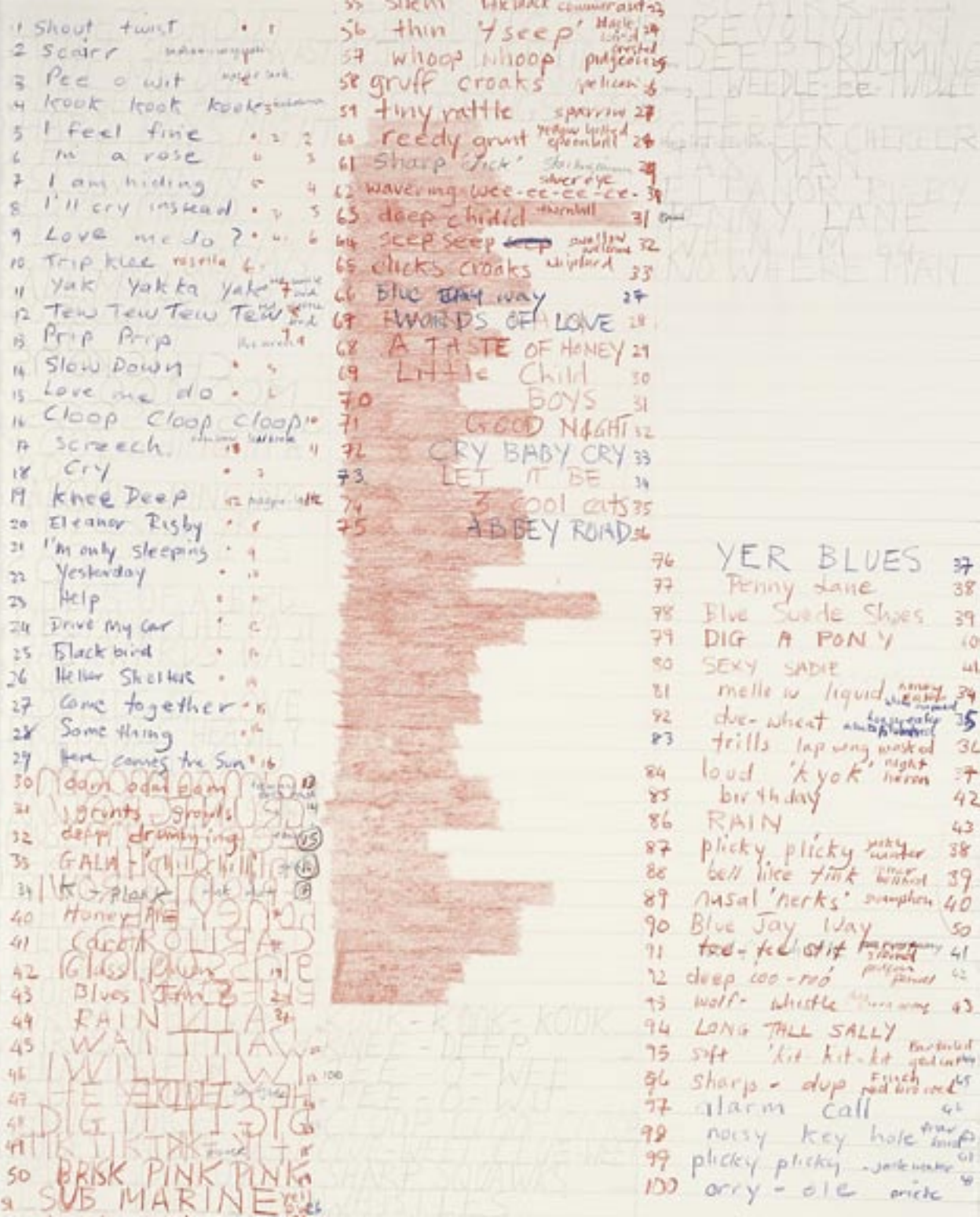

Blue

Jay Way

Sue

Pedley



Roll Up, Roll Up!

Light, colour, sound! While these terms might evoke the theatre or cinema, they are in fact the phenomena Sue Pedley employed in responding to the people and places of two notable sites for the history of Australian art in the project [Blue Jay Way](#). Pedley contemplated the parallel histories of Heide Museum of Modern Art in Melbourne, Victoria and Penrith Regional Gallery & The Lewers Bequest, at Emu Plains in western Sydney, New South Wales, the former homes of modern patrons and artists respectively. During 2006 Pedley developed a project that mediates a personal connection between what are now two well-established art institutions.

