy.⁸⁴

Before I conclude, an artist and experience that cannot go without mention is the work of Anish Kapoor. His work was exhibited in an old coal mine in Belgium which had been transformed into a modern art institution. His art influenced my work and the industrial complex of Grand Hornu which housed the artworks inspired me to further investigate Geelong's industrial buildings.

I chose to mention Kapoor separate to the artists described earlier because his work does not fall into the category of what I will term the 'industrial site' nor does it explore the possibility of past traces in industrial architecture. He does, however, in his exhibition and artwork titled *Melancholia* (fig 13), explore time and space similar to the artists mentioned previously. This brought me to explore phenomena evoked by images which hark toward the future, capturing the present and evoking traces, of the past.

Inevitably I was inspired by the architecture of the industrial complex at Grand Hornu *Appendix 1*. Further to this I visited another non-functioning coal mine, now museum, in the province of Mons *Appendix 1*, where I found an unidentified quote, on the wall of the old coalmine: *'To forget the past, is to deny the present, which leaves no hope for the future'*. This emphasises my contention that the loss of our industrial past and the impact older industries, have had on past generations cannot be underestimated relative to what communities have become.

Kapoor's work, I found, explored intense emotions evoked by a sense 'void' and 'abyss'. I identified in the previous chapter that themes such as these were explored by artists working with isolated and dilapidated industrial sites as they evoke a sense of emptiness and nothingness. Kapoor's work also encapsulated 'universal

⁸⁴ Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois; Rosalind. "A User's Guide to Entropy." 78, no. Autumn (1996): 38 -88. pg 21

archetypes' often openings or portals, voids, mountains, vessels, trees, fire, and water.⁸⁵

I began to explore in my studio at the woollen mill a similar archetypal image; I reproduced over and over vernacular openings, windows and portals, using ink and paper on the factory floor (*fig14*). Here I began to explore the notion of an industrial art; I wanted to mimic the grime and silt found on the internal chattels. I was interested in Kapoor's fascination with the vessel, as if it were a metaphor for the body containing a soul.⁸⁶ I was stimulated by this and created 35 drawings of a similar sign; this was the beginning of my artistic exploration in the studio at the woollen mill. Similarly the uninhabited factory for me was like a vessel containing the past. From here what followed was a developed body of drawings leading to up to the completion of the final oeuvre *Appendix 111*.

To view Kapoor's 'Melancholia' 2004 was like observing a large scale architectural object, that for me represented a window between the material and the immaterial emphasised by the archetypal use of circle and square and binary opposites.⁸⁷ Through research I found Kapoor's work had previously dealt with the past, present and future described here by Lewison 1990: '*where past and future are gathered...neither movement from nor towards*'. I began to interpret 'Melancholia' in a similar fashion and identified the ambiguity of the in-between; between past and future as another potential binary opposite and archetypal form.⁸⁸

As I began to understand the nature and complexity of Kapoor's work, it became more apparent to me that artists who dealt with universal subject matter such as archetypal signs had, in the midst of absence, emphasised a sense of presence.

⁸⁵ Jeremy Lewison and Gallery Tate, *Anish Kapoor Drawings, Anish Kapoor* (London: 1990). Employs a vocabulary of archetypal images. These include void mountain vessel tree fire and water. Pg 11

⁸⁶ Ibid 17 Openings feature particularly prominently in Kapoor's art as the point of access to the interior and therefore to the unconscious, with which the interior of the body is archetypally identified

⁸⁷ Williams 'The Mind in the Cave' refers to the study of Levi Strauss study into binary opposites of forms e.g circle and square, male and female, light and dark pg55

⁸⁸ Lewison, Jeremy, and Gallery Tate. *Anish Kapoor Drawings, Anish Kapoor*. London, 1990 in A place out of time - According to Jung writing in psychology and alchemy 'Without the experience of opposites there is no experience of wholeness and hence no inner approach to sacred images. Pg 13

Furthermore with my review of all five artists it became evident, that their art was often described in terms of philosophy. Those philosophers included Nietzsche, Bachelard and Baudelaire, which brings me to the conclusion of the project.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

Gilmour (1990) makes reference to Nietzsche's book 'Thus Spoke Zarathustra':

Nietzsche believes the gate of the present draws together the divergent paths of past and future. What this means is that the forms of identity that shape human experience have as much to do with the past as they do with the future.⁸⁹

I introduced the notion at the beginning of this project that whilst progress is inevitable, I question the wisdom of short-term financial gain over the long-term loss of identity. Here Nietzsche demonstrates the importance of past and future and its capacity to form one's identity.

