



Detail from *logbook*, LIVING WATER: the river hid

*"I thought how lovely and how strange a river is. A river is a river, always there,
and yet the water flowing through it is never the same water and never still."*

Aiden Chambers 'This is all: The Pillow Book of Cordelia Kenn'

The lightness of the early morning mist floats just above the water's surface, eddying and glowing gently. Banks of trees to my right are creamy, their branches heavy with the weight of hundreds of white birds. For one frozen moment the birds examine me and I them, and I feel an intense stillness. Then in unison, as if some unspoken message has been relayed, they take flight, their wings deafening as they beat the air, their bodies filling my vision and blotting out the sky as they fly away and leave me alone on the river.

When I first approached this body of work I was interested in discovering and somehow evoking the connection the current residents in and around Lismore have to their large river system, nestled in their midst. I researched the history of the area and searched out locals, trying to unlock their stories of the river where they lived and worked. But the conversations were stilted, the sharing of memory did not flow easily and what slowly became apparent was that in fact this body of work was not about other's memories but rather about a re-connection with water and river for me, a journey linking me through the rivers of Lismore back to my childhood.

The resultant logbook emerged out of a series of kayak trips up and down the Wilson River and Leicester Creek, travelling at different times of the day, in changeable weather and on different days of the week. Invariably I was the only person out on the river, in one step exiting the hustle and bustle of the town and entering this hidden almost mystical realm, a parallel universe. The experience of being low on the water, gliding slowly along the riverbanks and under the bridges had the effect of igniting all of my senses including the visceral sense of memory, a sense of connection to a lifeline. Navigation marks on the bridges and river banks were a familiar language to me, guides to assist safe passage. I recorded aspects of the experience through photographs and sound recordings and collected water from each trip as well as making marks and notes in a journal.

The physical evidence collected along with the imprint of the trip on my senses and psyche was taken back to the studio and translated into small ice/ink drawings on glass, a process of transformation, an invitation to the aleatoric mark where chance is invited into the process. The work became an expression of the human hand and intent in partnership with the materials chosen, which were then actively influenced by their physical environment (temperature, humidity and dust). These drawings were then scanned and reinterpreted into digital prints, overlaid with manipulated photographs.

Throughout my process I am searching for a coalescence of the mood and memory of that physical time on the river and the emotions provoked. The materiality of the embedded water, the sound expressed visually in sound waves, the tactile quality of the Belgian linen and leather and the natural translucent properties of the beeswax are all integral to the evocation of this mood.

As the process of translating these experiences developed I realised the layering of these memories was as physical as the layering of the images and the ink. I felt I was overlaying the past with the present and holding these moments suspended in time through the pages. A confluence of viewpoints.

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