

Resurrection series - etchings 2012

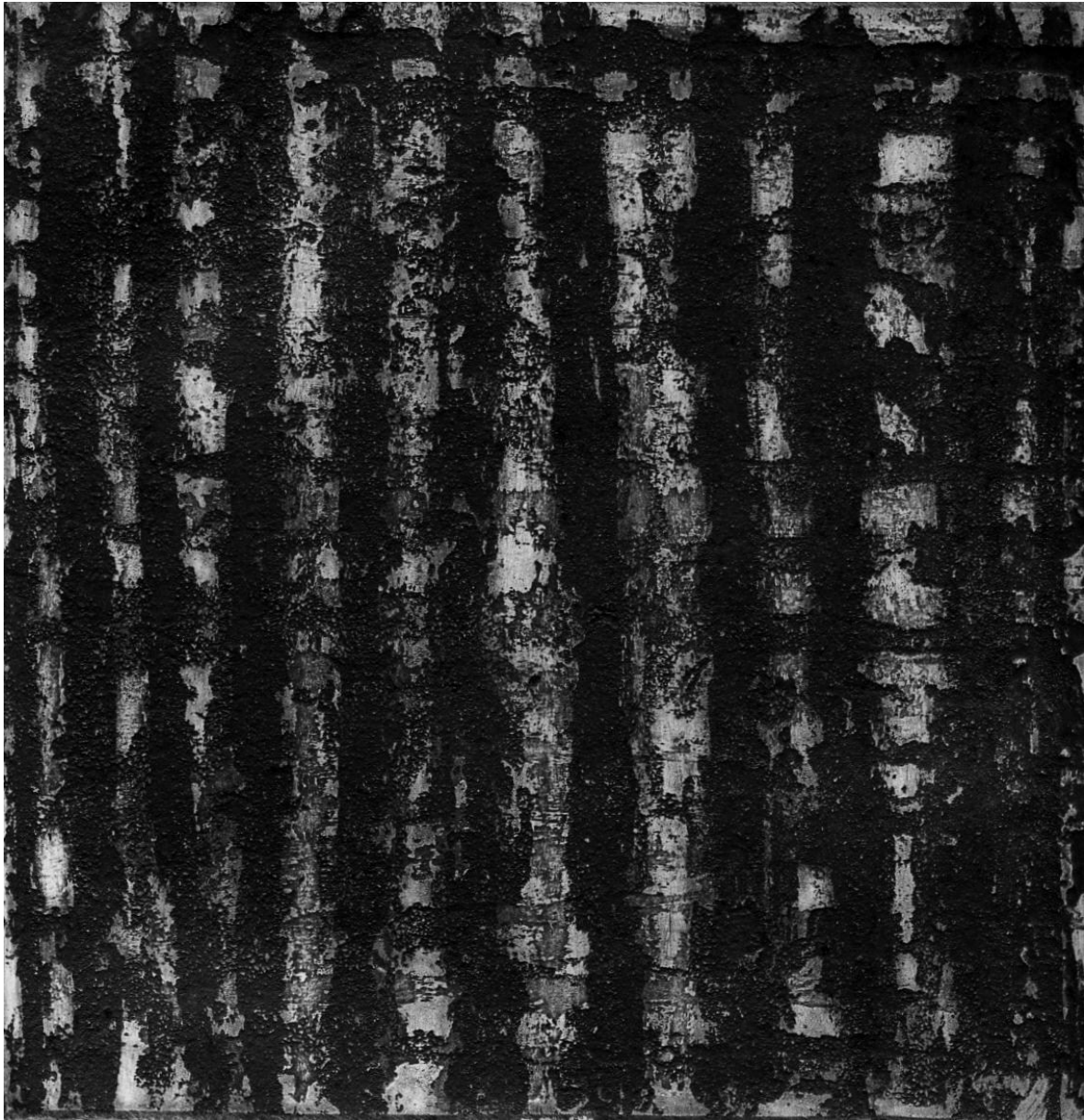
'I do not etch the plate I erode it...'

Initially inspired by William de Kooning's 'black and white paintings' with their striking tonal contrasts this series of etchings produced in early 2012 are now more so identified with 'resurrection' as many of them were made from old zinc plates that had been put to one side by the artist. Over many years the plates had been gathering dust and dirt being part of a pile of failed or not very successful attempts at etching; their surfaces already 'sculpted' with grooves to print other images which often did not hold the artist's attention. Creativity involves much exploration and often leads to experimental ends with the knowledge gained in the process applied at a later time to conjure a more resolved, finished image. Many of the zinc plates had to be sanded back creating unexpected textures which intrigued the artist and which were often outside of his direct control. With new layers of aquatint as well as much time in burnishing the plates the paradox occurred that by such 'weathering' of these 'eroded' surfaces the plates were revived to form new, fresh images. Although some of the works are pure abstractions they are included in this overall collection dealing with the Australian landscape as the rough-hewn textures remind the artist so much of the grainy, pocketed surfaces of this ancient continent's rock. There are twelve images in this series produced intermittently over a period from late March to early May; four of the smaller works are from fresh plates but the thought for these prints were somewhat generated by the other eight 'regenerated' images which preceded them. The muse then departed and the artist awaits a return as there are many other old etching plates that can be brought back to life as well as a plethora of new ideas, concepts and insights in his mind that could be materialised in the future on new plates as well.



'Fabric of the Universe.' 8" X 8". B&W. aquatint. sugarlift. zinc plate.

This plate along with the following two were first roughly covered with two cross hatch rows of sugartint which would then emerge through the thin layer of hard ground that would cover it to reveal bare zinc that would be covered with rosin and exposed to nitric acid to make a black impression: one row of vertical lines going across the plate and another row of horizontal lines going down the plate. A somewhat primal attempt to express the 'cosmic mesh' as well as make some reference to the stellar currents that oscillate through the universe as echoes to the original creation explosion. Eventually after repeated reworking of the plate there is only an intimation of the original crosshatching as the rocklike texture attempts to capture the essential binding fabric of the universe which both shapes reality into a coherent body as well as allow it to be fluid at the same time: to flow and be firm simultaneously. I understand how the universe can be perceived as a river.



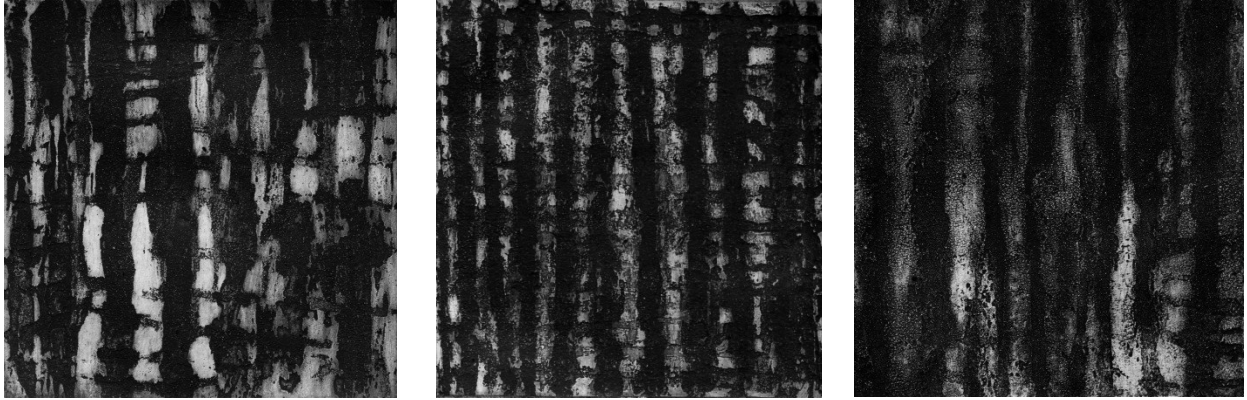
'Black Poles'. 8" X 8". B&W. aquatint. sugarlift. zinc plate

The title is in reference to Jackson Pollock's *Blue Poles*. Pollock was an artist whose large canvases visually epitomised the underlying co-ordinated structure of the universe. The artist would often be annoyed that viewers saw a pre-eminence of chaos in his work as he himself desired to comprehend the beautiful order of nature. I do likewise. I also venture to suggest the idea that the 'poles' are each like the axis of the Earth whose magnetic properties allow gravity to occur which in turn allows an atmosphere and therefore also allows life to occur. Perhaps, the overall gravity of the universe is underpinned by cosmic 'magnetic poles' to allow it and its creative forces to fully throb.



