



Inside cover: *Solar Farm 12*
Above: On site, Cape Grim

Energy Landscapes: Remaking Nature

Inside the painter's muscle cells chemical energy is transformed as muscles contract, legs push, the body leaps into the air. Energy changes into the kinetic bodily movements of performing, of stretching canvas, of painting a still image. Inside the filmmaker's video camera silicon sensors capture the leaping image, transforming photonic energy into voltage. Amplified and converted into digital data, the potential energy is stored, manipulated and reproduced as a series of sequential stills projected as flickering illusion.

Infused with the resonance of their environment, Robert Habel's almost still paintings juxtapose and intertwine with the luminance of Cole Larsen's moving narratives. Their sophisticated creative improvisation has been honed over 15 years of collaborative practice, with visual dialogues exploring the environmental and socio-political concerns of topical landscapes. Together they speak of nature remade to accommodate humanities hunger for mineral resources and energy sources.

Over several centuries, landscapes of extraction – mines, oil fields and smokestack industries, have symbolised both the degradation of nature and the romance of progress. Of undoubtable sensuality, the red and pink gashed earth, cut open to retrieve precious Zinc at Strathalbyn's Angas Mine – challenges our preconceptions of nature as exempt from human intervention. Balance and harmony with the environment is never immaculately conceived – but rather composed of aggregates of usage and perspective.

The painter, pristinely clad in a white chemical suit, performs the painting into being against the deep blue night sky. A carnival of light, flame bursts, and sound transforms the Santos Point Lowly gas refinery into a sparkling Disneyesque Magic Kingdom. Layer upon layer of paint builds opacity; cut-aways reveal translucence; midfield merges into close-up; smooth vision transmogrifies into magnificently thick gobs of textured paint. Verdicts of environmental damage are disquietingly dissipated by the playful soundscapes of the filmmaker.

Transposed to tropical Cairns, fossils of the energy landscapes – World War II diesel and oil tanks, are repurposed, reused and heritage-listed. Like the coal canals, oil pipelines and electricity wires which transformed the built environment of the western world, landscapes of transmission enable energy transformation to occur between one place and another - from one system to another.

The painter drags a large canvas towards the twisted, rusting metal frame of deconstructed oil ideology. He splatters and swathes in spray enamels. Subjective perspectives are orchestrated. The filmmaker pulls focus swiftly from contemplative concrete and lush foliage to fluorescent graffiti tags. We shift to depths, then surface, and back to stillness. Did you notice a movement – almost captured in the corner of your eye?

Our imagined green future, occupied by emerging landscapes of renewable energy, wind farms and solar fields, are more affect than reality⁴. Even with the cleanest air in the world, the energy of Tasmania's largest windfarm is sullied by its site. While en plein air was once a revolutionary act, beneath the whirring blades of the bloodied turbine landscape the performer/painter/filmmaker channels cultural colonialism. The 1828 Cape Grim massacre of 30 Pennemukeer people will always remain current.

Landscapes of energy, although of large geographic scale, are often unseen by energy consumers. By exposing their inherent invisibilities and social inequities, Larsen and Habel reveal the cycle of energy conversion and loss – from discovery, realisation and production to destruction. Landscapes, power stations, cities, rivers and continents are in a state of movement – only impermanence is unchanging.



⁴ Currently 1.3% of the world's energy comes from non-hydro renewable sources, with the use of coal increasing.

"The world gets back to burning" The Economist, online, June 8th 2011.



A fine day for painting at Cape Grim

Under the harsh glare of a South Australian sun, new compositions spontaneously emerge. The filmmaker multiplies and divides his screens; the painter sketches quickly, storing potential for the studio; later scratching into reflective metal, drawing out refraction, releasing the image moving within. A transformative moment occurs as the distinctive shadow of the filmmaker becomes solid under the hand of the painter. The landscape finds its double.

Energy economies invert as Pike River Woolshed Sun Farm harvests sunshine from dry red earth. The performer parodies propaganda and perceptions as fossil fuels and tidal energy, role-play on commercial news. "We are confident it will be a solution to current problems." Metal panels mirror other still and moving images in the gallery, capturing the presence of the viewer, implicating both you and me in these energetic topical landscape dialogues.

Has humanity's enslavement to energy lessened? Is an energetic system open or closed? Can sustainable energy landscapes be created that do no harm to biodiversity? Does the still image move and the moving image still?

This dynamic collaboration between painter Habel and filmmaker Larsen illuminates the social and ecological conditions of living within interconnected energy systems. Instead of proposing solutions they speak with journalistic neutrality of interdependencies, impacts, implications. Together, their energy exchange invigorates our analysis and appreciation of the aesthetics and ambiguities of remaking nature.

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- 1. *Solar Farm 4*
- 2. *Solar Farm 8*
- 3. *Solar Farm 11*
- 4. *Whyalla Nights 1*
- 5. *Whyalla Nights 2*



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1. *A Night Painting at Point Lowly-west*
2. *On site, Point Lowly*
3. *A Night Painting at Point Lowly-east*



1.



2.



3.



