Bimblebox:

art-science-nature
Bimblebox: art - science - nature is a touring exhibition partnered by Museum and Gallery Services Queensland and Redland Art Gallery in association with Bimblebox Nature Refuge. Assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body, the Gordon Darling Foundation and proudly sponsored by Artfully, Tangible Media, Planet Boab, Wotif.com, Platypus Graphics, artisan and At A Glance.
Redland Art Gallery welcomes the opportunity to partner with Museum and Gallery Services Queensland in association with Bimblebox Nature Refuge on **Bimblebox:art-science-nature**, a touring exhibition about the Refuge, its environmental, social and scientific significance, and an artist group’s creative response to their experience of this unique and threatened environment. Part of the Galilee Basin, this protected area in Central Queensland is earmarked for potential open-cut coal mining and future resource development.

This contemporary art project addresses one of most pressing issues for our generation: continued global development in a world of shrinking natural heritage, biodiversity and resources. Each of the artists invited to work on the exhibition, responded in different ways to sensitively document, record and interpret Bimblebox, its resource-rich habitat, endangered native species and pending future.

Redland Art Gallery is committed to enriching the lives of residents and visitors with the ideas of visual artists, craftspeople and designers through exhibitions that explore issues affecting the Redlands and its people, both directly and more broadly. **Bimblebox:art-science-nature** is an artist residency project that brings an artist’s voice and vision to an otherwise scientific debate, with participants exploring the Nature Refuge, its past and potential mining future at multiple levels.

Engaging with difficult, potentially contentious topics is not new for artists. While painters, sculptors and artisans historically have incorporated mined or metallurgical products into their material practice, only more recently have artists chosen to engage with the processes and effects of mining at a more critical level. In 19th century Realism it was, more often than not, driven by a social welfare concern for impoverished miners and the effects of the industry on their health and families. Today, the artist’s focus has shifted from the effects on the individual to global concerns for the environment and the earth as a whole, including but not limited to the human species.

Through projects such as **Bimblebox:art-science-nature**, artists at least can highlight the issues and the possibility of more sustainable development, with a commitment to environmental protection, the regeneration of ecosystems and preserving the natural heritage of regional Australia. At the same time it provides a pause to reflect on the growing consumption of non-renewable energy sources, the fragility of our planet, and the need to redress the imbalance by reducing carbon emissions and investing in the development of alternative, renewable energy options.

The project partners would like to acknowledge project coordinator and contributing artist, Jill Sampson, a tireless advocate for the Bimblebox Nature Refuge, and curator, Beth Jackson of Artfully, whose research and knowledge expanded the field of artists, bringing further intellectual rigour to the project. **Bimblebox:art-science-nature** has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body, the Gordon Darling Foundation and proudly sponsored by Artfully, Tangible Media, Planet Boab, Wotif.com, Platypus Graphics, Artisan and At a Glance.

**Stephanie Lindquist**
DIRECTOR, REDLAND ART GALLERY
BIMBLEBOX is a name set to resound around Australia. That's because the Bimblebox Nature Refuge in central Queensland's Galilee Basin, which represents the natural heart and soul of our nation, is threatened with disintegration into one of the world's biggest coal mines!

In this exhibition, organised by Jill Sampson and curated by Beth Jackson, that living heart and soul, and the imminent threat of its death, is brought to town through the brilliant work of artists in a range of media which echoes the diversity of Bimblebox itself.

Over a decade ago, a small group of committed families secured Bimblebox from land clearing and were given state and federal government guarantees that their 8,000 hectares of woodlands, harbouring a dazzling array of native flora and fauna, would be protected in perpetuity.

Neither they nor anyone else could have dreamed that a coal mine project called ‘China First’ was coming to wreck it. After all, Bimblebox, in the transition from Australia's moist coastal country to its arid desert lands, is a beautiful cameo of the Australia that occupies so much of our imagination, our folklore and our pride in place. If we, as a nation, can't keep Bimblebox, we can't keep anything.

This exhibition echoes Bimblebox’s plight: it is a ‘cri de coeur’ but also a call to action. Our response to the artists’ work here at the Redland Art Gallery, and as it moves beyond, will help determine whether Bimblebox survives the immediate threat of the giant coal shovels. If it does, it will survive forever.

Bob Brown
FORMER SENATOR AND LEADER OF THE GREENS
The Bimblebox Art Project grew out of my concern that much of Australia is being claimed for mineral and gas extraction regardless of ecological value, future food and water, and human health. From this grew the idea to bring artists onto the Bimblebox Nature Refuge to creatively document this endangered environment.

