



Illumination
The art of Philip Wolfhagen

Education kit

A Newcastle Art Gallery and Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery travelling exhibition



Illumination
The art of Philip Wolfhagen

Education kit

A Newcastle Art Gallery and Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery travelling exhibition



Contents

Philip Wolfhagen Biography	5
Focus Study 1: Overview Process and materials	6
Focus Study 1: Questions Process and materials	10
Focus Study 2: Overview Influences - Artists	11
Focus Study 2: Questions Influences - Artists	15
Focus Study 3: Overview Influences - Tasmania	16
Focus Study 3: Questions Influences - Tasmania	20
Glossary	21
Bibliography	22

Images
Previous page
Philip's palette in the Longford studio 2013

Cover page
Study for 'Shifting light' (detail) 2002
oil on plywood
3 panels
Purchased 2010
Newcastle Art Gallery collection

Illumination The art of Philip Wolfhagen
Education kit

About this exhibition

This exhibition surveys the twenty five year career of Australian painter Philip Wolfhagen. Born in 1963 in Tasmania, Wolfhagen is from a long line of northern Tasmanian settlers.

Wolfhagen’s abiding enchantment with the Australian landscape is the focus of this major travelling exhibition which will visit seven venues, starting at Newcastle Art Gallery in 2013.

The exhibition explores the tactility and intimacy of Wolfhagen’s painting process – in particular his lush surfaces of oil and beeswax, his command of colour and his use of signature devices such as the split horizon or picture plane.

Through the evocative and suggestive power of his landscapes, Wolfhagen allows us to rethink our origins – our arrival and our sense of belonging. Works on display explore Wolfhagen’s personal (and ancestral) connection to northern Tasmania, inspired by landscape painters who range from Cezanne to Constable, and classical musicians such as Handel, Beethoven and Britten.

Wolfhagen’s work is held in major public and corporate collections in Australia and in private collections nationally and internationally.

Exhibiting venues will feature up to fifty four major works by the artist, as well as studies, and the artist’s journals spanning his career to date (1989 – 2012).

Tour schedule

Newcastle Art Gallery, NSW: 22 June - 11 August 2013

Tasmanian Museum And Art Gallery, TAS: 13 September - 1 December 2013

The Australian National University Drill Hall Gallery, ACT: 20 February - 6 April 2014

Cairns Regional Gallery, QLD: 9 May - 6 July 2014

Tweed River Art Gallery, NSW: 8 August - 12 October 2014

Hamilton Art Gallery, VIC: 15 November 2014 - 1 February 2015

Gippsland Art Gallery, VIC: 14 February - 12 April 2015

Exhibition sponsors



About this education resource

This kit aims to enhance students’ experiences whilst visiting the exhibition, *Illumination The art of Philip Wolfhagen*, encouraging students to [Look](#), [Discuss](#), [Explore](#) and [Create](#) using ideas and teaching frameworks employed by the Visual Arts. [Webpage](#) questions encourage students to access further information on the Newcastle Art Gallery website. [Extension Activities](#) are also included for History, Geography, Music, Computer Studies and Science syllabi.

This resource is targeted to year 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 students. Teachers are advised to adapt to suit the needs of less or more capable students.

Newcastle Art Gallery strongly supports experience based learning and advises that this kit be used in conjunction with a visit to the exhibition.

Additional publications supporting the exhibition

Illumination The art of Philip Wolfhagen exhibition catalogue 2013

Illumination The art of Philip Wolfhagen exhibition video

Illumination The art of Philip Wolfhagen Kid’s art trail 2013

Learning webpages 2013 nag.org.au/learning/wolfhagen

Philip Wolfhagen
Biography



Longford studio, 2011

Wolfhagen is an artist of conviction. He seeks the immutable qualities in landscape, those elements to which human beings seem evolved to respond emotionally, and he creates works of art that impress deeply and lastingly on our minds.

Jane Clark- Painting memory

Philip Wolfhagen was born in 1963 and raised on farms in the Isis Valley and Longford in northern Tasmania.

In his early twenties Wolfhagen travelled through Canada and Alaska before enrolling at the Centre for the Arts, University of Tasmania in 1983. Dissatisfied by receiving a mere “pass” for his studies at the end of his first year, Wolfhagen took another year off with the intention of paddling in his home made kayak through the canals of pre-industrial Europe. After a week of heavy rain and near misses negotiating large boats in the narrow tunnels, Wolfhagen withdrew from the trip.

Soon after, Wolfhagen returned to the University of Tasmania and graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in 1987, majoring in printmaking.

Between 1988 - 89 Wolfhagen taught himself to paint in a rented studio in the Salamanca Arts Centre in Hobart. His first major paintings came in 1989 as the result of a commission for Murray High School in Queenstown, through the Tasmanian Art for Public Buildings Scheme.

