

Fertile Empires

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My theme explores the concept of rivers, which have existed for thousands of years. I photographed river floods to understand how these heavy rain flooding impact my environment. These rainstorms showed water movements across lands like Uluru to overflowing school drains. By experimenting with filters, I manipulated hues and showed how drains directly flows. I explored underground systems of the Artesian Basin which led to my use of oil pastels I personalised my aesthetic by choosing memories that arise from places I lived like Nhulunbuy, its beaches, and waterholes. Artists Judith Felch, Jenny Worsley and Rod Moss confirmed my use of tones to build these up to create new landforms and understand the role of this plays in its application for emotional impact which I successfully explored through sketches and acrylic pour.

Big Rivers w160cm xh76cm surges across two great flood plains sculpting the landscape into being. The downpour constantly shifts contours shaping dusty desert sands, its many courses merge into one long river. *Big Rivers'* aerial view captures this force, just in a moment it's paused for onlookers to understand its beautiful power. The delicate lace like tributaries create momentum created from the acrylic pour showing how rich life. Our imagination wanders as fluid paint spreads outwards with force creating free forming fanning sections like a delicate petal floating by. The diverse colour gradients move as one with many skyblue tones and tints joining to form new hues. Stretching across two plains reveals how different yet similar our rivers are with their golden sediment trails leading towards the river's basin hinting at how precious our rivers are to the surrounding ecosystem it supplies but also shows its vulnerability.

Just like photographer Peter Mack I effectively captured low angles to emphasise the river edge and realised I did not need heaps of detail to build my layout. I experimented with an interest in how many rivers form which started as an exploration into recreating rivers systems through maps and graph data used to create linear artworks. I specifically look at how running water obeyed the laws of the universe through ink blowing trails. A changing of media and style led to the development of dribble tributaries created through straw blowing ink on coloured paper, and then outlining these when dry. These abstract forms and line contours were effect and so began my exploration with watercolour river bends. I was patient as I persisted just like water does in creating small tributaries and looked to meander across the paper.

By exploring John Olsen's loose watercolour movement, I successfully matched my vision of rivers systems by painting washes like Olsen's loose painterly movements in Tributaries. I copied his aerial perspective as well as being inspired by the river skies (Aurora Borealis) of Grace Egbert to trail and implied shape. Needing greater detail, I worked on contours found on maps adding these topographical marks to enhance the birds eye view of my silted river tributaries.

Tributaries 75 cm x 57cm explores rivers and their tributaries have shaped our landscapes and our journeys, flowing through our cultures and dreams. These twisted tributaries meander through leaving brown silt trails behind. Their highlighting edges are purposefully layer with natural washes of colours to suggest great rich mineral plains.

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The added flourishes of life appear through delicate colour changes as the river alters directions. This aerial topographical view is mapped with delicate lace like land contours that change formations. These fill and extend along these diverging riverbanks and beyond. This effectively mirrored photographer Stas Bartnikas' aerial tributaries in my colour and natural movements. The yellow sandy edges and pink stained water suggest nature's chemical erosion as iron naturally creates pigments algae. The white elements left are the salt crystals left behind from evaporation. Tributaries shows how we have stopped connecting to this natural source but now bring the river to us but with a cost to somebody somewhere having less water.

I tried Robert Rauschenberg's mixed media "combined" suggestive paint sculpture in a box window using painterly brushstrokes for layering water's surface movements. Like Rauschenberg I successfully implied movements and held the perspective in a small area. Emphasising my connection to water I began exploring water movements connected to human interactions. I challenged myself further using noodles as I dyed these blue and draped over my hands. This made think about how water movement through head. These trails were reflected in Fertile Empires the final series.

Fertile Empires 30x18cmx 30cm explores the spiritual nature of the river as a gift of life that has been a source for thousands of years. The water has flowed through our hands allowing humans to bloom in desert country. The hands cup the most precious resource water that cannot be contained, however hard we try. The map reveals the merging of civilizations to different local Central Australian water systems from dams, wells, bores, creeks, and rivers. The casting of my hands personalised my connection to water as did the local map. This sculpture suggests the many empires that rely on water in such an arid zone. We are always trying to tame water time and time again but as we do, we changed the destiny of generations to come. *Fertile Empires* is a story about humans taking water for granted as we have forgotten to listen to the river and what it can do because we have damaged systems through overuse. For all their might rivers are an infinite resource, fragile and not easily mended.

Paying attention to the colour and brightness of watery landscapes I discovered indigenous artist Lin Onus who inspired my handling of the water's surface in copying transparent values. The perspective Onus uses effectively controlled my ideas about light and reflection which I incorporated through my use of resin and droplets. The casting of my hands personalised my connection as did my use of local map as I wanted to suggest the many empires that rely on water in such an arid zone.

Experimenting with media in creative ways gives me opportunity to observe my environment and developing a personal aesthetic flowing between indigenous culture and contemporary values. This transforms my understanding in what it means to belong and allows me opportunity to share these new perspectives with others in meaningful ways.