There have been two artist residencies on Bimblebox and both have been supported by many wonderful people including part owner Paola Cassoni. This support kept everything ticking along to allow the artists to explore, document and make various ‘studies’ of the surrounding environment. The rural skills and ingenuity of caretakers Ian and Karl Hoch with Sonya Duus provided a very beautiful bush campsite adjacent to a large area of flowering shrubs called the heathlands.

There is an inherent risk when one visits Bimblebox, it is a risk of the heart and the mind. To stand, breathe, walk and listen in this place is to fall under its spell. The light, the sounds, the smell of the bush, all enter your heart and mind, which reel in disbelief when you consider how anyone would want to destroy it. I cannot imagine it destroyed, nor can I bear the death toll this destruction will create.

It was easy to love Bimblebox in 2012. Three years of wet seasons gave it the gloss of life in abundance. Its vegetation and floral cloaks infused with energy, busy with insects and birds, the bush exploding with colourful and vibrant flowers. Yet in 2013, with drought and hot dry winds, I watched again as Bimblebox claimed the hearts of another group of people. While I expected short and bare vegetation coverage I was surprised at the abundance of life we witnessed. There were fewer flowers, but the land was still clothed in tall grasses of golden and russet hues and abundant wildlife.

As well as the two artist camps, this project has generated two exhibitions, while a third, Bimblebox 153 Birds, is in development. Document:// Bimblebox was shown at Sawtooth Gallery, Launceston, Tasmania in April 2013, while this exhibition, Bimblebox:art-science-nature, will tour nationally after its launch at Redland Art Gallery.

To be connected to a place and an environment is to begin to care for it and to look out for its future. We must know a place before we decide if it is to live or to die. Those of us who know Bimblebox understand that it should go on living long into the future.

Jill Sampson
PROJECT COORDINATOR
Bimblebox is a Nature Refuge – 8000 hectares of Desert Uplands country in central western Queensland that has, for the most part, never been cleared. It is a quintessential Australian landscape, semi arid and dominated by eucalypt trees and spinifex grasses. It holds enormous value for future generations through its biodiversity and ongoing scientific value. That is, for our ongoing sustenance and education.

But what do ‘we’ mean by the term ‘our’? Within the artistic responses to place it should indeed be possible to perceive the memory traces of landscape, echoes of Bimblebox and the ‘already theirs’ of the natural world, the choreography and concert of its ecology – sounds, images and movements of wind, water and fire, animals, birds and insects ... sensation-perceptions from under the breath becoming art. The artworks then are not so much ‘about’ Bimblebox as they are ‘of’ Bimblebox, the artist voice / the artwork expression emanating from and becoming part of a chorus of place.

Artworks are also signs proper, at once representational and abstract, and in some ways a higher order language than the functional discourses of science, industry and education. This is due to the open-ended nature of art, its inclusive ambiguity that engenders reflection and multifaceted interpretation. At this level, art can work to reveal not only patterns of connection but also lines of conflict, contradiction and tension. The artist suspends final analysis and judgment, but offers a type of ‘evidence’ for the viewer’s deciphering, arranging signs as a pastiche or bricolage. Viewing artwork is an invitation to enter into a dialogue, to become implicated in its field of thought-perception.

Communication, as an active process, carries within it a living evolution, and art (as force rather than form) can drive shifts in social values. How can our society better value and protect natural environments, ecological assets, biodiversity? Perhaps central to such a problem and such a challenge is the foundational ability to hear ‘theirs’ within ‘ours’.

From within the artworks of Bimblebox it may be possible to perceive emergent meanings, the alignment of new values, a changed order of signs. In gathering together this story of place, its phenomenal records, scientific and ecological findings, arranged amongst artistic responses in an exhibition, we invite others into an environment and an embrace – to find their own path, to reflect, respond, reply ... to remember and retell.

The exhibition is an invitation for involvement. Viewing is an active part of an ongoing process to learn ‘from’ Bimblebox not ‘about’ it, to better comprehend what it is we have saved or have lost and how to take responsibility for that future. The courage and solace will lie under our breath in the ever-present murmur of ‘theirs’ within ‘ours’.

Beth Jackson
CURATOR
Alison Clouston and Boyd investigate our relationship to nature through sculpture, original soundtrack, performance, drawing, carbon audit and offset, film and photography. Boyd, a graduate of Sydney Conservatorium, is active in Sydney’s music scene. Alison, MFA CoFA UNSW, is represented in National and Regional collections in Australia and NZ.