In 1990 Wolfhagen moved to Sydney and began a Post Graduate Diploma at the Sydney College of Arts. This move resulted in a longing for the Tasmanian environment that he had left behind.

Homesick, Wolfhagen began painting imagery of Tasmania from his memory and soon his recognisable approach to landscape painting emerged.

By the 1990s Wolfhagen’s work was increasingly attracting more and more attention from colleagues and collectors alike, with a string of exhibitions which launched him into the national arena.

In 1995 when Wolfhagen’s first child was born the family returned to Longford, Tasmania. After years of longing for his home landscape he was able to be immersed within it and observations of its slight but constant changes became major features of his work.

Over the next decade Wolfhagen brought this perceptive understanding of the environment to works featuring the land, the sea and the sky interpreting landscape in remarkably different ways.

An operation in 2009 to remove cataracts from his eyes resulted in a new view - both visually and artistically for Wolfhagen, with a renewed interest in drawing, line and detail.

Almost twenty years after returning to Tasmania from Sydney, Wolfhagen continues to be inspired by the Tasmanian landscape.

Focus Study 1: Overview
Process and Materials

The make or break moment! This part of my process usually involves an intense engagement with a piece of music, and often I am not really conscious of the act of painting. I think my best work comes out of this engagement with listening, so that actually I am not thinking about painting - I think only about sound and colour, about the texture of the music and of the tonality of light and shade, about the materials in my hands, and the rhythms inherent in both mediums

Philip Wolfhagen

Considered a ‘painter’s painter’ Philip Wolfhagen is a dedicated and in many ways traditional studio painter. Committed five hours a day, six days a week, his studio is the basis for Wolfhagen’s almost ritualistic art making process. The large studio space is pungent with smells of paint, linseed oil and beeswax – materials Wolfhagen has become renowned for.

Newcastle Art Gallery curator Sarah Johnson describes the experience of discovering Wolfhagen’s studio

Longford is a Georgian era town, a short drive from the centre of Launceston in northern Tasmania- the architecture of the village centre resonating a time gone by. Tucked next to the bakery is an unassuming colonial era building, a former flour mill, painted white and convict built as most structures are in this part of Tasmania. The downstairs is a scattered, maze like appliance repair workshop. Winding your way through the cavernous downstairs, heading up a precarious set of steep wooden stairs, you enter into a discrete light filled space- you enter Philip Wolfhagen’s studio.

A place of vigorous creativity the studio is a space for Wolfhagen to conceive ideas and meticulously work and rework his paintings. His process begins with selecting environs that appeal to him. Wolfhagen refers to this process

I am only really interested in painting places I know and love, the places that are meaningful for me, I have no desire to paint a landscape for the sake of it.

This meaningful place is Tasmania, a place where Wolfhagen and his family share a long and connected history. Wind, beautiful rivers meandering out of the mountains, the trees and the ocean are all parts of the ancient landscape that captivates Wolfhagen’s imagination. Wolfhagen himself claims to be a *perceptual artist, not a conceptual artist*.

Wolfhagen rigorously collects and condenses photographs of his surrounding landscape by photographing, sorting, printing, and framing chosen compositions. His journals are filled with drawings, small studies for larger works, and writings describing his process, emotions, ideas and triggers or cues for later reference. His journals are like the purest form of Visual Arts Process Diaries developed by students of Visual Arts.

Long before the act of painting begins Wolfhagen can spend days doing what he describes as *chromatic tuning*. This is the process of mixing colour on the glass slab he uses as his palette.

Without any formal tuition in painting, mixing his colours this way has come mostly through trial and error. Wolfhagen prepares his paints using a technique employed since the Renaissance. Hand ground pigment is mixed with cold pressed linseed oil. Despite a tendency to yellow, it has proven over hundreds of years to make strong, durable paints that dry slowly, allowing ample time for mixing and blending.

The other ingredient Wolfhagen adds in precise proportions is beeswax. One of his summer jobs as a young man was beekeeping and the beeswax that he mixes with his pigments creating luscious light enhancing textures originally came from beehives owned by his brother.

When the palette is ready Wolfhagen works quickly, using the imagery from his photographs to guide him. He applies paint with a paint trowel creating whole landscape picture planes on a single canvas and others split across several separate canvases lined up in a row. The latter is a signature device for which he has become well known. As he moves the paint across the canvas he blends, encourages graininess of texture, and scrapes back to reveal line work, and juxtapositions of colour.

Over time paintings emerge, sometimes immediately, other times after Wolfhagen has worked and reworked the surface many times over long periods.