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Collaborative visual art practice Selected exhibitions

- 2011** **Energy Landscapes: the new frontier**, painting and moving image, RiAus, Adelaide, South Australia.
Cairns: in the company of strangers, painting and moving image, Tanks Arts Centre, Cairns, Queensland.
Travelling East in a real AND imagined way, Adelaide City Council, South Australia.
- 2010** **A Night Painting at Point Lowly**, painting and moving image, Santos, Adelaide, South Australia.
In Partnership, painting and moving image, Academy Gallery, University of Tasmania, Launceston, and Devonport Regional Gallery, Tasmania.
The Jetty, moving image, Artroom 5, South Australia.
- 2009** **The Cedars Revisited**, Heysen Festival, Hahndorf, South Australia.
Santos Factory at Night, painting and moving image, Adelaide Festival Centre, South Australia.
- 2008** **Skylarking and other Serious Pursuits**, moving image, AV-Central, Adelaide, South Australia.
Peeling Walls, painting and moving image, SALA Festival, Adelaide, South Australia.
- 2007** **Travels Through Topical Landscapes**, painting and moving image, Flinders University Art Museum, Adelaide, South Australia.
Havin' fun in the sun, painting and moving image, Poimena Gallery, Launceston, Tasmania.
- 2006** **Singapore Landscapes**, painting and moving image, Sculpture Square, Singapore.
- 2004** **Gillman in the CBD**, painting and moving image, South Australian Museum.
- 1997** **On the Land at Gillman**, painting, photography and moving image, Community Arts Centre Gallery, Port Adelaide.

1. *Terramin Angas Mine 2*
 2. *Terramin Angas Mine 3*
 3. *Terramin Angas Mine 4*
 4. *Sun Farm*

List of works

A Night Painting at Point Lowly-east, 2007, oil on canvas, 160x260cm

A Night Painting at Point Lowly-west, 2007, oil on canvas, 160x260cm

Whyalla Nights 1, 2007, oil on canvas, 41x61cm

Whyalla Nights 2, 2007, oil on canvas, 41x61cm

Whyalla Nights 3, 2007, oil on canvas, 41x61cm

Tanks Walls Large 1, 2011, oil on canvas, 200x280cm

Tanks Walls Large 3, 2011, oil on canvas, 200x280cm

A fine day for painting at Cape Grim (with apologies to the Union Jack), 2009, acrylic, charcoal and pencil on woven polyester sail cloth, 190x140cm

Solar Farm 1, 2009, oil on paper, 31x86cm

Solar Farm 2, 2009, oil on paper, 31x86cm

Solar Farm 3, 2009, oil on paper, 31x43cm

Solar Farm 4, 2009, oil on paper, 31x43cm

Solar Farm 5, 2009, oil on paper, 31x43cm

Solar Farm 6, 2009, oil on paper, 31x43cm

Solar Farm 7, 2009, oil on paper, 31x43cm

Solar Farm 8, 2009, oil on paper, 31x43cm

Solar Farm 9, 2009, oil on paper, 31x43cm

Solar Farm 10, 2009, oil on paper, 31x43cm

Solar Farm 11, 2009, oil on paper, 31x43cm

Solar Farm 12, 2009, oil on paper, 31x43cm

Solar Farm 13, 2009, oil on paper, 31x43cm

Solar Farm 14, 2009, oil on paper, 31x43cm

Terramin Angas Mine 1, 2010, oil on oil paper, 31x86cm

Terramin Angas Mine 2, 2010, oil on oil paper, 31x43cm

Terramin Angas Mine 3, 2010, oil on oil paper, 31x43cm

Terramin Angas Mine 4, 2010, oil on oil paper, 31x43cm 2010

Sun Farm, 2011, oil and acrylic on brushed aluminium sheets, 8 panels, 2.4x 3.2m

Moving image list of works

Solar Flair: the new farming, 2011, 3:00 min HD video
Lyrup, South Australia

Old MacDonald had a solar farm: E-I-E-I-O, 2011, 3:00 min HD video
Lyrup, South Australia

Largely through reflection and duplication the artist paints and scrapes a solar dotted landscape onto shining aluminium sheets. His contemporary landscape with an absence of lush rolling hills, romanticism or nostalgia speaks more about today than sentimental depictions of the bush or beach.



On site, The Pike River Woolshed Sun Farm

Renewable News, 2011, 2:00 min, HD Video
Focks Studios, South Australia

Fossil News, 2011, 2:00 min, HD Video
Focks Studios, South Australia

The news as propoganda or serving the interests of the interested? The artist as the news reader provides an insight into the world of renewable and non-renewable energy. The viewer is challenged to decipher truths, half truths and untruths.



Tank 2.o, 2011, 23:30 min HD Video
Cairns, far North Queensland

The artist drags a large canvas along the road towards an idle and lonely tank sitting on the edge of the lush gardens. He starts painting with a mixture of enamels and spray cans, interpreting the contrast of concrete and tropical garden. The moving image moves past the still canvas, revealing the bright and alluring hip hop lettering of graffiti tags.

**A Fine Day for Painting at Cape Grim
(with apologies to the Union Jack)**, 2009, 12:15 min DVCam Video
Cape Grim, Tasmania

Woolnorth Station–Cape Grim: the northernmost tip of Tasmania; the cleanest air in the world; the site of an Aboriginal massacre in the late 1820s; still owned by Van Diemens Land Company and the site of Tasmania's largest windfarm.

The artist travels through the landscape, walking as he does, carrying his paints, canvas and a television set under his arm. As a performer the TV is his digital link to the tactile exercise of reproducing the landscape on canvas, in paint.



On site, oil tanks

Port Lowly Carnival Nights, 2006, 5 x 2:00 min DVCam Video
(music composition Andreas Lustig)
Point Lowly, South Australia

The coloured lights and bursts of flames ascend into the night sky, reviving childhood memories of Luna Park rather than the workings of an industrial site. The moving image is layered and continually shifts the focal point pushing the viewer closer to and further away from the *showbiz*. The artist as a performer represents fiction and non-fiction in the landscape. He interprets and documents his environment; this much is real. At night the focus is on the artist and the refinery, excluding other geographical and physical elements of the landscape present during the day. This depiction helps the viewer to understand the relationship between artist and source.



On site, Point Lowly



On site, The Pike River Woolshed Sun Farm