Evoking the vistas and sounds of the garden landscapes created by John and Sunday Reed at Heide (the property where they lived from 1935–1981) and Gerald and Margo Lewers at Penrith Regional Gallery (their family home from the 1940s–1978) through her cyanotypes and outdoor sculptures, Pedley's [Blue Jay Way](#) has the effect of a time machine. Exhibited at Heide and subsequently at Penrith, the presence of [Blue Jay Way](#) condenses the two discrete locations and their times into a virtual coevalness.

While museum exhibitions and site specific artists' interventions into place tend to fossick through the cultural and biographical history of a habitat, Pedley works outside documented history or the mythologised narratives originating from official and unofficial chronicles.

She starts with the sensations of place, drawn from time spent physically immersed in the environment, with its sounds and sights, and further informed by research into the documented past.

Experience leaves its trace on the artist and is visually imprinted and inscribed on her materials. Music titles and bird song echo phonetically across the face of the suspended buckets and the viewers who, having inserted their heads inside these vessels, look out at the garden while reading Pedley's text from within. The forms of plants, tools and the artist's body are lightly traced in cyanotype prints. Bringing history into the present, and melding gardens and galleries of today with their past, Pedley invites you to join her magical mystery tour. With a nod to the psychedelic sixties [Blue Jay Way](#) is waiting to take you away....

Zara Stanhope, Heide Museum of Modern Art and John Kirkman, Penrith Regional Gallery & The Lewers Bequest

Opposite
SUE PEDLEY
[BLUE JAY WAY](#) 2006–07
(WORKING DRAWING)
CHINAGRAPH AND PENCIL ON PAPER
75.0 X 56.0 CM
PHOTOGRAPHER: SUE BLACKBURN, EXACT IMAGE

Cover
SUE PEDLEY
[BLUE JAY WAY](#) 2006–07
100 CYANOTYPES, 100 PLASTIC BUCKETS, MIXED MEDIA
INSTALLATION DETAIL, HEIDE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, MELBOURNE
PHOTOGRAPHER: JOHN GOLLINGS



Sue Pedley: Blue Jay Way

'Blue jay way': the phrase is highly musical in its rhyme and rhythm, almost like a birdcall. The Blue Jay is a species of North American bird, renowned for its brilliant blue markings and gull-like screech. The bird lent its name to a street in the chic heights of Los Angeles, where George Harrison wrote a song while waiting for a friend. *Blue Jay Way* was released on The Beatles' psychedelic album *Magical Mystery Tour* in 1967, the same year Heide II (as the modern house on John and Sunday Reed's Heide property is now known) was completed. With its reference to human and bird song, the title of Sue Pedley's exhibition at Heide Museum of Modern Art and Penrith Regional Gallery & The Lewers Bequest reflects the artist's attempts to evoke in her work both the cultural and natural context of these two sacred sites of Australian modernism.

Gerald Lewers was a keen bird watcher, whose love of nature is reflected in the rambling Lewers' garden as much as in his sculptural works. The Penrith Valley is an area renowned for its native bird diversity, while the Lewers' garden was designed to evoke a multi-sensory experience, with bird song a key component. The Reeds' garden also evidences their love of native

plant and bird species. The modernist gems that are Heide II (McGlashan and Everist, 1967) and the Lewers' Ancher House (Sydney Ancher, 1964) were built at a time when the Merseybeat was the pop avant-garde.¹ Sunday Reed was an avid Beatles fan and to Pedley the songs of the Beatles represent a mixture of optimism and empowerment that is also inherent in the spirit of these now historic houses, hubs of modernist artistic activity, architectural innovation, and vibrant cultural debate.