Scrape
Study for 'A painter's landscape V' 2010
oil and beeswax on linen
46 x 49 cm
Philip and Catherine Wolfhagen collection

The final ingredient in his art making process is one that plays out in the background from start to finish. For Wolfhagen, the role of music is extraordinarily important in the production of his work. Amongst others, the sounds of George Frideric Handel - a British Baroque composer, famous for his operas, anthems, and organ concertos, Ludwig van Beethoven - a German composer and pianist who remains one of the most famous and influential of all composers, and Edward Benjamin Britten - an English composer, conductor, and pianist, all echo throughout the studio.

Wolfhagen explains that classical music in the studio re-focuses his consciousness on painting. He is drawn to music which mimics the fluid troughs and peaks of nature, as well as dark and melancholic compositions. Nature and melancholy are two prevalent themes in Wolfhagen's body of work.



Blend
Landscape semaphore no 10 2004
oil and beeswax on linen
2 panels
96 x 101 cm (each), 96 x 212 cm (overall)
Philip and Catherine Wolfhagen collection



Graininess of texture
Study for 'Shifting light' 2002
oil on plywood
3 panels
30 x 37 cm (each), 30 x 112.5 cm (overall)
Purchased 2010
Newcastle Art Gallery collection



Melancholy
Settlement III 2006
oil and beeswax on linen
200 x 214 cm
Batmen Superannuation Fund
On loan to Burnie Regional Art Gallery,
Burnie City Council



Nature

Study for 'Winter solstice' 2008
oil and beeswax on linen
57 x 46 cm
Edwina Jagelman collection



Split picture plane

The strewn path 2002
oil and beeswax on linen
3 panels
128.5 x 96 cm (each), 128.5 x 312 cm
(overall)
Private collection

Focus Study 1: Questions Process and Materials

Look

Look closely at Wolfhagen's paintings. Can you distinguish which of his works do and don't use beeswax without looking at the label next to the work of art?

Find *Journey to the source III* 2009 and *The first 5 days of April* 2011. Compare how the paint has been applied to each work.

Discuss

Describe the ways that using beeswax impacts on the end result of Wolfhagen's paintings. Discuss how these works look different to those without it.

Discuss the techniques Wolfhagen has used to apply the paint to *Journey to the source III* 2009 and *The first 5 days of April* 2011. Which techniques are the same and which are different? Your discussion may include the materials used, which colours were laid down first, the action of the artist's hand, or evidence of a brush versus a paint trowel.

Explore

Wolfhagen employs a studio approach to landscape painting. Explain what this entails, and explore alternative approaches other artists use when painting landscapes.

Wolfhagen describes himself as a *perceptual artist not a conceptual artist*. Define these terms and explain what you think Wolfhagen means by this. Provide examples by identifying features of his work which exemplify this.

In contrast, find an artist who could be described as a conceptual artist not a perceptual artist. Identify the artist and include examples of their work which exemplify this.

Create

Plan three excursions to the same outdoor location at three different times during the day. You may like to take photos of a landscape, seascape or skyscape. Set up a camera and take the same photo on each visit. Use the photos as the basis for three linear style prints. Draw your images onto Styrofoam sheets using a pointed edge such as a sharpened pencil. Next, apply paint to the entire drawn surface with a paint roller. Press the foam sheet paint side down onto paper and lift off to reveal your prints.

Extension Question: Geography

Go to nag.org.au/learning/wolfhagen and visit the [Influences - music and literature](#) page. Watch performances of some of Wolfhagen's favourite compositions. Identify sections of the music that do the following things;

- 1) Mimic the fluid troughs and peaks of nature
- 2) Sounds dark and melancholic

Compose a piece of music inspired by either fluid troughs and peaks of nature, or sounds which are dark and melancholic.

Arrange for each student to play their composition in front of the class. Allow time after each performance for class discussion about a title that would best suit the piece. Vote as a class for the final decisions about song titles.

Webpage

Go to nag.org.au/learning/wolfhagen and visit the [Artist's studio and practice](#) page. Look closely at the journal entries by Wolfhagen. Many of the drawings are studies for resolved works shown in the exhibition. Describe the content kept in art making journals and explain the benefits artists receive by keeping journals.

Select one of Wolfhagen's paintings and imagine the ways that he may have documented its process in his journals. Pretend that you are Wolfhagen at that time and dedicate three double pages in your art book to the journaling he could have done before the work was complete. You could include diary entries describing your ideas and feelings, photographs, colour swatches, sketches, and paint studies.

Focus Study 2: Overview
Influences - Artists

I think it is critically important to interpret the art of the past in the process of making art in the present. This is why the language of Painting is so full of ripe possibility; each generation builds upon the achievements of the previous one, and the lexicon only broadens. My interpretation of art history evolves with every book I read and every exhibition I see - it is a constantly expanding realm of understanding, and it is natural that this knowledge feeds into processes in the studio.