Developers shape our environments; our environments shape our lives and experiences and environments can be captured within architectural structural environments as demonstrated by Whitread. The demolition of the chimneys acted as a symbol of the public and the private and the seen and the unseen, and as a result I began to ponder upon who decides upon the preservation of certain industrial heritage. With a history of erased industrial architecture in Geelong and elsewhere, I feel that community identity has been lost without adequate consultation.

After documenting the demolition of the cement works, I wanted to capture the time and historicity of a preserved industrial site in Geelong. It was here that the formation of a dialogue between two sites, non-functioning and demolished, began. The subject created a basis for contrasting meaning, aesthetics elements and forms.

At the demolition of the Fyansford cement works that I had witnessed, the people who had gathered were there because the stacks represented 'experienced place' and time. It evoked for them memories of a bygone era, a time of change: One man in the crowd said to me that '*as a kid the limestone dust just covered all of the streets*' he went on describe the hot, dry summers and the dust. It for him was a reminder of the past and a

⁸⁹ Gilmour, *Fire on Earth: Anselm Kiefer and the Postmodern World*. p124 Anselm Kiefer's work reflect a similar view.

sign of our times. Furthermore these architectural forms had dominated the landscape for so long, that lived experience of the area was embedded in the site.

With further exploration at the Mill markets I found that experiences make us who we are in a modern society. The built environment shapes our ideas and beliefs. Change occurs on many levels and impacts on us culturally and vernacularly. My objective has been to demonstrate that artists have documented change by seizing the present on many levels with the use of the industrial subject.⁹⁰ The reason for this I believe is that change often marks a point to which real lived experience occurs (between past and future), I found the following statement relevant:

I could tell you how many steps make up the streets rising like stairways, and the degree of arcades' curves, and what kind of zinc scales cover the roofs; but I already know that this would be telling you nothing. The city does not consist of this, but of relationships between the measurements of space and events of its past...Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* ⁹¹

The aftermath of the demolition I witnessed became a metaphor for the loss of past cultures and past lived experiences. It was as if: *I felt that a city without ruin, did not have a past*⁹². Furthermore, as an artist I felt it was my role to document the present, particularly Geelong's industrial history. In my studio at the woollen mill, I could capture a sense of an era erased through the action of making art, and was inspired by industrial architecture of an older generation.

I gained an immense amount of resource from both industrial sites that became the focus of my attention; as I stated at the beginning I wanted to represent the endless artistic possibilities that abandoned or demolished industrial buildings have. I feel as though my art has captured something of each site and has made a meaningful visual and experiential impact on those that have viewed it.

⁹⁰ 'I would usually go to what I saw as the heart of spatial – structural constant that could be called the Hermetic aspect of my work, because it relates to an inner personal gesture, by which the microcosmic self is related to the whole' in Matta-Clark, Gordon, Christian Kravagna, Corinne Diserens, Judith Russi Kirshner, and Thomas E. Crow. "Gordon Matta-Clark." *Gordon Matta-Clark* (2003). Pg21 Matta-Clark, interviewed by wall, "Matter –Clark's Building dissections. Pg 76 and 182 of this book.