'Resurrection'. 8" X 8". B&W. aquatint. sugarlift. zinc plate

In my first attempt to rework the plate the patterned image was rather flat and lifeless and so I came up with the idea of covering the whole plate with aquatint to make it all black. As if working on a mezzotint I then burnished the plate to revitalise it and give it life leaving the various degrees of lighter areas to produce a mysterious quality. Light emerging from darkness to overcome it: as it was Easter I was immediately drawn to the parallel of the Resurrection thus the title. To make an afterthought remark the contrasting tonal shades in an abstract way hark all the way back to the dramatic spirituality of Caravaggio's *chiaroscuro* which pleases me.



These three images form a triptych loosely based on the overarching idea of the first image in this series looking at the notion of the very material substance of the universe. It is as if a microscope has been able to zoom in to the very crevices and cracks that have resulted over time as the basic molecular structure of the cosmos ‘ages’ with the passing of so many billions of years. Yet, despite such stellar erosion the universe maintains a tight order and rhythm that allows it to exist as a single entity which will not suddenly dissipate and shred into a trillion parts. Within this organic structure there seems to be always ever new forms of existence birthing into material form and within this mystery called the cosmos is the even more extraordinary mystery called life.

In nature regular patterns such as those known as fractals can be discerned to give credence to the notion that there is an underlying organised order to creation. In the case of Platonism natural regular forms are mere attempts at imitating the ethereal ‘Absolute Forms’ from which visible reality corresponds too. What at first sight appears chaotic and random in natural phenomenon is actually the playing out of natural forces that work at shaping Nature as if doing it in a conscious way. Unless I am mistaken it is possible to design mathematical models to even predict what such natural energies can do and to comprehend what they have done. The universe has the equal contributions of the ‘randomness’ of quantum theory and the ‘predictability’ of the theory of relativity mysteriously working upon it in an intertwine way by which humanity is yet to understand and which is equally a micro as well as cosmic ir/regular process that leads the artist, musician, philosopher, architect, mathematician, scientist, astronomer as well as the theologian to consider worthy to explore. Nature is a mystery. The human soul is a mystery. A relationship between the two entities seems to exist and as for myself one is motivated to at least attempt in an artistic way to consider its ultimate significance – so as to more fully perceive what it means to be human, yes to be fully human as finite physical beings in an infinite universe which allows us to also be ‘infinite’ through the human imagination as soulfully reflective of nature’s earthly and cosmic dimensions.



'Cosmic Tracers.'

9.5" X 7". B&W. aquatint. sugarlift. zinc plate

This image was initiated on Anzac Day and thus these bands can be viewed as giant rhythmic columns of white laser light which, like tracer bullets, mark out the furious celestial forces of the initial creative explosion as they continually shoot outwards in this ever expanding universe. On a more 'earthly level' I had a friend comment to me that this image reminded her of the birch trees that can be found in the forests of Lithuania and Russia.



sepia version



'Reed Universe.' 11" X 8". sepia. aquatint. sugarlift. zinc plate.

This image harks back to an earlier much smaller print of reeds based on a Cooks River mangrove. However, the first impulse for this print was to consider the cosmic pulses that infiltrate that much grander 'river' which we call the Universe. Whether one wants to focus on river reeds or streaks of celestial light I find there is a sense of peace about this image; a certain stillness that allows one's mind to meditate on life and on creation.



black & white version



'Galaxies Swirling Towards a Black Hole.'

Middle Head. Sydney Harbour.

8" X 6". B&W. aquatint. sugarlift. zinc plate.

I noticed this white speckled pattern on some rocks around a black hole and I envisaged them as swirling galaxies caught up in the gravitational pull of a black hole that would suck them into nothingness. Is not death itself a black hole? After all, our bodies are pulled by the gravitational forces of time and space to finally 'arrive' through the biological process of ageing at an endpoint...with a horizon event line which we will cross...which 'swallows' us where time and space no longer exist just like in a cosmological black hole...the physical reflecting the spiritual ...one can also think of at birth of leaving the womb...while death is like leaving this 'womb' called Earth...to end up in a new mysterious endless dimension...



Rock with hole . Middle Harbour. Sydney.



'Shell Nebula.' Gordons Bay. 9.5" X 7". B&W. aquatint. sugarlift. zinc plate.

A nebula is gaseous and results after the death of a galaxy. However, I envisage it as a hard shell and this conception results from my understanding that Georgia O'Keefe saw shells as typifying eternity due to their long lasting hardness. (In turn flowers were seen by her as expressing the fragility and mortality of life seeing their very beauty was transient). A nebula will pass away but compared to the miniscule life span of an individual – or even of the whole human race – this glowing cosmic cloud exists for an eternity. Thus the duality of the thought of something ephemeral as hard and stable resides comfortably in my mind without any semblance of inward conflict with this metaphysical contradiction: 'reality' is sometimes more applicably suited to exist within the mental realm.



sepia version



'Dark Matter Nebula.' 6" X 4". sepia. aquatint. sugarlift. zinc plate

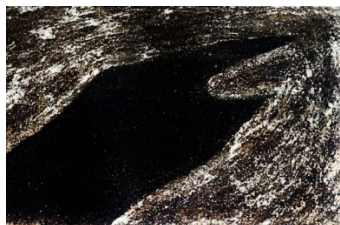
The art of Jasper Johns is noted for challenging the viewer's perception of reality such as diffusing the reality between 'high art' and the 'everyday object' which echoes the Duchampian concept of the readymade; yet what interests me more so about the art of this intriguing American artist is a far deeper philosophical questioning of trusting our physical senses to perceive what is physically 'actual' or real through his disorienting/decontextualising use of everyday subject matter to make the eye 'work' at trying to 'realise' what exactly it is looking at for there is an ambiguity to his paintings and prints which leads the viewer to uncomfortably realise all is not what it seems; his art echoes Magritte (who Jasper Johns admires) to some extent but I feel there is a clarity to Magritte's visual manipulations which can be eventually sorted but not so in a ready way with Jasper Johns. Yet, what Jasper Johns aims for is to extend the viewer's mind beyond what is 'real' - that is: the usual illusionary trickery of perspective which is the standard bearer of much that is considered as normal art practice since the time of the Renaissance. However, perspective is actually a 'mirage on the eyes' making the viewer believe in a three dimensional representative space which does not really exist; which in reality is actually impossible to exist on the two dimensional 'window' plane of the canvas. Modern physics with - for example - the formulation of quantum physics, comes into play for we now know that what appears stable to us in the physical world is merely different combinations of buzzing particles that create in contradictory ways different aspects of matter from gas plumes to liquids to so called 'solid' steel. Perspective merely deceives the eye to convince the brain that what is being viewed is as real as the 'real world.' Yet neither the scene painted or the actual scene that is being copied by the artist can be viewed as being what they truly are. Our five senses more or less convince us that what is around us is real in much the same way that

Renaissance perspective convinces us what we see on the picture plane is real; yet we are learning that our five senses are merely filtering to us a 'reality' that our minds can cope with as other aspects of reality such as the multi-dimensional reality of a microscopic quantum universe - which helps to create what we see - is held back from our daily conscious perception of everyday matter. Perhaps, just as well, for it is a micro-universe difficult for us to conceptually comprehend. However, if human consciousness is to reach full fruition - so as to reach a fuller humanness - what Jasper Johns confronts our senses with in his art - that disrupts our present conditioned way of looking at the world - is to be very welcomed.

