Scott Wilmot Bennett

Artist Statement

My work is about exploring meaning in the world and life through the materials, processes and stylistic language of art. I am concerned with search, investigation and inquiry. I believe that art, life and myth are inextricably linked.

> "Not only the result, but the road to it also, is a part of truth. The investigation of truth must itself be true, true investigation is unfolded truth, the disjuncted members of which unite in the result" S.M. EISENSTEIN

It was in this spirit of "genuine investigation" that I approached the residency at Undara. Many of my most successful works have been as a result of direct experience.

Paddling my standup paddle board (SUP) on One Hundred Mile Swamp was a peak experience. Being from the coast, the water made me feel comfortable, at home, yet I was paddling through the outback! Surrounded by savannah and that rocky boldered landscape with its low granite outcrops that would become familiar.

Alone on the water paddling silently through a collection of the most astonishing trees was a wonderful meditation. One tree in particular has been enshrined, in the painting *The Rainbow Gold*. I'm reminded of the notion that an ordinary thing is promoted to the dignity of an art object by the simple choice of the artist.

It's funny to think of the countless trees out there, but this one is now, in a small way, "famous". It has already been seen by several hundred people, an icon that exists as prints, photos and a painting that's located in a city thousands of miles away.

I loved Undara's changing seasons, in the wet everything is green and growing. There is water everywhere creating strong contrasts. Puddles in the red earth reflect the light and attract colourful birds. The land seems less harsh, it is welcoming.

The water table can rise up during the wet, partially flooding the lava tubes. It is a marvellous experience to walk through the crystal clear water. Sunlight filtered and dappled, illuminates the cool water and reflecting and refracting, it bounces off the rock, creating a magical effect. For a moment I saw a flash of paradise a moment of transcendent radiance. I now know why the ancient grottos had such mystique.

In the dry, the green disappears, contracting into the shallow depression that forms the now almost waterless swamp. It was another profound experience to wander on foot what I had floated over. The woodland series resulted from these wanderings.

Fire is a common theme that runs through all the works. Undara is after all, an ancient lava field, criss-crossed by a rare geological feature, the lava tube. The trees as well, have fire written in their appearance. The different types of bark, evolved as a specific strategy against bushfire, are a constant reminder.

My favourite time of the day was late afternoon. Walking the Pioneer track at sunset, I was stuck by the sight of the brilliant red leaves of new growth and the golden blaze of the grass, both backlit by the sun. In the flickering saffron coloured light everything seemed on fire.