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On Bimblebox, we stalked the bush looking for life, spying with binoculars and a small movement sensor camera, as field biologists do. We made a short film. Boyd played the old stockyard gates. Alison made a protective roll-cage for a nest and it became a skull, suggesting mindfulness. From these emerged the performance/protest bodywork Coalface. Its eye sockets run images of birds at home and birds as displaced fringe dwellers of the Anthropocene (this human-dominated Era of Earth’s history). Its coal-ship-shoes demonstrate in performance the utter, foolhardy clumsiness of navigating coal out through the Great Barrier Reef. From this work, we developed Carbon Dating, remembering again the interconnectedness of all species, from our common roots in the primordial swamps of the Carboniferous Era, through the evolutionary dance of carbon-based life.

We encourage carbon audit and offset for all our human works. And we invite visitors to interact with these original soundtracks by playing the red buttons.
Dr. Pamela CroftWarcon, Howard Butler and Kaylene Butler are creative practitioners and collaborators with proud Indigenous cultural heritage. Pamela is a senior visual artist, teacher and mentor. Howard is an artist and craftsperson with traditional cultural knowledge. Kaylene works in the film industry and currently runs her own consultancy practice Kima.

The 8000 hectare Bimblebox Nature Refuge site is within the Jagalingou Country. Our collaborative installation artwork includes a number of conceptual layers. The first is to acknowledge Jagalingou Country and the Wiri people of Central Queensland as the first inhabitants of this particular area. In the Dreamtime, the Rainbow Serpent and Mother Earth made tracks that criss-crossed the Country where rituals were performed to create land and life forms.

The clear resin floor mat includes Bimblebox tree leaves and Mudda-gutta the Rainbow Serpent. Embedding these objects is a form of remembrance. The artificial grass and the coolamon are meant to act as ‘stop and reflect’ symbols. Our natural environments are rapidly changing into artificial environments as the Western dominant culture continues to place economic importance above all else. The coolamon, used by Aboriginal women to carry gathered foods, remains empty as a reminder that this could be the inheritance we leave to our future generations.
As an artist I am intrigued with the idea of connection, and how links are formed through our relationship within both natural and social realms. In my work I create sites of ecological observation to challenge our discourses by providing new ways of ‘seeing’ and creating new ‘connections’ in the mind of the viewer.

REsearch examines the tension between resource mining, conservation and consumption, reflecting on the need to discover new ways to fuel our power hungry world. The industrial revolution fuelled a demand for coal consumption, a trend that has continued into the 21st century. Currently, humankind is consuming resources at an unsustainable rate. With increased population and diminishing resources our planet is beginning to show signs of pressure, resulting in global warming and climate change.

This work depicts scientific research as a vehicle to discover new ‘green’ technologies to replace resource mining in order that native flora and fauna, such as those found at the Bimblebox Nature Refuge, are preserved as a living ecosystem in situ rather than as historic specimens in jars. By simultaneously evoking notions of past, present and future, this work invites the viewer to consider the role that ‘research’ has and will continue to have in writing our ecological future.
Emma Lindsay has been a finalist in several art awards. Her paintings, featured in the Studio TV Artbreak documentary series, are held in public and private collections in Australia and overseas. She has undertaken residencies at the Baer Art Centre in Iceland and the Bathurst Regional Art Gallery Hill End Residency.

My current PhD project Visualising Extinction is an investigation into the representation of endangered and extinct Australian birds, focusing on natural history bird specimens and the museum as a constructed site and artificial landscape of extinction. The fight to save the Bimblebox Nature Refuge is a metaphor for the global fight to save all non-human species from unlimited human economic and resource exploitation in all remaining habitats and environments that support wild and endangered species.

This work bears witness to the promises regarding agreed government protections for the Bimblebox Nature Refuge, a habitat helping ensure the continued survival of species like the endangered black-throated finch. This work bears witness to the voiceless endangered black-throated finch, to the existence of the Bimblebox Nature Refuge and to the ordinary Australian people who are fighting so hard to save it from destruction.
Fiona MacDonald (born in Rockhampton) is known for her bodies of work that draw on local cultural traditions, social and natural history. Neglected local history archives are often sources for her work. Her installations take the form of ‘conversations’ about undercurrents in social processes of inclusion and exclusion.