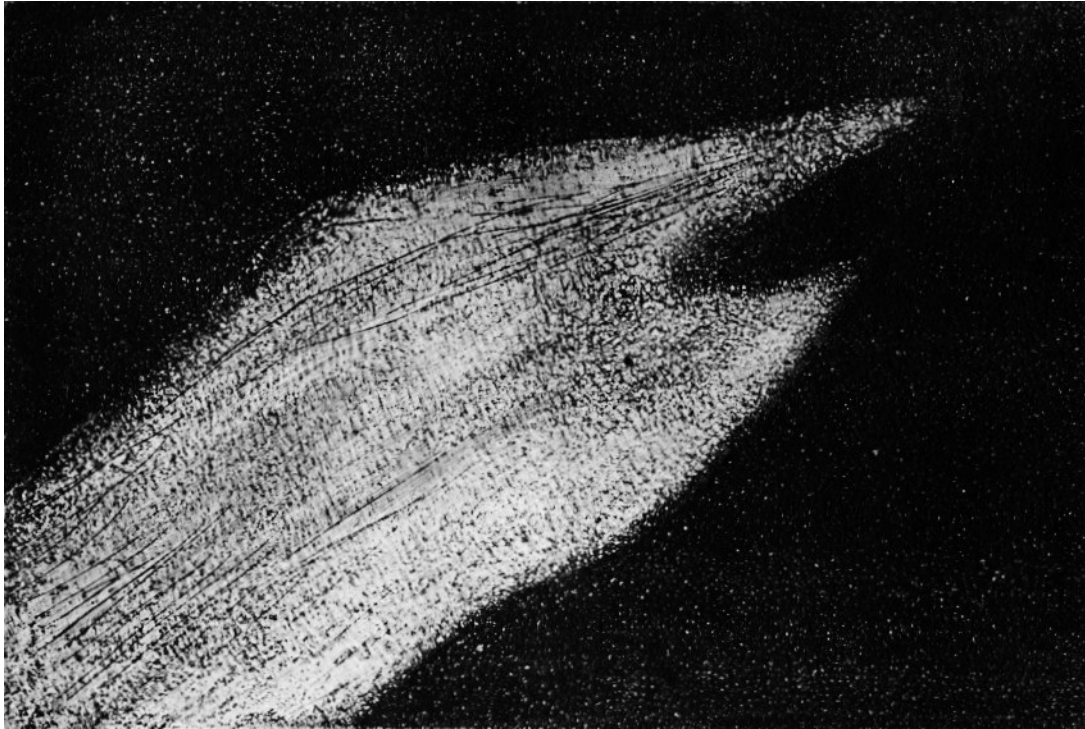
The unconscious could be equated with the nether world of quantum physics while the 'high conscious' Neoplatonic realm of Ideal Forms advocated from the time of Aristotle all the way up to the time of Plotinus in the early foundation centuries of Christianity is more akin to the Theory of Relativity. It seems even that for the last few hundred years the matter of the Universe has been seen as a uniform substance as it has become accepted theory that the same star particles that form the Earth and the living things on it - including human beings - and that have formed (and continue to form) the furthest celestial fires from us are essentially the same; it is in the process of cooling and local cosmic variations that different molecular structures form different materials as varied as living cells to rock to blood to water. The universe as uniform equates to a universe that is a stable entity yet we know quantum theory defies that 'secure' evaluation and there is much effort these days to resolve what is in state of pre-ordained uniformity with what is in constant inconsistent unpredictable flux. Thus, one may put forward the artistic challenge that in much the same way science is seeking an overall unified theory of everything connecting quantum theory with relative theory art can delve towards a unity between the perceived unified 3-D illusionism of western linear perspective and the metaphysical conceptual explorations into an art quantum 'fourth dimension' that Marcel Duchamp pursued and which the likes of Jasper Johns considers.

Michael Cricton in his book 'JASPER JOHNS' states how Cezanne noted that for painter the eye and the brain had to work together with the eye revealing what nature beholds while the brain could logically organize every visual sensation so as enable the painter to personally express his or her response to nature; what Michael Cricton asserts from Cezanne's opinion is that in art history although the eye and brain are two poles which complement each other the twentieth century was a time when the brain had the upper hand so to speak over the eye. Certainly, a case in point is Marcel Duchamp's conceptual art which is aimed at stimulating the mind rather than further exciting the eyes with 'retinal art'. Visually speaking however it is to be noted that the emergence of Cubism with its emphasis of a multi-perspective fragmented analysis of its subject matter led to a breakdown of the tradition of linear perspective in European art. The mind involves itself in deeper engagement with what the eyes are viewing only on a surface level enabling the viewer to be no longer passive and to become more active in comprehending what is before him or her or, as Duchamp had surmised, it is ultimately the spectator which provides supreme meaning to a work of art. It is the human mind inside each of us (e.g. as artist, as medical practitioner, as physicist, as astronomer, as musician, as historian, as ruler, as ordinary person-on-the-street and so forth) that ultimately provides both social and empirical meaning to the world; to the universe in which we live. It could be said that with 'mind/conceptual art' one is no longer simply 'presented' with a 'window' through which to view a particular reality but one is invited to become involved in shaping what reality may actually be - allowing art to become a catalyst for the mind to consider new conceptual possibilities rather than displaying - or reinforcing - present perceptions. A more interactive

dialogue may also be opened up between creator and spectator. All of us may eventually become increasingly aware of the manner in which we give meaning to our existence and to which we can mis/trust that our meaning is 'true' or 'real' or 'absolute' or 'social' or relative' or 'scientific' or 'objective' or 'subjective' or 'binary' or 'un/changing' and so forth...thus our organic brain by way of that ephemeral mystery 'within it' – the mind – can lead to heightened thought processes that allow the synapses – those cerebral connectors – to evolve once more to see with 'new vision'. In the new age of cyberspace it seems the conceptual experimentations of forward thinking artists such as Marcel Duchamp and Jasper Johns can lead to greater human 'in/sight' especially when on a cultural and psychological level there may come a redefinition of time – a keystone of our everyday perception of reality - in the same way that Einstein exposed that time itself is relative to the speed of an object in relation to mass and gravity diminishing its former Newtonian absolute quality. As the darkest recesses of the human mind links up more consciously with its ever awakened consciousness to arrive at a higher perception of the world 'quantum time' may become as familiar to us as our present understanding of time in relation to theory of relativity. Much more can be considered on this topic for there are also the social conditions of present day reality that art can also explore which also play a major role in our definition and redefinition of reality. (After all, art has always played the dual role of both serving a propoganda purpose for the status qou as well as to initiate an ideological breakdown of the prevailing beliefs of the day to herald in a new status qou that in turn will need to be challenged by new ideas and so on and so on...such is the general cyclic nature of much human activity continually oscillating between tradition to innovation). It is time to make a brief comment on the etching 'Dark Matter Nebula' which is a simple work involving a very textured, grainy area surrounding a black area whose outline originates from the 'shell nebula' of the etching of that title. Yet what appears as a straight forward negative space contains 'dark matter' which may be viewed as solid yet could also be perceived as invisible and what one is really seeing (through a 'window') is the immeasurable dark space of the universe with the grainy rock like texture surrounding it could be seen as the uncountable mass of billions of stars that lead to a 'solid look' but is truly an ephemeral gaseous cosmic expanse. In other words one may view this image two ways much like the famous hourglass outline that can also be viewed as the profiles of two human faces. What is considered as accepted reality can often be a case of one's point of view for it was commonly thought the Sun revolved around the Earth as a reflection of the theological idea that 'Man' as God's ultimate representative was at the centre of the universe until it was scientifically 'seen' that it was rather the Earth that revolved around the Sun. It is not how we actually see the world but rely on an Enlightenment understanding of a cosmic reality that it is us who are actually moving and not the Sun. Thus this etching can be viewed conceptually two ways as a representation of a conceptual appreciation of the dynamism of human perception which still needs to be very much explored as intimated by Jasper Johns and perhaps the one great 'art visionary of the twentieth century: Marcel Duchamp.