Pedley crafted her response to the sites of Heide and Lewers by taking a previous major work, *Sound of Bamboo* (2002), as a point of departure. Pedley's practice is site specific, entailing long periods of inquiry into the history, use and cultural significance of her selected locales. In *Sound of Bamboo*, Pedley's research into the many manifestations of this archetypically Asian plant culminated in a subtle intervention in the existing architecture of Sydney's Royal Botanic Gardens that drew attention to overlooked vistas, associations and meanings. Pedley's work is process-orientated: the period of experimentation when the artist works upon and activates the various elements of the site—its spatial and material

¹ Friend of the Reeds, Peter Hobbs, recalls that Sunday was 'mad on The Beatles. I think she suffered from Beatlemania', in Janine Burke, *The Heart Garden: Sunday Reed and Heide*, Random House, Sydney, 2004, p. 379.



Opposite
SUE PEDLEY
BLUE JAY WAY 2006–07
1 OF 100 CYANOTYPES
75.0 X 56.0 CM
PHOTOGRAPHER: SUE BLACKBURN

Left
SUE PEDLEY
SOUND OF BAMBOO 2002
FELTED WOOL, ACRYLIC THREAD, BAMBOO
ARTSPACE PROJECT, ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS, SYDNEY
PHOTOGRAPHER: SUE PEDLEY

qualities as well as the historical and cultural associations—including the crafting of her objects and images, is as important as the final installation. Pedley's process is, moreover, invariably concerned with heightening the awareness of the effects of space, light and time on one's thoughts and attitudes.

Blue Jay Way (2006–07) comprises one hundred blue plastic buckets: fifty inscribed in perforations with the titles and lyrics of Beatles' songs, fifty with the phonetic denotations of particular birdcalls. Either stacked into columns that seem to mimic architectural supports or appearing in stark contrast to the trees to which they are attached, the buckets wend their way around the gardens and courtyards of Heide and Lewers, creating new pathways of engagement for the viewer. The appearance of these banal, synthetic objects amongst the highly-regarded outdoor sculptures and gardens may appear irreverent to those for whom the significance of Lewers and Heide lies in a fixed idea of the modernist art they helped nurture. That provocation is intentional, as the artist is attempting to insert fresh currents of thought into these sites and their well worn histories. The interactivity that the buckets invite is an integral part of this process. With their resemblance to a helmet in their form and use, and therefore closely referencing Sidney Nolan's Ned Kelly, the inverted buckets serve as a prop for the inventive play that animates the experience of these artworks.

The buckets also feature in a series of cyanotypes (blue prints), captured as shadows on light-sensitive paper. Cyanotypes reflect the environmental elements of a site, ambient light and space, and are thus well-suited to the process-based nature of Pedley's work. In **Blue Jay Way** these ghostly photographs spell out in soft daubs of light the often plaintive song titles—'Cry', 'Come Together', 'Help', 'Slow Down', 'Yesterday'—

that the artist has inscribed on the buckets. Or they literalise the sounds of 'nature'—'k-plonk', 'screech', 'yak yakka yah', 'reedy grunt', 'jayer, jayer'. Many prints also catch the artist herself midway through the photographic process, her body embedded amongst the objects and images she has created. Some cyanotypes represent plants of special significance to the two sites, including the succulents iconic of Margo Lewers' garden, the lavender at Heide (Sunday Reed's notorious doll Gethsemane was stuffed with lavender, grown in Sunday's Kitchen Garden along with an eclectic mix of herbs, vegetables and flowers), and the sedges that typically surround the riverbanks on which each residence is located. Nonetheless, it is the aural dimension that is continually affirmed—ironically through visual and textual means—so as to diversify and enliven the viewer's experience of these sites.

The contrast between the abstract bird sounds and the more figurative connotations of the Beatles' lyrics also keys into Pedley's interest in the relations between Heide and Lewers as centres of patronage, and seedbeds of artistic collaboration and cross fertilisation. In the juxtaposition of sounds and song titles, Pedley mirrors the familiar characterisation (some would say caricaturisation!) of Heide and Lewers as bastions of figuration and abstraction respectively. The artist seeks to further suggest this dynamic in the figurative images of the blue cyanotypes and the streamlined forms of the buckets; between the stacks of plastic buckets (at the Penrith site) and the trees on which the buckets are strapped (at the Heide site).

