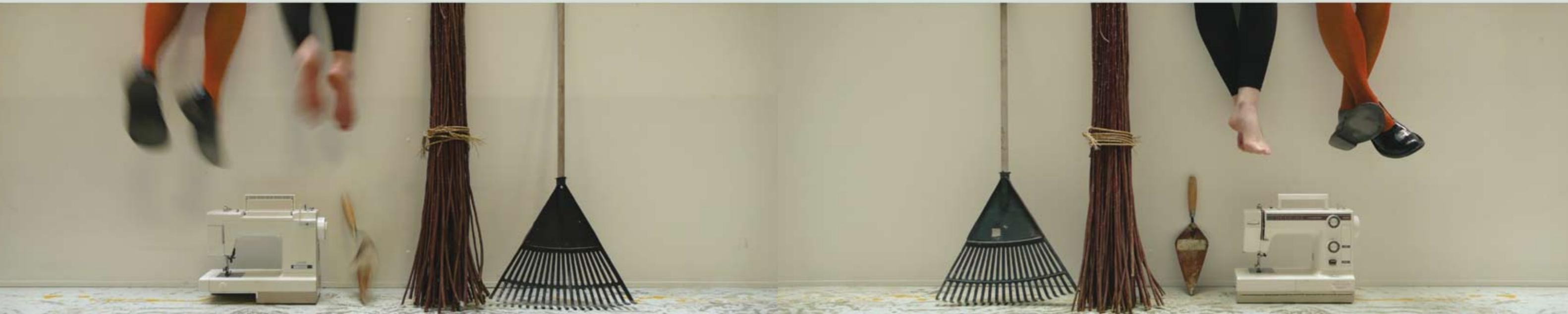


Nicole Voevodin-Splash and Elizabeth Woops

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# LANDscapers





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Nicole Voevodin-Cash and Elizabeth Woods

## INTRODUCTION

Voevodin–Cash and Woods met one another in regional Queensland in 1998. From this meeting they became friends and collaborators.

Within the art world they were labelled 'regional artists', a categorisation which implied that because they didn't make art from a central, 'more important' reference point (e.g. a metropolitan city), they sat outside a certain clique of art making. This motivated both artists to find a suitable way of working that held significance both in and out of regional areas.

Voevodin–Cash and Woods focused on the positive outcomes of regionalism. This allowed them the freedom to explore and experiment within their practices, drawing on theories addressing the literal and functional site. This led to investigations into the natural environment, site specificity, landscaping, cooking, sewing and essentially pushing boundaries with their art and audiences to question: 'What is art?' and 'What is it good for?'

This shared rationale consolidated a working relationship between these two artists that has lasted for more than ten years. It seemed inevitable that this would eventuate into a collaborative project/exhibition that continues to explore the main area of investigation shared by these artists – *site and interaction*.

## WALKING INTO AND OUT OF WHITENESS

I am always interested in seeing artwork in artists' studios, people's houses or within work environments, or indeed in unusual spaces as lived or isolated context can at times provide a greater depth of meaning and a stimulus for informed conversation. With this in mind it seems to me almost ludicrous that we locate much of our art in rectangular, bland and featureless rooms and then try to attract people to come in and look at it.

But then art galleries are part of a socio-economic system that organises our houses, streets, parks, factories and shops into a visual plan mediated by history, politics and environment. Functions are clearly demarcated and separated. A closer look at this plan reveals systems akin to those found in the human body. Some people even go so far as to talk about the city as a metaphoric body (e.g. the parks as lungs, the streets as veins etc). Whatever way one talks about it, the elements that make up a city are a kind of language that helps us understand who we are and what we value.

Artists Nicole Voevodin-Cash and Elizabeth Woods have in their *LANDscapers* project set out to explore the language of the city, to challenge our expectations of a gallery, to transpose a mediated visual map into a regimented three dimensional space and to create an extended engagement with the audience and community generally.