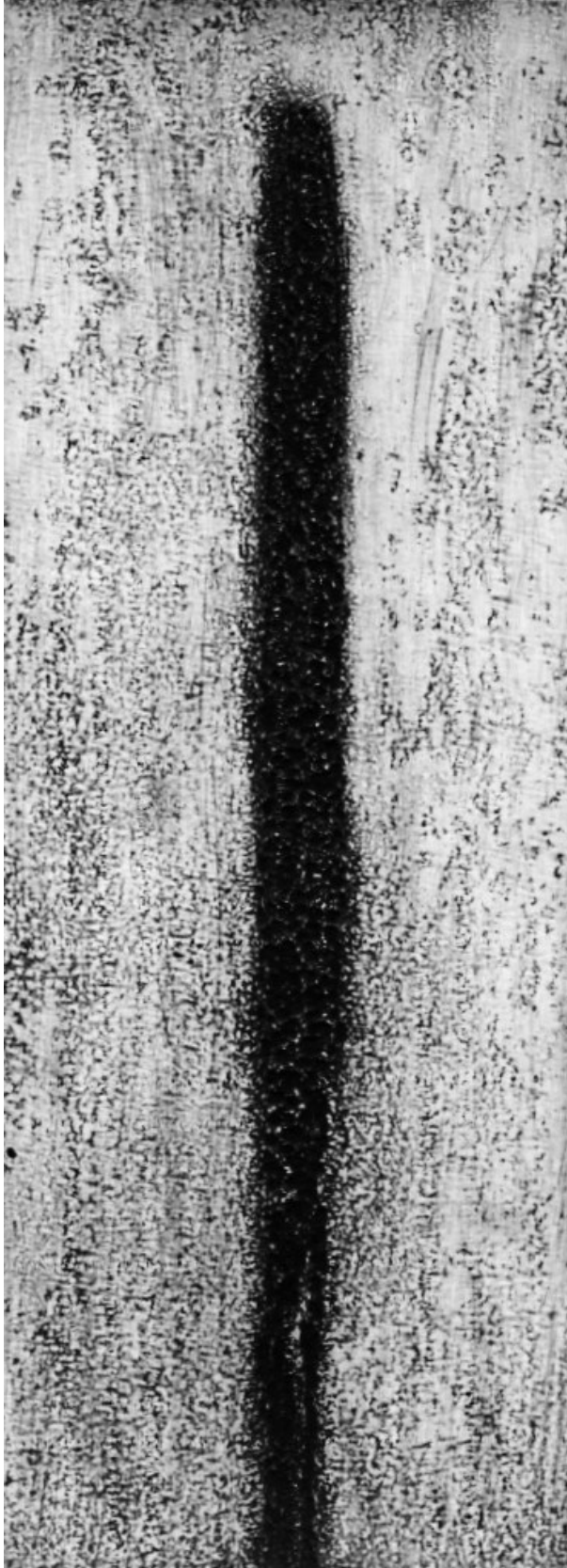
Dark Matter Nebula and the etching which follows *Ghost Nebula* which can be viewed together as a diptych as both look at the underlying theme of human/physical perception and reality.



'Ghost Nebula.'

6" X 4". B&W. aquatint. sugarlift. zinc plate.

Something that we can see that is no longer there. Astronomers tell us when we look at the stars some of those that we see no longer exist. Thus this etching is what we are viewing is the light released from such now extinguished fiery furnaces. It is simply the case that the light waves have taken uncountable years to reach Earth. What we are seeing with our eyes are 'light ghosts' and raises questions about the natural laws of the universe affecting our physical perception of it. Light photons that are real registering an object that is no longer physically present.



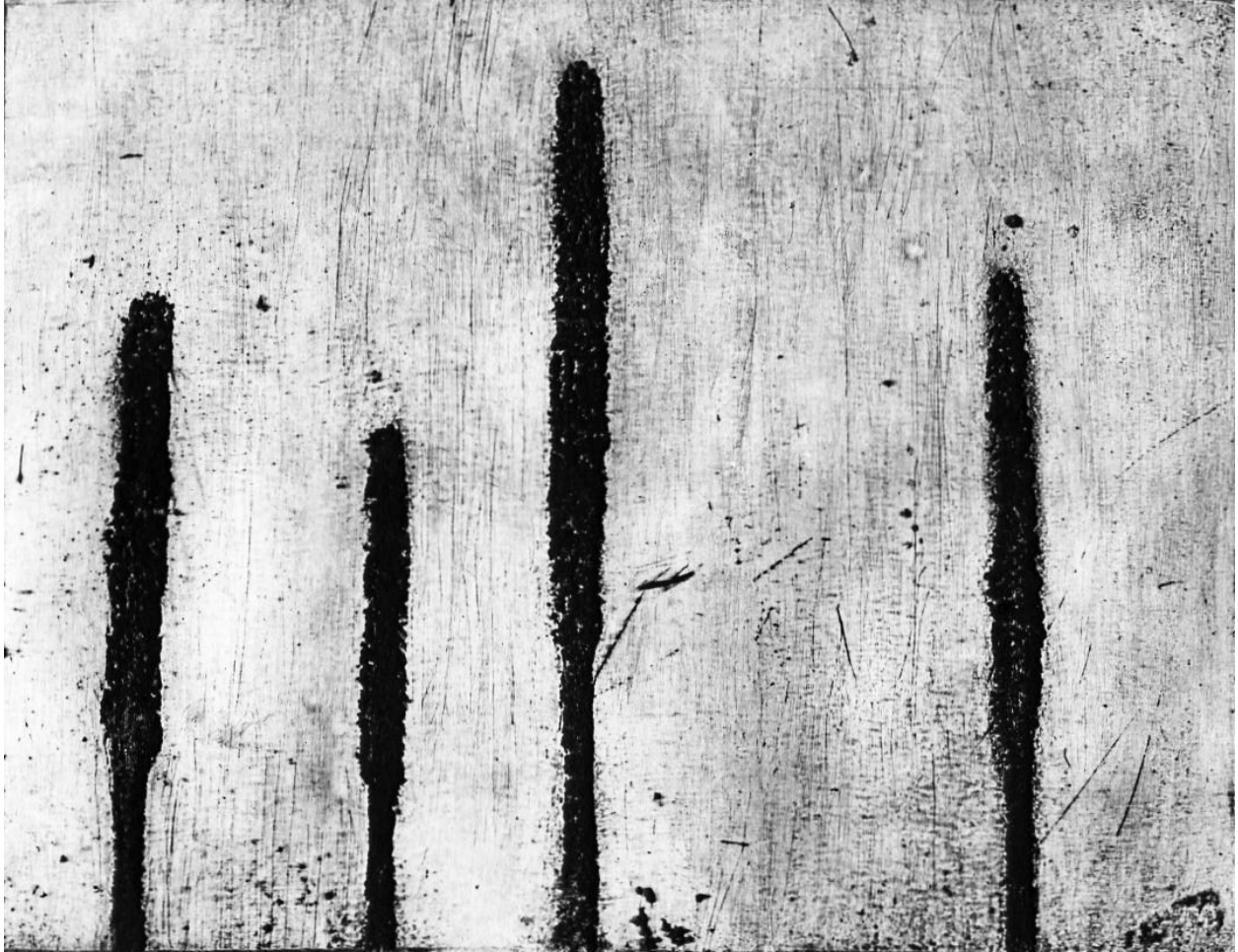
'Note of the Universe.'

Royal National Park.

7" X 2". B&W. aquatint.

sugarlift. zinc plate.

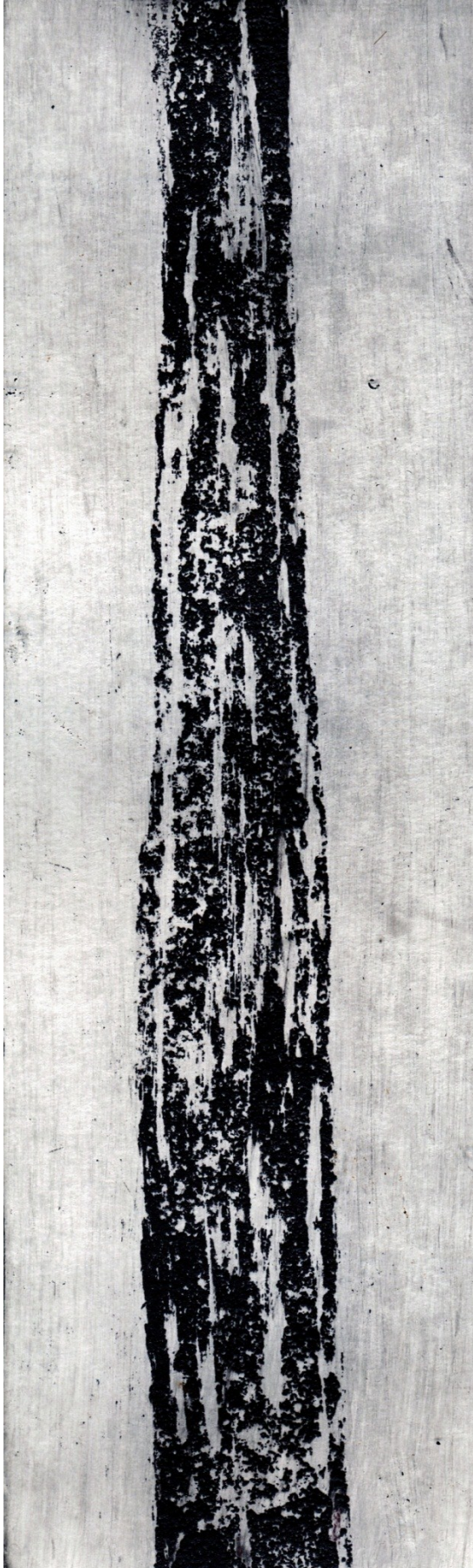
Walking back from the Curramoors these long very dark brown long stalks were sighted on a scrub plain as if stabbing the sky. I was reminded of musical notes and thought how an ancient astronomer such as Ptolemy thought of the solar system and stars aligned on a series of musical spheres and of a modern artist such as Kandinsky corresponding colour harmony to an underlying musical structure of the universe to create 'visual music' that would eventuate in spiritual, life enhancing 'vibrations of the human soul'. A cosmic symphony for each individual being. (The Lithuanian musical composer and mystical nature painter M.K. Ciurlionis also crossed my mind who it is said influenced Kandinsky).



