

Dear Pattie

It is just sinking in how special it was to mingle with you and Michele on the land where I live.

Fos and I revisited today to find all as it was a week ago, with its beautiful complexity and serendipitous couplings, its swaying balance, and knotty junctions.

Time and place have provided some interesting subtle additions and subtractions. Fallen sticks, leaves drying and falling, clay cracking.

Fos just walked through/under shaking his dam-wet fur over everything. Who knows what other creatures have visited to sniff, nibble, tug?

This is scrubby, prickly, ant-y bush, beautiful but not pretty. Its' gems are well-hidden, often fleeting and so even more precious. Its' spirit is gnarly, a streetfighter, a pugilist, its' demeanour grumpy and stand-offish. The sound of it is the muffled thump of a black wallaby tail and the grating squark of a sulphur-crested cockatoo.

I open my heart to this bush in awe. A small grassy woodland survivor.

*“People participate as materials – in the eco system –gift me things, engage in the foraging and crafting, offer conversation, experience giving the materials a voice.”*

Opening your practice to others creates a mind-blowing array of possibilities. A potential for staggering creative expansion, but also chaos.

I imagined it might be difficult, a clashing of egos, but it wasn't like that at all. Our collecting, musing, shaping, mixing, placing, tying, draping was calm, delightful, engaging. Perhaps because we are naturally simpatico, but I think this process of placing yourself alongside the materials instead of above, engenders a natural dampening of the ego. I wonder what you think about that idea, Pattie?

Michele and I talk about that day together and puzzle over the colonisation discussion we were having with you, it is an on-going conversation, challenging us to position ourselves differently in the world.

When we stopped that day, we three sat on the soft grass that always appears under those native cherry trees and ate apples together.

Three weeks later

It's late afternoon, Pattie, dappled sun crosses the path, really a bright sunny day; it's been beautiful. So, I'm approaching and ...oh, it's changed so much! It's collapsing, degenerating, melding, merging. The 'aesthetic' piece that manifested at the other end has fallen and is making its own kind of new aesthetic statement on the ground. And the main part is, I don't know, looks like it's kind of folding in on itself. Becoming something else. Something less. Something more.

I returned to my studio full of things that I've made, painted, sculpted, drawn, woven and they're all sitting there gathering a layer of dust and irrelevance. When I was creating them, there was absorption, focus, fulfilment, and occasionally joy. And, also, an opportunity to make a problem and then solve it. I was trying to communicate something, yes, that's part of what I was doing, but you know, they're not communicating anything to anyone right now.

Currently, my studio place has a spirit of heaviness instead of happiness.

My beloved creations have become obligations to attend to, finished as they are.

*“Studios, back rooms, hidden places become places for alchemy, wonder, experimentation, conversation, and mess. Sometimes they become the art – hidden away – accessible by invitation only. I ponder making the studio the work – art as a verb.”*

This makes me think differently about my studio of things. I am reminded that a sense of child-like wonder is your best friend as an artist, and I feel it possible to un-attach them from their solidity and look at them as in flux, on the way to being something else.

It will be lovely to visit you on the beach Pattie. Michele and I are looking forward to that. And knowing that by just being there we will change the energy, add to the work, be a part of the work, is an exciting feeling.

*“A co-emergence of relations between place, context, viewer, and artist emerges. – an aliveness – generative of conversation.”*

I have been watching how it is at that place on the beach where you are. I am struck by the fragile strength of the manifested ‘sculpture’, the way it talks to the wind and the waves, the sense that the organic, tumbleweed-like pieces will toss away along the sand, the cohabiting of people and sound and dance and quiet and moonlight and sun and space. Surely a rich and multi layered imprint is occurring.

I am reminded of the indigenous cultural activity of yarnning. Michele and I enjoyed being part of a yarnning circle of weavers during lockdown – zoom style. The same non-linear, dynamic connection between people happens in your work, with the added complex layers of materials and place.

*“My ethos for inhabiting place decentres the human and repositions it in an ecosystem of materials.”*

I experience your work as a continuum, not a frozen moment. It absolutely allows for fortuitous happenings, an invitation from the materials and the place they are occupying to converse, contemplate, join in. The materials including, but not restricted to, the humans.

I have read some wonderful books lately, concerned with the realisation that the natural world is even more complex than we have imagined, trees and plants communicating with one other to protect, nurture, inform and forewarn. The sculptural place that your work occupies seems perfectly aligned with an awareness happening in the world these days - a waking up to the idea that humans occupy a place *alongside* other living things, not above. I know I am only touching on a small part of the whole of your practice, and I look forward to my understanding of it growing.

Well, Pattie, Michele and I will see you on the beach. I hope it has been so far, a 'performance of mattering' that brings you joy. We look forward to being a part of it.

Love Sally