What we see at the end of the exhibition period and indeed in the images of the finally developed and operating exhibition is an installation in a gallery space that is on the one hand a three dimensional semi-abstract drawing, and on the other hand, an almost living and growing organic form. It offers some obvious references to plant form, human body parts and the act of breathing. However its whiteness cautions against trying to take these comparisons too far.

Interestingly, the beginning and end of the *LANDscapers* project seems less important than what happened in between. The artists started the project by developing a drawing stimulated by walking arbitrarily around a section of city streets. The drawing was made in a not too dissimilar way to stream of consciousness writing. Voevodin-Cash and Woods drew a plan of the streets as they walked through them, and the growing plan started to look less like an actual transposition of the actual streets and

more like the meanderings of their own minds. The cul-de-sac like shapes, for instance, did not represent actual courts but turning back points when there was little mental stimulation. The notion of scale was interrupted when the eye was attracted to something like a flower or group of trees and the drawing took a distinctive detailed look, as opposed to a scaled street map. This was landscape design or topography as a kind of psycho mapping. But above all the whole process was more about walking, seeing and connecting than trying to represent any larger symbolic or representative issue or viewpoint. One might say that where you walk is where you are meant to find yourself; nothing more and nothing less than that.

After a day in the streets, the artists then moved into the gallery at the beginning of a normal exhibition cycle; inhabiting it with the tools and materials with which to take the drawing further. The challenge was to recreate the city drawing into 3 dimensions using fabric and so for the next 30 days the gallery literally became a studio and factory. But again, as in the original drawing process, Voevodin-Cash and Woods were not focused on creating a product but were more concerned with process and connectivity and now by adding a broader group of people into the equation they were recharting place with the addition of a community of sorts. In this sense the gallery became more like a garden and the activity that was taking place was a form of landscaping as opposed to manufacturing – the artists with the help of others were landscaping the cubic space of the gallery and also growing new relationships. Not only was the space being worked with and redeveloped but it was also made accessible.

The focus was now on relationship building with visitors. Both individuals and groups came to visit. Some groups such as gardening and walking groups had, along with other community groups, been invited with a letter. Each individual or group was welcomed with cups of tea, cake, and lunch and engaged in conversation. Conversation topics ranged from gardening to shadow play to cooking to sewing. Many stayed to help and some made a number of return visits to watch the progress of work, whilst others became active volunteers and team members. The artists, in recognition of the role of other people in this process, extended the sewing of the fabric drawing into white uniforms for the other 'gardeners'. This was further extended one night with a special candlelit dinner in the 'garden'.

At times the gallery space resembled a giant dressmaker's table, a kind of homage to the skills of the pattern maker and dressmaker who manage to bring together an assortment of strange shaped pieces of fabric into a recognizable form and to

the conversations that take place around this work. In the end the work in the gallery is constructed and provides various clues and references to the real world in its positioning on walls and the floor and via its organic shapes and its loose grid elements, but it resists being labelled an object in situ. Rather it has been made to grow from within the gallery, an intervention, which now became part of the breathing (air conditioning system) of the space with its attached umbilical cord. The new gallery, like the womb, brings forth new life.

The materiality of the project was finally launched, and like the return to the normal body after birth, the gallery space returned to its neutrality. For its instigators, the LANDscapers project brought together a dovetailing set of skills and interests and also a pleasure in craft, humble and wearable materials, and personal communication. Both artists in their own practices, inside and outside the gallery connect people and places through materials. They are interested in the concept of conduits and channelling and the differentiation of inside and outside space and how we negotiate this. Their collaboration here has clarified existing practice but also allowed new growth.

Finally, I am left pondering the Donald Judd quote where he says that 'art doesn't get made, it happens'. So yes, contrary to my opening paragraph, an artwork can be placed in a white rectangular gallery box and it has the potential to be truly poetic or speak of a different order of understanding. The artwork comes from the real world, references the real world but makes visible the invisible. And in this sense it is the context of the gallery space that allows for that to happen.