⁹¹ Townsend 'When we collide'

⁹² ABC Documentary, *Global Village* 2006

Like Charles Dickens' 'Tale of Two Cities' this was the exploration of two sites and within them I found contrast and aesthetic ambiguities. My experience was like the experience illustrated at the beginning of the famous novel "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness." ⁹³

This journey has also been an exploration of space, space I believe encapsulates time and time for me is lived experience⁹⁴ I found two of the following points relevant '*In its countless alveoli space contains compressed time. That is what time is for*' *Bachalard* ⁹⁵, I found many traces of the past in the old woollen mill, names and dates such as *Ray Fedley 1954 (Appendix 1)* were inscribed in chalk on the banisters of the underground cellar and preserved in time by the stillness of air found in the cavernous space.

These interiors were dark and eerie and it made one think not only about lost industries and architecture, but also what advances new technologies would have on our future. We arguably only have a small 'window of opportunity' to act before its impact will be far greater than imaginable. ⁹⁶ I found in dilapidated non-functioning factories a window to the past and future.

The spaces and sites were transient and emulated time. Above all my methods and philosophies were drawn together by the processes I adopted and the concepts I explored. I hope that some industries of an older generation are preserved for future generations to enjoy and artists who are willing to confront the unavoidable element of darkness to explore. Because in such beautifully and architecturally designed spaces real lived experience can be felt, and our built environment can have a sense of history.

I would like to conclude this project's work with the following excerpt:

⁹³ Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*. Penguin. London. 1970

⁹⁴ "...but those materializations seemed to speak not of the personal, but of a collective, lived, historical experience." And 'The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space' in 'Of Other Spaces' Michel Foucault

⁹⁵ Gilmour, John. C. *Fire on Earth: Anselm Kiefer and the Postmodern World*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990. Pg 5

⁹⁶ ABC Radio National 29th of October in relation to the new 'Global Warning' Stern Report.

*And so each venture
Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate
With shabby material always deteriorating
In the general mess of imprecision of feeling,
Undisciplined squads of emotion. And what there is to conquer
By strength and submission, has already been discovered
Once or twice, or several times by one cannot hope
To emulate – but there is know competition –
There is only the fight to recover what has been lost
And found and lost again and again: and now, under conditions
That seem unpropitious. But perhaps neither gain nor loss.
For us, there is only trying. The rest is not our business. TS ELIOT⁹⁷*

⁹⁷ Kapoor, Anish, Pier Luigi Tazzi, Homi K. Bhabha, and Gallery Hayward. "Anish Kapoor." *Anish Kapoor* (1998). TS Eliot *Four Quarters* page24

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APPENDIX 1

The following appendix consists of additional photographs and artworks completed in support of the exegesis.

Further Illustrations 1

1. Kelly McNiece 2004 Pre –demolition Cement Works, Photograph, the artist ©
2. Kelly McNiece 2004 Pre- demolition Cement works, Photograph, the artist ©
3. Kelly McNiece 2004 Shell, Photograph, the artist ©
4. Kelly McNiece 2004 International Harvester, Photograph, the artist ©
5. Kelly McNiece 2004 Former Meat Works, Photograph, the artist ©
6. Kelly McNiece 2004 Old Coal Mine Mons Belgium Photograph, the artist ©
7. Kelly McNiece 2004 Grand Hornu Industrial Complex, Belgium Photograph, the artist ©
8. Kelly McNiece 2005 The Woollen Mills, Photograph, the artist ©
9. Kelly McNiece 2005 Studio Interior and Window Photograph, the artist ©
10. Kelly McNiece 2005 Underground Woollen Mill Photograph, the artist ©

Further Illustrations 11

Selected Images

1. Kelly Mc Niece 2004 Deconstruction Series–x, Cibachrome Photographs, the artist ©

Selected Images

2. Kelly McNiece 2004 Deconstruction Series–y, Black and White Photographs, the artist ©
3. Kelly McNiece 2005 Studio Drawings, Charcoal on Paper, the artist ©
4. Kelly McNiece 2005 Architectural concept drawings, the artist ©

Further Illustrations 111

1. Kelly McNiece 2006 ‘Ancient Lights’, Pastel on Paper, the artist ©
2. Kelly McNiece 2006, The Geelong Gallery – Simulacra.