'Chord of the Universe.'

7" X 5.5". B&W. aquatint. sugarlift. zinc plate

In this rather raw image is a collection of 'notes' forming a chord. A musical chord followed by other chords form a unifying series of sounds which can be compared to the mathematical equations that underpin the structure of the universe. One can wonder and meditate upon on how a few musical notes - like a few mathematical digits - can be rhythmically organized in an infinite variety of ways to express and highlight the innumerable dimensions of a seemingly boundless cosmic reality.



'Pillar of Time.'

*Minnamurra Rainforest.
Jamberoo.*

9.5" X 3". B&W. aquatint.
sugarlift. zinc plate.

This image of a tree was achieved with one mindful calligraphic brushstroke using sugarlift; a few seconds of time passing to initiate an 'icon' to which one may focus the mind on time eternal.



*'Dark Matter
Stems of the
Universe.'*

Wolli Creek.

*8" X 6". sepia. sugarlift.
aquatint. zinc plate.*

This textured image also explores the boundaries of human perception. The dark columns are based on three trees in Wolli Creek; in this etching they can be viewed either as enclosed foreground masses or as 'open-ended infinities' of a cosmos beyond the other galaxies in the 'positive spaces' around them. It is a continuum of the issue of the way we view the visible world; to process it, so as to (subjectively/objectively) comprehend 'what *is* reality' (as first hinted at in *Dark Mass Nebula*). Although originally based on trees I have used the term stem (rather than trunk) in the title as *stem* is a word that more readily implies organic growth (such as in the term 'stem cells') and to imply not only the infinite celestial growth of the universe but also the mental 'growth' of the human mind that is also without end - like the cosmos. It should also be noted that our human imagination can be envisaged as multi-dimensional; which on a conceptual level supersedes our known three-dimensional universe. The three stems may also be considered as referencing the number three which is a number commonly implicated with the divine. The texture for this image belongs to a scratched up etching plate that was sanded back to reveal and accentuate the multiplicity of textures which initially emerged from the natural process of the plate gradually eroding over time. Sugarlift was then brushed on to form the three dark strokes on which eventually an aquatint was applied.



'Eroding Universe.'

6" X 4". sepia. aquatint. zinc plate

Following on from doing the images of eroding rocks it was a logical extension to consider the whole universe as one singular form that was eroding due to its lengthy age. This etching was actually done by nature which I facilitated as the plate had naturally weathered over time in my grimy studio which is a cedar shed in the backyard. In true 'Duchampian artistic 'tradition' once discovering the 'nature affected plate' rather than cleaning it up I chose to view it as a 'readymade' ripe for 'artistic hatching'. I placed the eroded etching plate in a bath of nitric acid for over an hour or so until I was satisfied that a 'deep bite' had been achieved. Like a photographer recording light particles falling on a physical object I have merely 'captured' what nature had 'created' on a slice of copper. This image intimates the many galaxies that exist in the stellar flux that is our universe; all of which may eventually dissipate into nothingness. Lastly, there is almost an X-Ray – perhaps, somewhat solar negative - quality to this image in inference to the 'astronomical mapping' that presently occurs of the Universe – the ultimate 'readymade'.



'Eroding Universe.'

10" X 6". B&W. copperplate.

This etching is also a product of nature being another weathered, eroded plate. There is a softness to this work which perhaps echoes the ultimate ephemeral quality of the Universe.



'Symphony of the Universe.' Botany Bay National Park.

10" X 6". B&W. aquatint. sugarlift. zinc plate. etching.

Symphony of the Universe is based on scraggly trees emerging from the thick scrub at Botany Bay. The series of wavy lines intimate the rhythmic 'notations' of the universe which echo the cosmic gravitational currents that uniformly sway through the cosmos to continually signal the first creative explosion of its existence.



Botany Bay National Park



'Accelerating Universe.'

10" X 6". B&W. aquatint. copperplate.

This image is very interesting as it is also produced by Nature with me simply being the facilitator of it. It is another etching plate that has simply been lying around in my dusty, dirty wooden cabin studio. It may even have spent some time in a stack of etching plates of failed etched images. With etching one never quite knows what is to eventuate until the etched plate is actually printed. It is a source of both joy and frustration to lift the paper up off the plate to see an image meet – or even surpass all expectations or not be ‘quite right’ or even worse – be a disastrous smudge of greys, whites and blacks. I work more from ‘experimental instinct rather than follow any particular guaranteed technical approach – as formulae means death to me – especially the death of creativity. (Art is not craft). Art should always be the *living* expression of a *living* human spirit. (Otherwise a machine is more beneficial). Consequently the ‘hazards’ of human emotion and human decision come into play leading naturally enough to a degree of failure through unexpected results but also to a degree of success through unexpected results. As an artist I can also choose to look at a naturally eroded etching plate and consider that the scratches, marks on it can convey the artist’s intention as in the case of this etching (and other ‘eroded etching plates). I simply placed the copperplate in a bath of ferric chloride for a while – maybe up to two or so hours – until I felt the plate had been sufficiently bitten to produce an adequate image – an image by the way I had only guessed at as to what it would be. However, I

must admit to some human intervention as I did place an aquatint over the plate to guarantee some contrasting black areas would emerge. In any case the image above is what was achieved. I feel it contains a certain level of dramatic movement amongst the many textures, shapes and patterns which immediately reminded me of artist's impressions of the celestial galaxies and supernovas. I had heard on the radio of the recent discovery that – contrary to what astronomers had expected – measurements of the speed of expansion of the Universe - after its initial creation - were showing that the Universe was actually accelerating rather than slowing down! It was a cosmic result that defied all previous human assumption. Thus, the Universe is reaching its supposed 'endpoint' much quicker than originally thought. What the endpoint of the Universe will actually be is still open to conjecture as it may reach a final expansion point and then contract in on itself like an elastic band or it may continue to expand to the extent whereby one day every star will be so out of reach of every other star that there will be no light – only a deathly black cold darkness will ensue. However, by then the Earth will have been swallowed up a gigantic red Sun going through its death throes – perhaps in another four billion years from now.

As the Universe accelerates I think of Jackson Pollock with those 'swirling visions' depicted in his drip paintings which unconsciously reflect the vibrating ordering of the Universe. There is not chaos in Pollock's canvases but a psychological 'tuning in' with the underlying gravitational pulse of the cosmos that binds all reality together into a patterned, fluctuating methodical mass that follows its own internal logic as instigated by nature. "*I am nature.*" Pollock once forcefully proclaimed. It is said that in the development of the Universe there was the final step of attaining consciousness through the birth of life; humanity is an 'eye' of the Universe looking back on the Universe.* Yet, looking back on itself through Pollock's eyes there is a manic imagination who drunkenly chose to end his own tortured life by speeding into a tree killing with him one of the two women also in the car. I wonder what sort of tumultuous future – or end - may also be in store for the Universe if Nature chooses to press down on the accelerator even harder as this cosmic conflagration with its 'terrible beauty' continues to expand at an ever increasing rate.

* See '*What is Post-Modernism?*' by Charles Jencks. Academy Editions. 1996.



'The Creation of the Moon.' Stotts Reserve. (Sydney).

6" X 4". sepia. aquatint. sugarlift. zinc plate.

This peculiar image is based on a rock outcrop in Stotts Reserve which immediately reminded me of a childhood memory of the moon as a small fiery sphere emerging from the hot Earth. There are many theories as to how the Moon was actually formed but this mental image from many years ago still holds sway with me. As it is it seems the triangular rock had split and separated from the larger boulder; thus being a microcosm of what had happened between Earth and Moon billions of years ago. Recently, I have been in the habit of visiting Stotts Reserve on a weekly basis with a friend who is involved in bush regeneration. I help him out for an hour or so with weeding and so forth. It is a tranquil oasis in the urban landscape of Sydney and the weekly visits have a meditative quality about them. It also allows one to know a small landscape intimately and to come across aspects of the terrain that would otherwise remain unnoticed. It allows me to perceive how on a micro scale the natural environment intimates to the whole Creation and to its miraculous process as well as ultimately to the vast scale and complexity of all existence.