The architecture is another point of comparison between the two sites that Pedley's installation foregrounds. In particular, Pedley's work underlines how both buildings juxtapose art and nature and facilitate

Opposite

SUE PEDLEY

BLUE JAY WAY 2006–07

100 CYANOTYPES, 100 PLASTIC BUCKETS, MIXED MEDIA
 INSTALLATION DETAIL, PENRITH REGIONAL GALLERY
 & THE LEWERS BEQUEST, EMU PLAINS, NEW SOUTH WALES
 PHOTOGRAPHER: RUBY DAVIES







2 Cassi Plett and Naomi McCarthy, Report on Doyenne's Project: an Oral History of the Penrith Regional Gallery & The Lewers Bequest, 2005, n. p.

3 Peter Hobb recalls Sunday being excited by the plastic aesthetics of the 1960s. She arranged for Christmas guests to have brightly coloured plastic buckets to carry out the chores, as noted in Janine Burke, *op. cit.*, p. 379.

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the exchange between inside and outside. Pedley's process entailed constant transition between the studio/gallery and the yard/garden, and her installation itself flows between interior and exterior. The motifs the artist employs—such as the bamboo blind and the bucket—also augments these relations. Japanese bamboo blind was used as the second exposure on many of the cyanotypes so that its texture imbricates the image. Bamboo blinds, along with other screens, trellises and platforms rendered in natural materials, are used in Ancher House to conjoin indoor and outdoor spaces, and by extension, to suggest the possible fusion of art and architecture, and art and nature, into a complete environment or aesthetic experience. In his recollections of the artists' gatherings at the Lewers' home, architect Andrew Andersons noted how the house, parties, food, garden and artworks were 'like one integrated happening', testament to the Lewers' commitment to Herbert Read's notion of art as central to everyday life.² The interconnectedness of inside and outside spaces also marks David McGlashan's award-winning design for Heide II. Deemed to be one of the finest examples of domestic modernist architecture in Australia, Heide II was devised as a residence and future gallery to house the Reeds' extensive collection of Australian art. The design, by creating a maze of interconnecting rooms and outdoor courtyards, sought to provide ample opportunity for the prospective inhabitant or visitor to be refreshed by contact with the garden.

The bucket, a utensil used for both internal and external domestic tasks, also makes subtle reference to the interconnectedness of interior and exterior. Buckets feature in the memories surrounding the cultivation and maintenance of the

Lewers' garden—the Lewers' elder daughter Darani recalls labouring with buckets of water in the hot sun, not being allowed to swim in the river until the pumpkins were watered—while Sunday Reed apparently found the modernist simplicity of the (then novel) mass-produced plastic bucket compelling.³ In broader terms, the bucket is a receptacle with connotations of containment. A perforated bucket—as Pedley's is—by contrast, suggests seepage, loss and an almost ironic defeat of functionality. Such allusions are apt in [Blue Jay Way](#), given its engagement with cultural history, memory and their natures.

In [Blue Jay Way](#), Pedley intervenes with a light touch into two icons of Australian modernism, which like all institutions at times labour under the weight of interpretation, to allow fresh perspectives to emerge. This is achieved through her poetic and whimsical references to the history and architecture of each site, and by a heightening of awareness of those sites. Pedley's installation activates the spaces in and around the galleries, inviting the viewer to walk through novel pathways, interact with unexpected objects and to experience each site relative to the other. By alluding to bird and human song, she evokes the viewer's aural modes of perception, stimulating experience to suggest different ways of knowing. Along with its explorations of cultural histories, [Blue Jay Way](#) seeks to valorise the holistic integration of garden, architecture and artwork that Heide and Lewers achieve, to offer living examples of the complete aesthetic experience.