Mining Galilee renders the residue of history in the Galilee Basin through the use of historic photographs and digital drawing. The circumstances of the threat of destruction that face the Bimblebox Nature Refuge can be seen as a microcosm of the crisis of climate change that confronts contemporary lives globally, throwing into stark contrast the tragedy of the European presence compared with millennia of Aboriginal occupation of the same space.

My concern for the environment is indivisible from my concern for future generations. We are living through the most peaceful and comfortable period in the history of humanity but our failure to protect the environment is threatening future security. Australia is dependent on the digging and selling of mineral resources, this brings wealth and stability to our community but a flip side is climate change and unsustainable levels of production and waste at the expense of the future stability.
Liz Mahood grew up in Central Queensland and is passionate about building bridges of understanding between suburban and rural peoples. She has work hanging in private homes in Queensland, New South Wales and Western Australia and has contributed illustrations to several published books.

Through my work I seek to challenge the beliefs that influence our perceptions, thoughts and actions. I aim to bring attention to that which is subtle and intangible, to recognise and explore beyond the labels we easily attach to that which we can see. ‘A bird’ is far more than an illustration in a reference book. It is breath ... in and out, it is flight, an insect catcher, a builder of nests, a singer of songs, a carrier of messages ... it is feathers, warmth and a beating heart.

My work is concerned with the not so visible and the unrealised value and importance of all that happens that we do not see. I invite the viewer to look at my work without employing words to describe or analyse ... to spend a moment just being in the moment. Nature knows no words. Nature just is.
Based in Hobart, Samara McIlroy has studied science, sculpture, photography and painting. Samara’s practice is not medium-specific, utilising photography, drawing, sculptural installation, data, text, performance and digital media. Her work involves initiating site-specific and public interventions around human interconnectedness and dialogue. She has exhibited in artist-run spaces and public galleries.

Collecting media coverage of the controversy surrounding Waratah Coal’s mining proposal formed part of my research for this work. Mainstream media presents Bimblebox Nature Refuge as either a site of exploitation or a threatened landscape. Multiplicities of viewpoints are not possible. In this simplified mediascape, the complexity of the ecosystem and the myriad lifeforms within its borders cannot be represented.

This artwork consists of short slogans projected (via tiny digital screens) on to the retina through magnified viewfinders. Each text represents one side of the conflict. On the left, a snippet lifted from election advertising, and on the right, the (translated) sounds from the beak of the endangered black-throated finch \((Poephila cincta cincta)\). The images, viewed separately through each eye, are joined together in the brain. Viewed this way, the texts transform into an interspecies dialogue.
Glenda Orr’s love of nature led to careers as research biologist, natural resource policy analyst and finally, artist. Since graduating with First Class Honours in Fine Art (printmaking major), she has tutored in art theory at Griffith University, shown widely nationally and internationally, and won several art prizes.

The Bimblebox Sky Map series evolved from a lasting memory of looking up at the beautiful textures, tones and patterns that the overlapping branches of a stand of dead trees formed against the evening sky. Often ‘dead’ is considered as obsolete, but in the woodland dead trees not only have a stark beauty, they also have an important function as habitat for hollow dwelling animals, perches for birds and a food for microorganisms and termites.

Orr spent much time collecting tree sap and experimenting with dissolving, dripping and drawing with it, finally finding it ideal to tonally render highlights and shadows of the dead tree patterns created at sunset. The blind embossed underlay, based on the exponential-scale log graph paper, forms a confining grid for the dabs of sap paint – both a visual and metaphorical unnatural straight line fragmentation of the natural world portrayed.
I am preoccupied with the declining health of our planet and feel that the Holocene extinction is already well underway. I live in the bush with Sarah and a bunch of wallabies. My work combines the primitive rawness of charcoal with the sophistication of oil paint glazes.

Artists have a long history of bringing environmental issues to the attention of the public. In this tradition, I welcomed the opportunity to join with a disparate group of artists and document my impressions of Bimblebox.

I tried to depict as many different aspects of the property as I could find in such a short visit – bushland, working property, artists’ camp, clear night skies and the people that care for it.

A tiny diverse oasis amidst a barren monoculture.
I am an artist and tutor of drawing and printmaking. The art making process I use is in response to the physical sites I have worked on in areas of the Great Artesian Basin of Eastern Australia. My interest is in the geography and connections of groundwater and ephemeral water systems.