Philip Wolfhagen

Philip Wolfhagen acknowledges references to almost all periods of art history from the 17th century to the present, suggesting his paintings can be seen as a *synthesis of time*.

Wolfhagen’s classical themes and strict linear design can be seen as referencing the Enlightenment (17th century), his conjuring of mood and concomitant emotion references early romanticism (late 18th century), the flattening of his landscape references modernism (early 20th century), and his split horizon lines have been described as post-modern (post 1950).

Having grown up in Tasmania - a part of the world which is visually reminiscent of 18th and 19th century imagery, it makes sense that art makers of that time have become a touchstone or reference point for Wolfhagen, however this inherent connection to place stems from a historical view point too. Wolfhagen’s family came to Tasmania in the 1860s. The house that Wolfhagen grew up in was built as a soldiers’ barracks in 1824. The studio that Wolfhagen paints in was once a flour mill built by convicts, the hand sawn timbers and two foot thick brick walls are all a constant reminder of the past.

Wolfhagen explains that these experiences inspire him to

see Tasmania in some ways through the eyes of 18th century painters, and see the wonderful Arcadian hope they had for the place.

William Buelow Gould

Wolfhagen cites one of his earliest inspirations as the convict artist William Buelow Gould. Gould was a convict artist, born in England and transported in December 1827 for seven years to Van Diemen’s Land (Tasmania), for stealing. During the voyage it is known that he worked as a painter, making portraits of the officers. Soon after his arrival in Hobart, Gould was in trouble again, this time for more theft and drunkenness. In June 1829 Gould was sentenced for three years secondary punishment to Macquarie Harbour Penal Station on the west coast of Tasmania.

Regarded as one of the harshest in all of the colonies in Tasmania and generally reserved for the worst convicts, the journey to Macquarie Harbour from Hobart could only be taken by ship around the rugged south and west coasts of Tasmania. During Gould’s voyage the ship became weather bound 100 kilometres south of Hobart, where half the convicts aboard mutinied and took the ship. Gould was amongst the officers and convicts who were left behind, marooned in the Recherche Bay. Gould and a small party went over-land to seek help for the convicts and officers alike. As a result Gould’s sentence was reduced to assignment as a servant in homes of the elite in Macquarie Harbour.

It was during his time working as a servant, and later as a free man that Gould became one of the most important early artists in the colony, making still life paintings and water colours of birds, botanical specimens, fish and other sea life collected from the surrounding beaches. His landscape sketches also provide important and rare insights into the Macquarie Harbour convict settlement.

John Constable

John Constable was an English romantic painter, known for his landscape paintings of the area surrounding his home in Dedham Vale East England. Although Constable’s paintings are now amongst the most valuable and popular in British art, he was never successful financially, selling few works in England. Constable’s work depicts a heightened interest in nature and an expression of emotion, holding such affection for the area around his home that it is now known as Constable Country. Constable described his connection to the land in 1821

I should paint my own place best, painting is but another word for feeling.

Wolfhagen identifies personally with Constable, feeling an equal pull to represent the landscape he loves.

Knowing that Constable had famously painted cloud studies in 19th century England, Wolfhagen worked with similar themes as a student. More recently Wolfhagen has again painted cloud filled canvases *Small exaltation no 1* 2011, a choice he felt took him back to his beginnings as an artist. With such a connection to the past and those who have come before him, Wolfhagen’s work reminds us to rethink our own origins – our arrival and our sense of belonging.