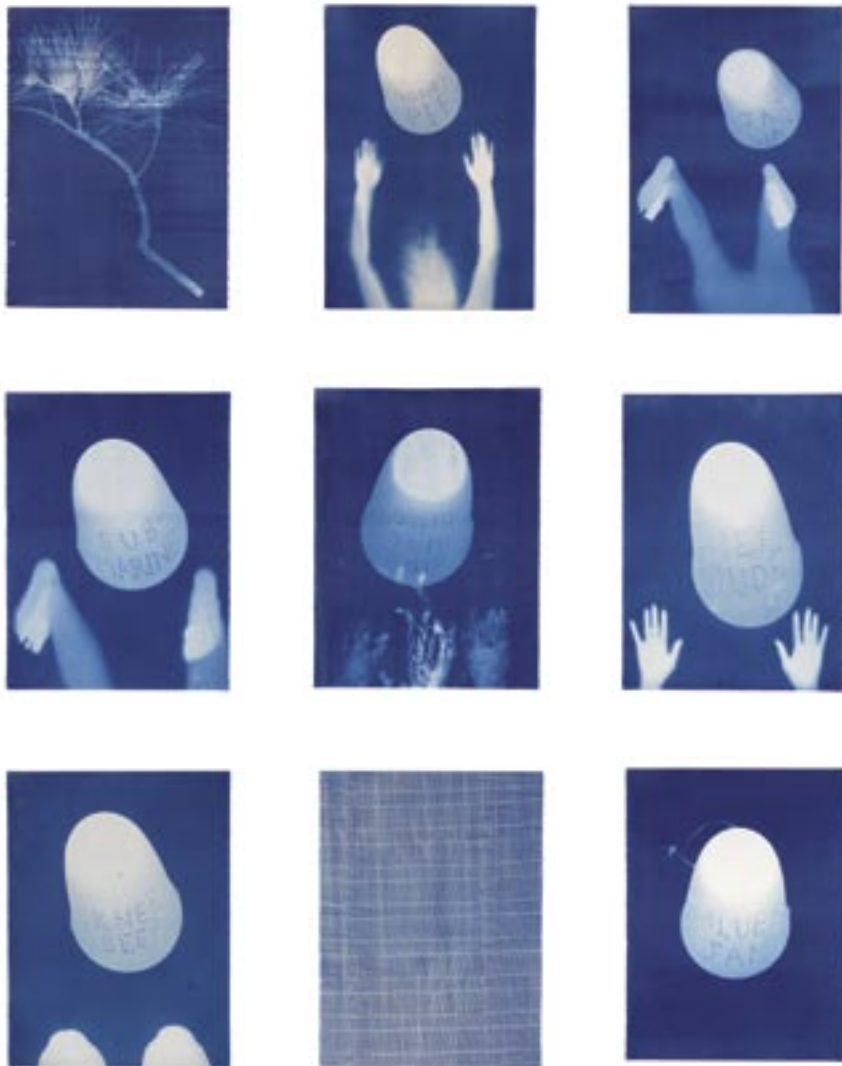
Dr Jacqueline Millner, Lecturer, School of Humanities and Languages, University of Western Sydney

Opposite

SUE PEDLEY
[BLUE JAY WAY](#) 2006–07
 100 CYANOTYPES, 100 PLASTIC BUCKETS, MIXED MEDIA
 INSTALLATION DETAIL, HEIDE MUSEUM
 OF MODERN ART, MELBOURNE
 PHOTOGRAPHER: JOHN GOLLINGS

Previous

SUE PEDLEY
[BLUE JAY WAY](#) 2006–07
 100 CYANOTYPES, 100 PLASTIC BUCKETS, MIXED MEDIA
 INSTALLATION DETAIL, HEIDE MUSEUM
 OF MODERN ART, MELBOURNE
 PHOTOGRAPHER: JOHN GOLLINGS

**Above**

SUE PEDLEY
 BLUE JAY WAY 2006–07
 9 OF 100 CYANOTYPES
 75.0 X 56.0 CM, 110.0 X 75.0 CM
 PHOTOGRAPHER: SUE BLACKBURN

Following

SUE PEDLEY
 BLUE JAY WAY 2006–07
 (WORKING DRAWING)
 CHINAGRAPH AND PENCIL ON PAPER
 75.0 X 56.0 CM
 PHOTOGRAPHER: SUE BLACKBURN

Sue Pedley

Born Launceston 1954; lives and works in Sydney

- 1997 Master of Fine Arts, College of Fine Arts,
 University of New South Wales, Sydney
 1989 Postgraduate Diploma of Fine Art, Sydney
 College of the Arts, Sydney
 1984 Bachelor of Fine Arts, Tasmanian School
 of Art, Hobart