At the Bimblebox Nature Refuge in the Galilee Basin in Central Queensland, I suspended two tarpaulins, one made from sheets of hosho paper, the other from tyvek over ‘demarcated’ areas of shrubby heathlands, spinifex communities, pockets of yellow jacket trees and grasses. This canopied gesture symbolised the protection or isolation of these ecosystems and the histories they represent.

Both in literal and metaphysical terms, the terrain of the earth is a floor for human and geological activity, but also a ceiling for Australia’s artesian basins. This layer is always shifting and in constant flux, particularly now with human forces accelerating these changes.

Natural and constructed artefacts in the landscape are used within my practice to focus on these interventions. They are implemented as mediums, formats and tools to convey the connectivity of land and water systems and reference the wider cataclysmic implications for the Galilee Basin.
Luke was the Australian Fellow at PS1 MoMA, New York (1996-97), and the Australian Scholar at the British School at Rome (2012). His history includes being an Australian representative in the 2nd Asia-Pacific Triennial (1996) and the Biennale of Sydney (2002).

All Souls’ Day is the day after All Saints’ Day, following Halloween. As a Catholic child I spent that day rescuing souls from the torments of Purgatory via prayers of intercession.

All Souls Day (Tree) was photographed in the Lake Galilee area where I grew up. The ghosts of the past and landscape and our ever-shifting relationship with the land are here in this work. Trees represent Knowledge and Paradise in Western Art, and also our fall from grace and our striving to regain what has been lost.

This work is part of the AlphaStation/Alphaville project, which explores many of the issues of my life and youth and the social and religious experiences that shaped me. It documents a point in time haunted by the past and imagining the future. It speaks of dreams and nightmares and what may also be there hidden within everyday realities.
Jill takes her inspiration from the natural environment, history, research and her concern for the future. Stories are integral to Jill's work and life. She loves to explore the existing layers of the Australian landscape to reveal the stories of the past.

These blankets that create the skin or surface of this piece had been discarded. Their history is unknown. However each blanket started out as wool on an Australian sheep in a time when we valued Australian agriculture and manufacture.

I have taken these blankets back out to the bush and imprinted Bimblebox into them. I have stitched and mended these threadbare blankets into another skin, an ancient cloak, a landscape. While the grass figures are messengers, strange birds or whirlies. They are our conscience, our biological and cultural memory.

This is my attempt to mend and heal the land we have changed and continue to change. Bimblebox would still be recognisable to the First Australians, however coal mining wants to rip away the skin of this land, take its memory and destroy its future. If this skin is ripped away nothing can live here.
The Hunter Bro’s aka Gerald Soworka

Conceptually my work is about ways of being in the world and what it is to be human. My artistic practice is predicated on drawing, not just as a practice but as a psychological and philosophical imperative to see the world as it really is. Not as it should or could be, but what is really there in front of us. This is not intrinsic to humans, and for most of us must be learned. This is the true and profound benefit of learning to draw and drawing the world.

Bimblebox Nature Refuge and the attendant environmental challenges establish a graphic study in the conflicting ways that humans stand on the land or inhabit the environment.

This set of two artist books explores my impression of an interface with these conflicting attitudes. The work is basically a before and after (coal mining) impression of these conflicting attitudes. The first book records Bimblebox at the moment of the initial transgressions of the miners as we experienced it. The second, black book, is a more subjective rage at the bleakness and hollowness of the rapacious, utilitarian, dig-it-up-at-any-cost attitude that underscores current policy and hangs heavy over the Nature Refuge.
I look at the substance and appearance of things and at the interval of desire it produces; the interval between what is visible and what we want to see. This concentration of tension exists in the process of seeing what is becoming and receding.

‘Seeing is forgetting the name of the thing one sees’ is the title to Lawrence Weschler’s biography of Robert Irwin and is also quoted by the photographer Uta Barth. This Zen proverb has been used time and again to describe the process of seeing. To articulate the desire to see what is before us.

Landscape Reconfigured is a photographic series that looks at the multiple perspectives created with the use of mirrors in the pictorial plane. The mirrors break up the primary view or focal point in the frame and reflect the reverse or what normally would not be seen, changing the elements that make up a landscape.
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For information on how to download our digital catalogue go to www.bimbleboxexhibition.com.

The digital catalogue is an interactive exploration of the exhibition, Bimblebox: art-science-nature. It contains interactive multimedia content including curatorial visits to artists’ studios, artist camps at Bimblebox Nature Refuge and additional essays providing you with further understanding of Bimblebox and the impending threat to its habitat and future farming practices.