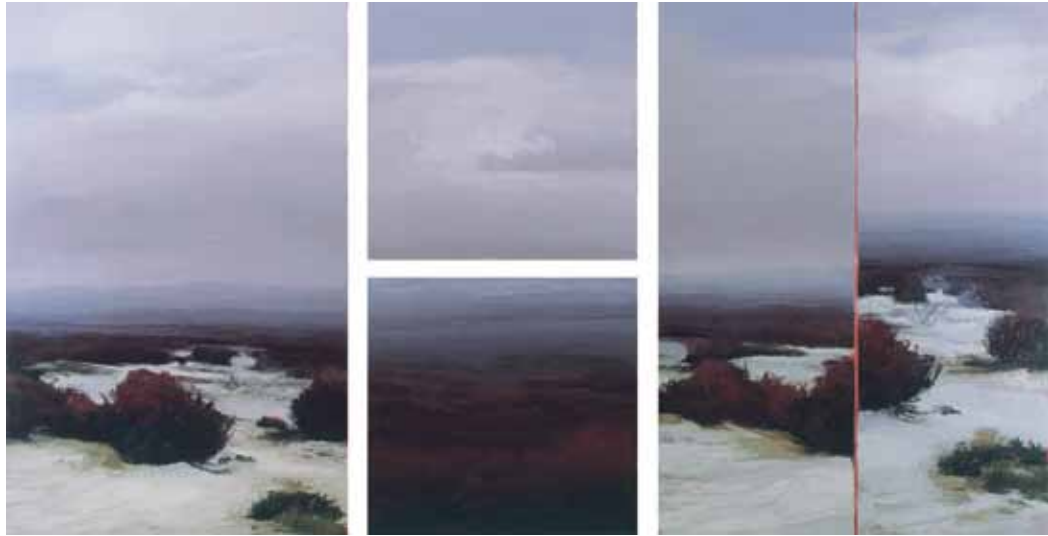
Peter Dombrovskis

Peter Dombrovskis was born in a refugee camp in Germany in 1945. After losing his father in the last months of World War II he and his mother immigrated to Australia. In 1951 Dombrovskis and his mother moved to Hobart, settling on the slopes of Mount Wellington. Together they roamed its ferny tracks and climbed its rock faces. Like Constable, and Wolfhagen a passionate connection to place emerged.

In the 1960s Dombrovskis began taking photos inspired largely by the pioneer of conservation and photography Olegas Truchanas, who eventually became a father figure to him. Dombrovskis became a keen environmentalist, with a love of Tasmania and his photographs brought attention to the need for conservation in many Tasmanian areas. A suite of Dombrovskis’ photos contributed to the High Courts decision made on 1 July 1983 that in the case of Commonwealth of Australia versus Tasmania, damming of the Franklin River would not proceed, meaning that hydro-electric power generation would not be introduced to the area at that time.

Dombrovskis approached landscape photography with deep respect. He was open to the possibilities. Rather than rushing or forcing an image, he preferred for the subject to evolve naturally, a process that took possession of his heart and mind. He knew that by being relaxed and passive he would receive great photographs.

Dombrovskis died of a heart attack in 1996 while photographing in the Western Arthur Range in Tasmania. He was inducted as the first Australian into the International Photography Hall of Fame and Museum.



**Work that relates to photography
by Peter Dombrovskis**

Approach to First Lagoon 2001
oil and beeswax on linen
4 panels
151 x 297 cm (overall)
Presented through the NGV Foundation in
memory of
Christine Kelly by Douglas Butler, Fellow,
2003
National Gallery of Victoria collection



**Work that relates to photography
by Peter Dombrovskis**

Imaginary light 41° South 147° East 1996
oil and beeswax on linen
168 x 214 cm
Private collection



**Work that relates to clouds by
John Constable**

Small exaltation no 1 2011
oil and beeswax on linen
46 x 49 cm
Margie Sullivan collection



**Work that relates to clouds by
John Constable**

Small exaltation no 4 2011
oil and beeswax on linen
46 x 49 cm
Jennifer Arnold and Alan Luckie collection

Focus Study 2: Questions
Influences - Artists

Look

Look at Wolfhagen’s paintings. Can you identify features of his work that employ techniques used in photography?

One of Wolfhagen’s signature devices is the split horizon or picture plane. What does this mean? Looking at his work can you identify which of his works have this feature?

Discuss

Discuss the role that photography plays in Wolfhagen’s art making process.

Wolfhagen claims to *see Tasmania in some ways through the eyes of 18th century painters*. Discuss the impact this has had on Wolfhagen’s work.

Explore

Wolfhagen’s work has been said to reference the Enlightenment, early romanticism, modernism, and post-modernism. Conduct some research and write a definition of all four art movements. Next identify features of Wolfhagen’s that which links him with those movements.

It has been said that Tasmania is a part of the world which is visually reminiscent of 18th and 19th century imagery. Source four photographs of the natural Tasmanian midland landscape and four images of 18th and 19th century paintings of landscape. Compare the images and identify similarities and differences between them.

Create

Go to nag.org.au/learning/wolfhagen. Visit the [Exhibition video](#) page and watch the exhibition video.

During the video take notes about the process and tools Wolfhagen uses to create his colour palettes. Next select four colours to begin your own paint palette. Inspired by Wolfhagen’s practice in the video mix the paint to create a range of different hues. Aim for as many as ten new colours. Use a paint trowel similar to those Wolfhagen uses to apply paints from your palette and create a landscape painting. Create a work of art inspired by Wolfhagen as he was in turn inspired by other artists before him.

Extension Question: History

Go to nag.org.au/learning/wolfhagen visit the [Influences - Tasmania](#) page and read the article *Vandalism of the Lea Tree*. This article describes an event that Peter Dombrovskis was involved with, a divisive episode in Australian history when a proposal was forwarded to construct a dam on the Gordon river below Franklin in Tasmania. Write a report explaining the events that lead to the vandalism of the Lea Tree and include information about the role that Dombrovskis played at the time.