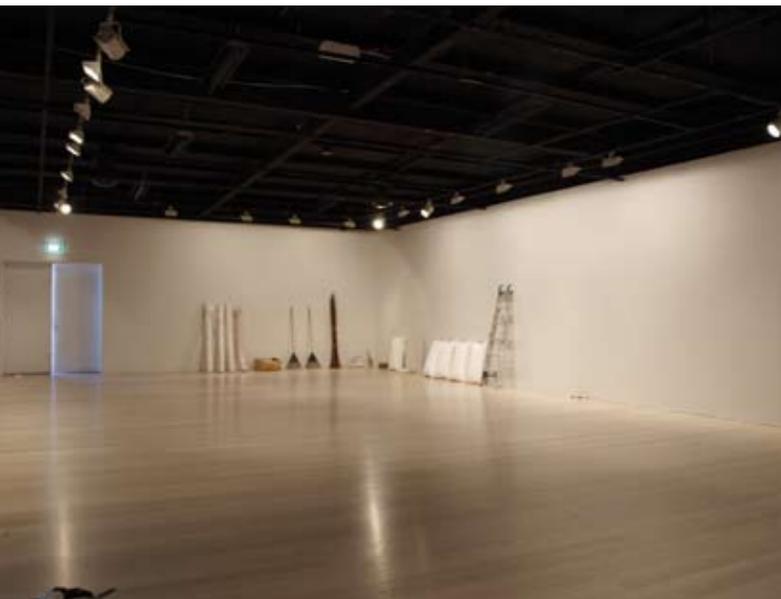
In *LANDscapers* the art is both made and happens. At what point did the art happen in this project? For me it was not at any one point or even the physical culmination of the process but more in the connections explored and made and the traces of memory that the project will provide for a diverse range of people. In this project it was not so much the artists' role to find poetic or new levels of meaning in things or life but to share the challenge of making meaning with other people. We walk into whiteness and back out and for a brief moment of time see the connections between each other and things more clearly.

KEVIN WILSON

Program Director, Artworkers Queensland

process

DAY 1 & 2



DAY 3 & 4

DAY 5 & 6



DAY 7 & 8

DAY 9 & 10



DAY 11 & 12

DAY 13 & 14



DAY 15 & 16

DAY 17 & 18



DAY 19 & 20

DAY 21 & 22



DAY 23 & 24

DAY 25 & 26



DAY 27

WEEK 1



WEEK 2



WEEK 3



WEEK 4













## ELIZABETH WOODS

Elizabeth Woods is a public artist, as opposed to an artist who makes private art for public space. She suggests that the objects she makes are relevant but not significant and believes that the relationships gained through the creative experience are more important than the actual objects produced.

Woods lives between the Sunshine Coast, Queensland and Tasmania. She is currently undertaking a PhD at the University of Tasmania. For the past 7 years Woods has been an itinerant artist travelling both nationally and internationally working on various site-specific projects, public commissions and residencies.

Support for Woods' projects has been diverse. She recently undertook a UNESCO residency in France (2007), and was the recipient of an Australia Council New Works grant (2008) that will allow her to travel back to Europe in the production of a new body of work.

## NICOLE VOEVODIN-CASH

Voevodin-Cash's practice has produced a significant body of work dealing with phenomenology of the senses, investigating interaction as a sculptural strategy and its relationship to site. She lives and works on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland.

Voevodin-Cash holds a Diploma in Fine Arts, a Graduate-Diploma in Art Education and a Masters in Visual Arts. She has been the recipient of a number of awards from the Australia Council, Arts Queensland, Regional Development programs and has completed a number of public art commissions. Recently she received an Australia Council New Work grant to spend 6 months in the studio further investigating the landscape using 'inflation' as a medium and process.

Voevodin-Cash believes, theoretically, there is nothing more timeless than a garden. Interweave this with an interest in interaction and you have works that landscape each site using the senses.

Nicole Voevodin-Cash is represented by Arc One, Melbourne.  
[www.voevodin-cash.com](http://www.voevodin-cash.com)

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