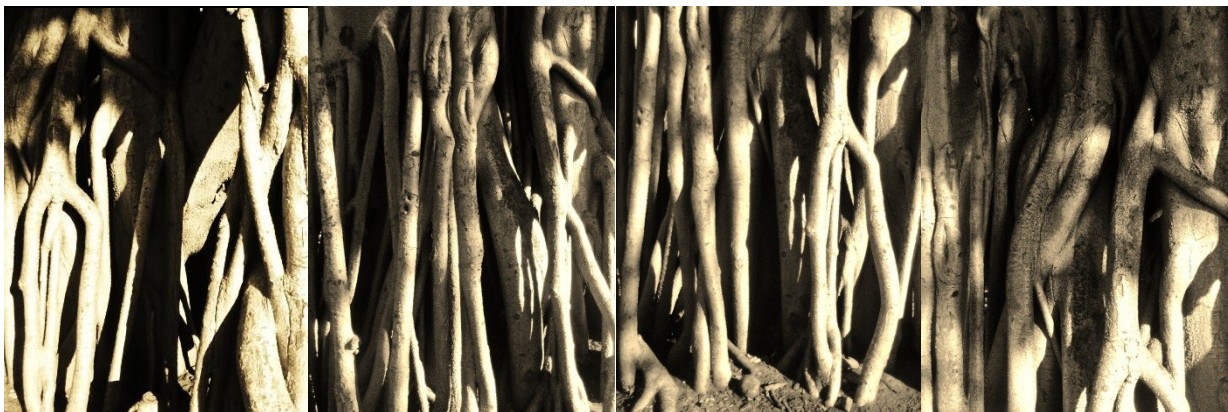
Stotts Reserve is a small area of bushland which relates to Wolli Creek. It is very much desired this overall wilderness area will hopefully remain in its native bushland state free from the threat of any urban development.

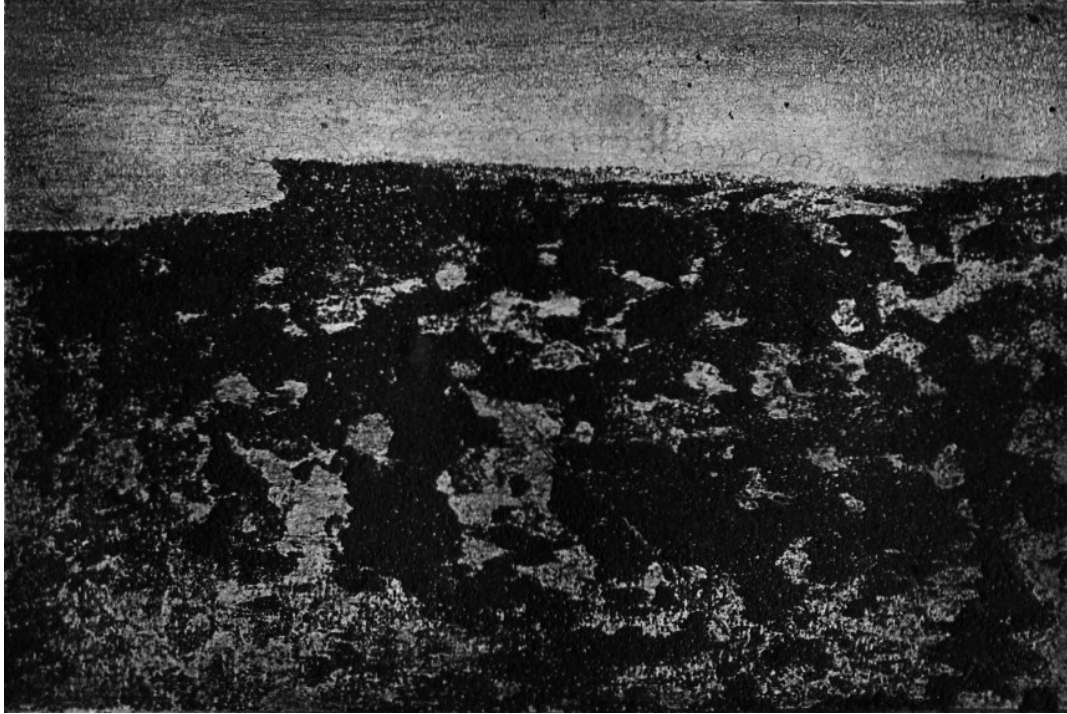


'The Roots of Time.' Circular Quay.

6" X 4". sepia. aquatint. sugarlift. zinc plate

The image is based on the elongated roots protruding from trees planted at Circular Quay. I consider time can be 'organic' as well as stable.



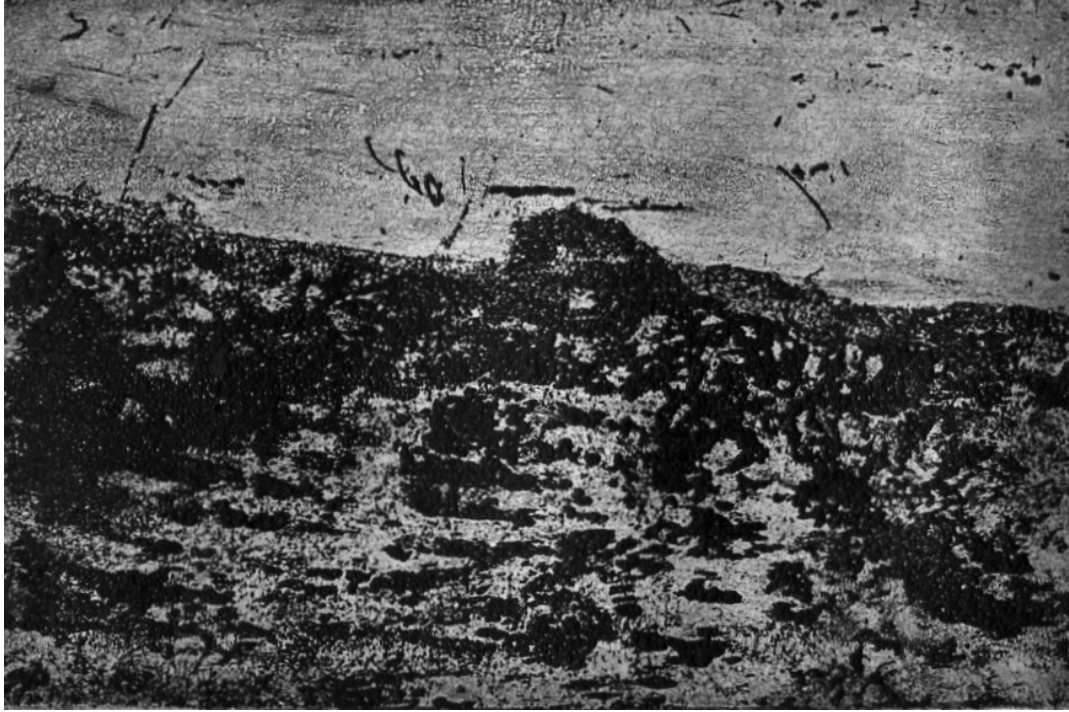


'Eroding Rocks.'

6" X 4". sepia. aquatint. sugarlift. zinc plate

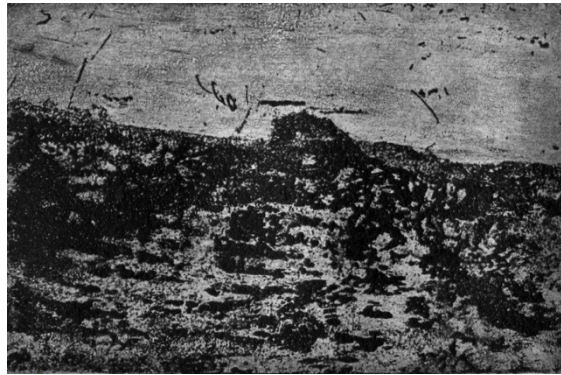
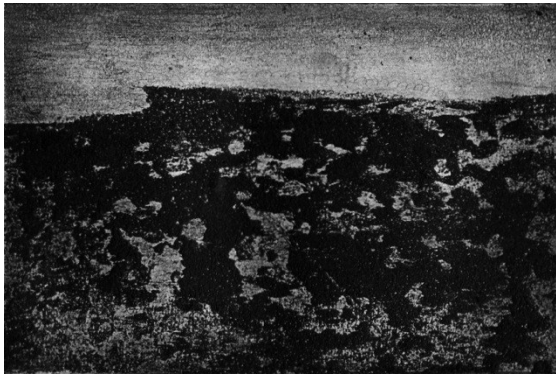
Eroding rocks the measure of 'time eroding' on the physical plane.