Webpage

Go to nag.org.au/learning/wolfhagen and visit the [Influences - Artists](#) page and look at the cloud paintings by John Constable from 1822 and 1823. Compare them to Wolfhagen’s cloud paintings. Describe the ways that they are both similar and different. Consider the techniques, materials, intended audience and influences involved.

Philip Wolfhagen’s work references William Buelow Gould conceptually and historically, not visually. Compare and contrast the lives, art making practices and paintings of each artist and explain what this means.

Focus Study 3: Overview
Past and Future Awareness

I grew up in a relatively isolated valley in a family obsessed with the natural world, and although this included a passion for hunting, it did not seem at odds with our love for every living thing in our environment. As a child it was the arrival of the migratory birds in spring that made me feel connected to place, but it also made me wonder about other places – where had these birds been since I last heard them in the autumn?

Philip Wolfhagen

I’ve been searching all summer looking for the perfect cloud

In the statement above Wolfhagen gives insight into the exact and perfectionist approach by which he finds and photographs clouds as inspiration for his paintings.

With upcoming international exhibitions, Wolfhagen became aware of the need to create imagery more familiar to new audiences than the often bleak Tasmanian landscape he regularly depicted.

Clouds are a view familiar to most, even those living in built up cities such as New York or London can spot that piece of nature peeping through a succession of skyscrapers. This makes clouds a visual language that everyone can understand.

But Wolfhagen’s clouds not only appeal to the masses. They also communicate a swarm of ideas.

Clouds are always changing, swelling, and breaking up. Representing a cloud with paint is capturing a fleeting moment in nature. Wolfhagen’s clouds speak of the impermanence of any perfect moment, about the certainty of time and mortality. Such heavy themes in Wolfhagen’s work describe his understanding and concern for both the past and the future of the place that he loves -Tasmania.

Past

There are aspects of Tasmania’s colonial and modern day history which can be understood as significant influences on Wolfhagen’s work.

Wolfhagen’s understanding and awareness of history and the world around him, while not manifesting literally as subject matter in his paintings, is something that informs his depictions of landscape. Some key issues include Indigenous issues, both Tasmanian and national deforestation, animal extinction, and climate change.

These issues are indeed of concern for many Australians, but in the course of Tasmania’s history, all can be seen at play affecting the island despite its disconnection from the mainland and arcadian lifestyle.

Indigenous issues

Until the 18th century Aboriginal people had lived on the land now known as Tasmania for several thousand years. Between 1803 - 1823 there was conflict between these original inhabitants and British colonisers, farmers, sealers and whalers. Fighting, the abduction of Aboriginal women and death by common diseases such as small pox and other venereal diseases led to a drastic decrease in the Aboriginal population.

At this time it was thought that only one thousand Aboriginal people remained alive in Tasmania. Numbers continued to drop so drastically that by 1876, although later evidence proved otherwise it was believed that the death of an Aboriginal woman named Truganini marked the end of the Aboriginal population in Tasmania completely.

Deforestation and animal extinction

Throughout Tasmanian history flora and fauna have also come under threat.

Several examples of Huon Pine, a rare, slow growing timber found only in Tasmania are believed to be up to 2,000 years old, making them some of the oldest living things in the world. Prized for its beautiful texture and rich in aromatic oils that make it exceptionally resistant to decay Huon Pine was once felled in mass leading to a dramatic decline in numbers.

Likewise Tasmania’s legendary emblem the Tasmanian Tiger had a bounty on its head. The scientifically named *Thylacinus cynocephalus*, meaning pouched dog with a wolf’s head, stood nearly 60cm high and 180cm long. Despite its fierce reputation, the Tasmanian Tiger had a nervous temperament and when captured it tended to give up easily, becoming extinct by 1936 after only a century of white settlement in Australia.

It is thought that Wolfhagen’s often empty landscapes express an absence of what once was in Tasmania. Some of Wolfhagen’s clouds come with a sense of ominousness, presenting as the dark looming moment before a heavy thunderstorm.

Climate Change

The Earth’s climate is changing. Antarctic sea ice is melting earlier and developing later. Glaciers are disappearing and storms, heat waves and floods are becoming more extreme. There is strong evidence that the warming of the Earth over the last 50 years has been caused by human activity. Changes in land use including agriculture and deforestation and the burning of fossil fuels are thought to be major contributors. The scale of future temperature increases and other aspects of climate change are still being debated; nevertheless the risks that the Earth potentially faces are significant.

Whether Wolfhagen’s storm fronts describe global warming or the boiling mushroom clouds of an atomic disaster, they warn against past and future environmental disasters.

Future

Wolfhagen’s conviction to environmental awareness goes beyond his paintings. But instead of being driven to overt and public activism he lives it in every part of his daily life.