Selected solo exhibitions

- 2002 *Sound of Lotus*, Mori Gallery, Sydney
Sound of Bamboo, Artspace, Royal Botanic
 Gardens, Sydney
 2001 *Sound of Lotus*, Paradise Road Gallery,
 Colombo, Sri Lanka
 2000 *Quarrying Memory*, Gallery 4A, Sydney
 1999 *round and round the garden*,
 Watch This Space, Alice Springs
 1996 *under the pier*, Experimental Art
 Foundation, Adelaide
under the pier, Artspace, Sydney
 1995 *humidity*, Pendulum, Sydney
 1994 *stains frescoes 111 riverbed*,
 Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane
 1993 *frescoes 111 assay*, Australian Girls
 Own Gallery (AGOG), Canberra
 1992 *tide*, First Draft West, Sydney
frescoes, Photospace, Canberra
 1991 *the intertidal zone*, 200 Gertrude Street,
 Melbourne and Performance Space, Sydney
 1989 *the element orange*,
 Performance Space, Sydney
 1986 *blue dog*, Stadelsschule, Frankfurt, Germany
do you want to dance burning wood,
 Galerie Wasch Salon, Frankfurt, Germany

Selected group exhibitions and projects

- 2006 *Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial 2006*, Japan
*Light Sensitive: Contemporary Australian
 Photography from the Loti Smorgon Fund*,
 National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
We are Australian Too, Casula Powerhouse
 Arts Centre, Sydney
Procession, Mai Gallery, Ho Chi Minh
 City, Vietnam
 2005 *Works from Sri Lanka*, Helen Maxwell
 Gallery, Canberra
 2004–06 *A Matter of Time*, 16th Tamworth Fibre
 Textile Biennial, Tamworth Regional
 Gallery, Tamworth, New South Wales
 and national tour
 2003 *First Impressions*, National Gallery
 of Victoria, Melbourne
Reverb, Mai's Gallery, Ho Chi Minh
 City, Vietnam

- 2002 *Hue*, Gallery 4A, Sydney
 2001 *Drawing*, Tin Sheds Gallery, Sydney
 2000 *Techne*, UTS Gallery, Sydney
The Convict and the Jew, with Tess Horwitz,
 24HR Art, Darwin
 1999 *The Convict and the Jew*, with Tess Horwitz,
 Contemporary Art Space, Canberra
Schaufenster in die Welt, Kassel, Germany
 1998–99 *Shields*, National Sculpture Forum, Canberra;
 Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, Sydney;
 Footscray Community Arts Centre, Melbourne
 1998 Second International Sculpture Symposium,
 Hue, Vietnam
 1997 *Australian Perspecta 1997: Between Art
 and Nature*, Art Gallery of New South
 Wales, Sydney
 1991 *Museum of Accidents*, Open City's
 Production, Performance Space, Sydney
 1990 *Combing*, Tin Sheds Gallery, Sydney
 1988 *Landfall*, Chameleon Gallery, Hobart

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 Textile Biennial*, exh. cat., Tamworth Regional Gallery,
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 National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2006, p. 16.
 Isobel Crombie, *First Impressions*, exh. cat.,
 National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2003, p. 12.
 Anne Ferran, 'Listening to Clara, Ethel and Ada',
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 Tess Horwitz, *the intertidal zone*, exh. cat.,
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 Suzanne Lecht, 'Sculpturing Impressions of Hue',
Sculpture News, issue 4, Spring 1999, pp. 32–35.
 Abby Mellich, 'Broken Circle', *stains frescoes 111
 riverbed*, exh. cat., Institute of Modern Art,
 Brisbane, 1994.
 Jacqueline Millner, *Sue Pedley*, Artspace, Sydney, 2003.
 Jacqueline Millner, *Sound of Bamboo*, exh. cat.,
 Artspace, Sydney, 2002.
 Jacqueline Millner, 'Afterword: perspective on
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 of New South Wales, Sydney, 1999, pp. 161, 174.
 Jacqueline Millner, 'Humidity', *Agenda*, vol. 38,
 September 1996, pp. 74–75.
 Jacqueline Millner, *Under the Pier*, exh. cat.,
 Artspace, Sydney, 1996.
 Christine Morrow, 'stains frescoes 111 riverbed',
Eyeline, vol. 26, Summer 1994, p. 28.
 Isabella Reich, 'The Convict and the Jew', *Eyeline*,
 vol. 44, Summer 2000, p. 52.
 Margaret Roberts, 'Drawing: artists talk', *Eyeline*,
 vol. 46, Spring 2001, p. 54.
 Virginia Ross, 'Under the Pier', *Eyeline*, vol. 32,
 February 1997, p. 40.



Heide
Museum of
Modern Art
Heide