'Eroding Rocks.'

6" X 4". sepia. aquatint. sugarlift. zinc plate.





'Time Totem.'

Minnamorra Rainforest.

Jamberoo.

8" X 4". sepia. aquatint. sugarlift.
zinc plate.

As I walked through this rainforest I considered it how it was a 'living installation' as it is hemmed in by the agricultural lands that surround it and how it is only due to a conscious human decision making process that it still exists. The whole region was once rainforest but it was all logged away and this 'ecological sanctuary' is all that remains.

Marcel Duchamp considered that the artist's 'discovery' of a 'found object' was a sort of *rendezvous* between it and the artist who has by chance sighted the object (as if to have 'met it') and there upon chosen to confer a cultural validity upon it which overrides any previous purely utilitarian meaning. A new 'higher mental dimension' is 'entwined' into the physical attributes of the object to allow it serve a fresh cultural function. To be a 'new creature' spiritually so-to-speak.

As far as I can perceive there is no artistic rationale in Duchamp's thinking that the object always has to 'necessarily' be industrial and thus as I walked through this rainforest I came across many natural 'found objects'. (It is simply a matter of fact that Duchamp lived in an urban setting in which he found his readymades). Thus when I 'met' this impressive tree trunk as it came across my path I naturally enough consciously deemed it as a 'totem of time'. As it was I was reminded of the totem poles that are associated with indigenous culture. Interestingly enough, on an artistic level this rainforest is a living, growing 'nature installation', which will change form over the years and which could be recorded with every new visit.





'Tree Couplet.' Minnamorra Rainforest. Jamberoo.

6" X 4". B&W. aquatint. sugarlift. zinc plate

To perceive beyond the exclusive binary logic of Aristotle (up/down, in/out. etcetera) is to see the endless possibility of multitude combinations that could exist. Quantum mechanics allows us to take a more lateral approach to reality and so it intrigues me how these two tree trunks have emerged from the 'another organic plane'. Thus I do not dismiss binary logic (as it has its role to play) but I see how a more dynamic reasoning is also boundlessly available – so as to fully open the Blakean 'doors of perception' – our eyes those 'windows to our soul.

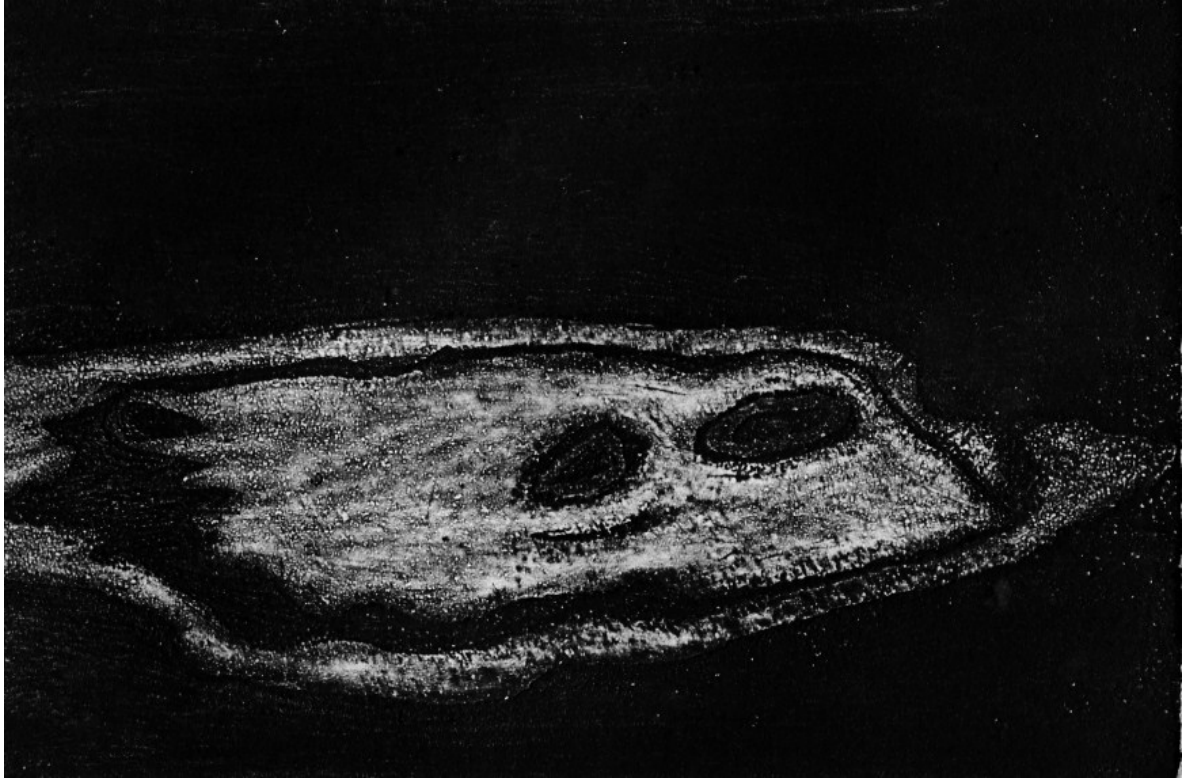


'Fallen Tree Galaxy.' Mougamurra Reserve. Hawkesbury River.

6" X 4". sepia. aquatint. sugarlift. zinc plate

This image is based on a large fallen tree beside a bush track. Despite it lying on the ground this trunk still had a majestic quality about it.





'Embryo of the Universe' Central Australia.

6" X 4". B&W. aquatint. sugarlift. zinc plate



'Pendulum of Time.' Central Australia.

6" X 4". B&W. aquatint. sugarlift. zinc plate

This particular triptych of etchings is based on aerial Super 8 footage taken from a Cessna while flying over Central Australia. I was on the way to visit friends working as doctor and nurse at the Arunda community Amata.

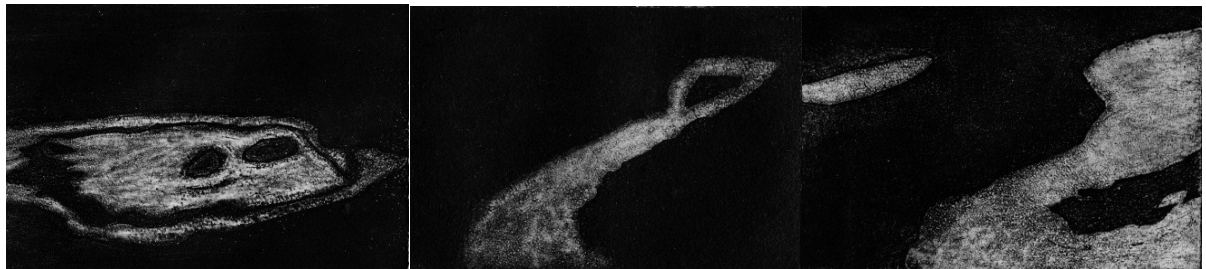
These images have turned out to reference for me the idea of 'return' and 'time' as considered by T.S. Eliot in his poems the 'Four Quartets'. Most significantly there is paradoxical idea of returning to a previously visited place to see it 'for the first time.' This is partly due to the technical decision of wanting to introduce a more textured background as seen in the 'Alpha' etchings of the same central Australian landscape after originally producing these etchings in the simple black & white contrast way they are presented here. The textured appearance was unsatisfactory and so I returned to my original presentation with an increased appreciation of this format. In any case, I never imagined that when I filmed the landscape nearly twenty years ago I would ever use it as the subject matter of a series of etchings; especially for a set of prints that have taken on a rather contemplative edge to them. To meander to a more philosophical level I could state that for each individual there is between the 'first time' and the 'second time' there has been the passage of events that allows the 'second visitation' to resonate with an increased awareness that perhaps was lacking in the original visit.

One's 'getting of wisdom' is perhaps brought about by time weathering on the mind through memory which is a 'mental residue' of physical experience. Human comprehension leads to spiritual revelation and thus in turn human vision is renewed to allow a supposed known reality to appear 'anew'. It is not necessarily so much that what was perceived before is to be negated

but rather that any 'truth' that has earlier been envisaged is deepened. With that said it seems Eliot saw time as somewhat contesting with eternity but rather once could see time as leading to a union with eternity: through the immateriality of the human mind consciously striving to be in contact with a spiritual realm beyond any physical dimension; that is ever constant and beyond any ongoing degradation. To perceive the invisible in the visible. Human memory can work as a bridge between what is seen and not seen and time and experience – those so called temporal qualities of reality – form the basis of human reminiscence. Thus in the same way we do not know what is 'white' without also knowing what is 'black' then we will not know the timelessness of 'eternity' without first understanding the mortal condition we presently live in.