Wolfhagen and his family share a convict built house a short drive from the town of Longford. There, they carefully manage an historic home and its surrounding land. The garden is a micro version of the English landscape, complete with natural placements of woodland plants, trees and shrubs. Inspired first by his own mother’s love of plants, Wolfhagen borrows ideas for his garden from sources such as landscape designers of the 18th century and Claude Monet.

Wolfhagen dedicates a lot of work and thought to growing his own food, managing the plantation of seeds at the critical moments throughout each season, allowing wonderful varieties of fresh fruit, vegetables and herbs to grow. Wolfhagen also raises and kills his own animals to eat. Understanding exactly how much meat comes from a single animal has taught Wolfhagen and his family not to over consume, and to appreciate meat more holistically.

Newcastle Art Gallery curator Sarah Johnson, describes Wolfhagen’s sustainable living approach to life

A manicured delicately curated English garden greets us and lunch of freshly picked asparagus from the garden, fresh eggs from the free range chickens in the garden, homemade tart with fresh berries from the garden also. This is the embodiment of a holistic lifestyle that relates directly to the immediate landscape.



Empty landscape

Third illusory field 1991
oil and beeswax on canvas
172 x 270 cm
Gift of Dr Colin and Elizabeth Laverty
2005
Art Gallery of NSW collection



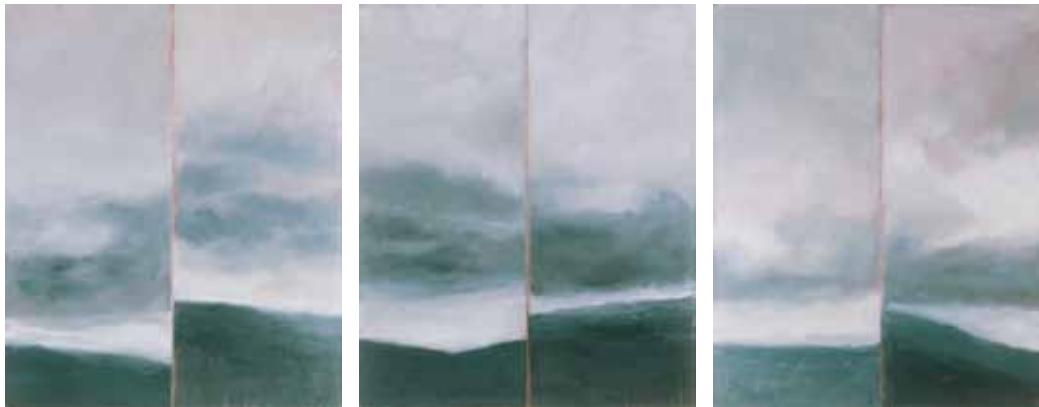
Empty landscape

Vanishing point no 1 1995
oil and beeswax on canvas
143 x 231 cm
Gift of the Newcastle Region Art Gallery
Foundation 2010
Newcastle Art Gallery collection



Storm front

Cloud study 1989
oil on canvas
5 panels
111.5 x 170.5 cm (overall)
Philip and Catherine Wolfhagen collection



Storm front

Delirium stage IV, V, VI 1990
oil on canvas
126 x 105 cm
A.M & A.R Ragless Bequest Funds 1998
Art Gallery of South Australia collection

Focus Study 3: Questions Influences - Tasmania

Look

Look at the clouds in Wolfhagen's work *Cloud Study* 1989. This is the earliest of the works in the exhibition. Look at the way that this work has been presented on the wall differently to the others. Are the clouds static or do they have a sense of movement?

Look at and compare the two cloud paintings *Delirium stages IV, V, VI* 1990, and *Second exaltation* 2011.

Discuss

Discuss the presentation of *Cloud Study* 1989. Share suggestions about why you think this work is presented on the wall this way. Are there features of the work that suggest stillness or movement?

How do you feel when you look at the two paintings *Delirium stages IV, V, VI* 1990 and *Second exaltation* 2011? Do they both give you the same or different types of feelings? How do you think Wolfhagen was feeling when he made these two paintings?

Explore

Conduct research and gather a list of animals, besides the Tasmanian Tiger that are extinct in Australia. Find information on their habits and natural environments.

It could be said that Wolfhagen's lifestyle is an example of sustainable living. What does this mean? How does this impact on his art making?

Create

Select one of the animals you have researched and use that animal and the information you found as inspiration for a landscape painting. Use colours in your painting that describe sadness and regret about the loss of the animal.

Extension Question: Science

Wolfhagen sees environmental awareness as a global concern and acknowledges the influence of global warming on his work. Go to nag.org.au/learning/wolfhagen and visit the [Influences - Tasmania](#) page. Follow the link to the *Australian Government Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency* and read about the impacts of climate change on the state you live in. Summarise your readings and write a report about the main issues your state is facing in the future as a result of climate change.

HSIE

It is believed that Wolfhagen's empty landscapes describe an absence of what once was in Tasmania. Research the series of events that lead to the extinction of the Tasmanian tiger in 1936 and write a description of these events.

Go to nag.org.au/learning/wolfhagen and visit the [Influences - Tasmania](#) page. Follow the link to the *National Geographic page* and read the article *Species Revival: Should We Bring Back Extinct Animals?* Use this information for a debate in your classroom arguing for and against the topic; Should we bring back extinct animals?

Webpage

Go to nag.org.au/learning/wolfhagen and visit the [Influences - Tasmania](#) page to find images of areas surrounding Wolfhagen's home. Explain how living in this landscape influences Wolfhagen's paintings and identify features of his work that resemble this area.

Explain how this landscape differs to the landscape that you live in.

Glossary

Tactility Perceptible to the sense of touch

Ritualistic Relating to ritual or ritualism. A detailed method or procedure faithfully or regularly followed

Chromatic Relating to colours

Renaissance The humanistic revival of classical art, architecture, literature, and learning that originated in Italy in the 14th century and later spread throughout Europe

Juxtaposition An act or instance of placing close together or side by side, especially for comparison or contrast

Perceptual Derives from perception; to see. The act of gaining insight, intuition, or knowledge directly through any of the senses, especially sight or hearing

Conceptual Something formed in the mind; a thought or notion

Triptych A set of three pictures or panels

Synthesis The combining of separate elements or substances to form a coherent whole

Concomitant Following or accompanying as a consequence

Enlightenment A philosophical movement in 17th and 18th century that emphasised the use of reason to scrutinise previously accepted doctrines and traditions and that brought about many humanitarian reforms (1600s – late 1700s)

Romanticism An artistic movement originating in Europe in the late 18th century and characterised by a heightened interest in nature, emphasis on the individual’s expression of emotion and imagination, departure from the attitudes and forms of classicism, and rebellion against established social rules and conventions (late 1700s)

Modernism A style or movement in the arts that aims to break with classical and traditional forms (1900s – 1950s)

Post-modernism A movement relating to art, that reacts against earlier modernist principles, as by reintroducing traditional or classical elements of style or by carrying modernist styles or practices to extremes (post 1950’s)

Arcadian One who leads or prefers a simple, rural life

Mutinied Derived from mutiny; an act of open rebellion against constituted authority, especially by seamen or soldiers against their officers

Marooned Intentionally abandoned

Flora Plants considered as a group, especially the plants of a particular country, region, or time

Fauna The animals of a particular region, habitat, or geological period

Felled To cut down trees

Extinction The state or process of a species, family, or larger group ceasing to exist

Ominousness Being or exhibiting an omen believed to foretell the future, often signifying change, foreboding or foreshadowing evil

Sustainable living A lifestyle that attempts to reduce an individual’s or society’s use of the Earth’s natural resources

Bibliography

Newcastle Art Gallery publications

Newcastle Art Gallery, *Illumination The art of Philip Wolfhagen* exhibition catalogue, N.S.W, Australia, 2013

Newcastle Art Gallery, *Illumination The art of Philip Wolfhagen* exhibition video, N.S.W, Australia, 2013

Other publications

Australian Government Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency <http://www.climatechange.gov.au/default.aspx>, viewed 17th of May 2013

Bett Gallery Hobart, *Philip Wolfhagen: Looking for the perfect cloud*, North Hobart Tasmania, Australia, 2007

National Geographic *Species Revival: Should We Bring Back Extinct Animals?*
<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/03/130305-science-animals-extinct-species-revival-deextinction-debate-tedx/>, viewed 17th of May 2013

McCormick, Alice & Sarah Rhodes, *The artist’s lunch: at home with Australia’s most celebrated artists*, Murdoch Books Sydney, N.S.W, Australia, 2008

McDonald, John, ‘*Beyond the pale*’, The Sydney Morning Herald, 21 Jan 2012, p 20

Philip Bacon Galleries, *A procession of shadows*, exhibition catalogue,
Philip Bacon Galleries, Fortitude Valley, Brisbane, Q.L.D, Australia, 2012

Timms, Peter, Malcolm Bywaters & Catherine Wolfhagen, *Hits & memories: 10 years at the Academy Gallery*, Academy Gallery, University of Tasmania, School of Visual and Performing Arts, Launceston, Tasmania, Australia, 2012

Acknowledgments

With thanks to Philip and Catherine Wolfhagen

Images

Next page

Longford studio 2013

Back page

Study for ‘Shifting light’ (detail) 2002

oil on plywood

3 panels

Purchased 2010

Newcastle Art Gallery collection