As to measuring any emerging insights this could be evaluated by revisiting by way of the cycle of time the different starting points – both physically and mentally – that have served as consequential 'life markers' in one's existence. The notion of a 'pendulum of time' thus resonates with me as the mind swings back from the present to past memory that can seem as equally real as the ubiquitous 'eternal now' to then through prophetic vision to envisage the future yet to come.

Life's trajectory may not need to bend along some fatalistic, locked in course but can be manoeuvred by taking in what has become before to help us make today a differing, unpredicted response. Thus through what were originally temporal images such as this one I have through the evaluative process of human thought come to meditate on a few universal realisations as to be perceived through these works. In this particular etching I can easily imagine the almost smoke like 'arm of time' wafting back and forth across the deep dark hues of a mindful immeasurable connecting synaptic landscape between human experience and human memory and human realisation.





'Mother and Child.' Central Australia.

6" X 4". B&W. aquatint. sugarlift. zinc plate



'Keyhole to the Universe.' Garigal National Park. (Sydney)

6" X 4". sepia. aquatint. sugarlift. zinc plate.

In many recent etchings there has been an iconoclastic approach to the images whereby there has been a focus on one particular object. This approach is partly due to the indirect influence of Henry Moore whose sculptures often conveyed in a monumental way a certain idea and I have attempted to final the same 'monumental' approach although on a much more modest scale. There has also been a general tendency to 'strip back' an image by ridding it of any 'visual clutter' to arrive at a basic 'symbol' of what is to be expressed. Thus the object such as a tree or rock is surrounded by empty space. Yet space is needed in order to allow living growth to be made possible by having the necessary room to move into and thus in a metaphorical sense the fullness of an idea is allowed to be clearly expressed due to a visual clarity brought on by the emptiness that surrounds it – both eye and mind have been left with nothing else to focus on but by the subject of the image which is its essence. Emptiness matters. In Chinese painting emptiness can be perceived as an expression of the infinite which is a very concrete reality especially when it is to be considered that culture has to play a pivotal role in harmonizing humanity's relationship between itself and nature. An ultimate unity with the cosmos seems to me to be all encompassing Taoist aim which was a major influence on Chinese painting. To paraphrase the Tao notion of Yin and Yang emptiness and fullness are opposites that rely on each other to provide a complementary universal wholeness to life – and, as a consequence, also in art. A Chinese painting can 'breathe' and stay alive due to the empty space which essentially co-exists *equally* with the solid forms in the image. *Breath* is unseen but it is breath that provides life – with this way of thinking emptiness is thus vital in life. I am not at all knowledgeable of

Chinese aesthetics but *Empty and Full. The Language of Chinese Painting* by Francois Cheng (Shambhala. Boston & London) provides an eloquent introduction to the relationship of Chinese art and Chinese philosophy such as the *Tao*. Instinctively, I have merely arrived at the same artistic conclusion to the value of so called 'empty space' in any pictorial configuration.

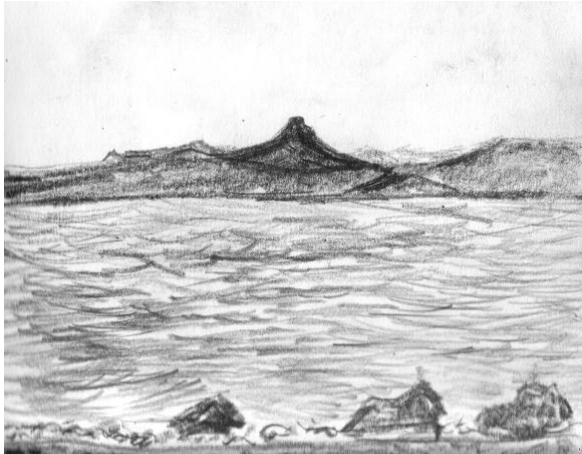
The floating 'keyhole' in this image intimates the calligraphic brush-stroking of Chinese art as well as to the organic biomorphic forms of the twentieth century artist Hans/Jean Arp (or even of Miro). The image is based holes in a rock formation at Galigal National Park in northern Sydney. Although the keyhole is in two parts it is easy to imagine them joining up to form one whole space. It is a paradox in this image that what is actually space is conveyed in black while that which may be solid is white. Yet, if this is the 'keyhole' to the universe which allows entry to the cosmos where do we the viewer stand? Outside the universe? Outside space and time? In that case it perhaps makes sense that we are in a spiritual realm and it is valid that it is portrayed by the purity that is that is the colour white. White is the full colour spectrum combined in on itself by every colour and perhaps if outside the universe its edge would be therefore white as it would perhaps be possible to see the all of reality in every conceivable combination at the same time. Thus what is white blank which appears as 'nothing' is really *everything*. As if we are spirits in a boundless womb of eternity we will unlock the door leading to time and space to invert our position of the reverse perception we now have of reality while 'outside' the universe; what is black and what is white will perhaps be turned around. (It is somewhat ironic that recent astronomical discoveries confirm that the vast darkness of space is actually filled up with a dark matter that makes up to 95% of the known cosmos. What is 'nothing' in deep space is not that at all. If the universe were a mountain then the visible forms of the universe that do exist such as the stars and planets would simply form a thin blanket of snow covering the top of this peak). I have mixed feelings about this simple – yet profound – image. Yet have realised that the next logical step on this artistic course is to produce an image without any form - simply so called 'empty space'. (I am also reminded by the simple Zen like compositions created by Georgia O'Keefe towards the end of her long life). No matter the hue, whether it be black or white or some other colour in between the artistic realm of nothingness as approached by Western modernism is best left to a Malevich or a Rothko to explore and define. I will draw back and in turn after the next 'mental gestation' period' go on to imaginatively explore other tributaries of that vast unlimited river delta we call 'reality' to discover or reflect 'truth'.



Garigal National Park. Sydney.

jervis bay

Below are two sketches and some other photos of the Jervis bay environ. The first sketch is of an extinct volcano on the other side of a stretch of water at a bay where a local Aboriginal community is situated. It along with the photo of the eroding rock pillars reveals to me the paradox of undetectable 'eternal time' intersecting with the visible physical world which perhaps leads to or influences mortal decay; one could surmise that what erodes disappears to the wind, air, earth and water – to the elements of the universe; the material 'more' that is forgone is a sort of a spiritual growth as this 'lost physical property resides anew in perhaps an unseen quantum realm'





Resurrection series

'Fabric of the Universe.'

8"X8". B&W. aquatint. sugarlift. zinc plate.

'Black Poles'.

8"X8". B&W. aquatint. sugarlift. zinc plate

'Resurrection'.

8"X8". B&W. aquatint. sugarlift. zinc plate

'Cosmic Tracers.'

9.5" X 7". B&W. aquatint. sugarlift. zinc plate

'Reed Tranquility.'

11" X 8". sepia. aquatint. sugarlift. zinc plate

'Galaxies Swirling Towards a Black Hole.' Middle Head. Sydney Harbour.

8" X 6". B&W. aquatint. sugarlift. zinc plate

'Shell Nebula.' Gordons Bay.

9.5" X 7". B&W. aquatint. sugarlift. zinc plate

'Dark Matter Nebula.'

6" X 4". sepia. aquatint. sugarlift. zinc plate

'Ghost Nebula.'

6" X 4". B&W. aquatint. sugarlift. zinc plate

'Note of the Universe.' Royal National Park.

7" X 2". B&W. aquatint. sugarlift. zinc plate

'Chord of the Universe.'

7" X 5.5". B&W. aquatint. sugarlift. zinc plate

'Pillar of Time.'

9.5" X 3". B&W. aquatint. sugarlift. zinc plate.

Other details to be added at a later date.

I wish to make mention of two other books:

KANT AFTER DUCHAMP by Thuerry de Duve MIT Press.

The BIGGEST ESTATE on EARTH How Aborigines Made Australia by Bill Gammage. Allen & Unwin.



Royal National Park



Hawkesbury River tree



Jamberoo



Jamberoo



Bronte to Bondi walk...



Hawkesbury River



Rock. Jamberoo December 2009

