

## WHO CARES?

The biosphere will undoubtedly survive the present onslaught on its very fabric. But will our species? It is a moot point, and it is our actions in the immediate future that will quite likely determine the outcome. The earth's atmosphere, drainage basins, rivers, forests, plants and animals, coastlines and oceans are being ravaged. And yet our commitment to population increase and concentration, material wealth and economic growth is unrelenting. Our faith in our way of life is unflinching. No part of the earth is beyond our reach. It is a collision course.

Australia is at the forefront of this blind race to what is quite probably self-destruction, to put it bluntly. Our country's most fragile ecosystems are patently under great duress: salinisation, desertification, deforestation and inappropriate agricultural practices. An aggressive consumer society clings, in massive disorganised cities, to a vulnerable coastline. Great corporations with unquenching thirst reach out from our shores for the still largely untapped primary resources of Asia and the Pacific. A blind political establishment is engaged alongside the United States and Great Britain in a new century of resource wars of global reach that are designed to capture the wealth of the planet for the benefit of the privileged few.

What do Australian artists have to say about the rape of our continent, about our unlimited consumerism, about our new, forceful interventionism in the Asia-Pacific Region, and about our unwavering commitment to the American Imperative? It is one minute before midnight insofar as humankind is concerned, and probably even less in the case of *Homo Australiensis*. If politicians are bound to their all too brief political agendas and business

exchange and the naïve demands of their shareholders, surely artists are free, more lucid and more responsible? You are the conscience of the nation.

What then do you have to say about the future of Australia? By that we do not mean John Howard or Kim Beazley's Australia, or that of any political party in search of power. We are thinking rather about this fragment of Gondwana, this most ancient of continents, with its deep aboriginal memory, its voracious European invasion, its successive waves of immigrants in seek of "a better life", its rampant urbanisation and, now, its overt Imperial designs? *Eric Waddell, Honorary Professor and Former Head, School of Geosciences, The University of Sydney*

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Artists participating:

HANY ARMANIOUS  
JOHN BARTLEY  
JULIANA BARTULIN  
DALLAS BRAY  
JOHN BEARD  
PETER BOOTH  
TIM BURNS  
ROBERT COONEY  
DESTINY DEACON  
EX DE MEDICI  
NEIL EVANS  
VIVIENNE FERGUSON  
MURRAY FREDERICKS  
JOE FROST  
MELINDA HARPER

LOUISE HEARMAN  
NIGEL HELYER  
BILL HENSON  
IAN HOWARD  
GUO JIAN  
INGO KLEINERT  
RICHARD LEWER  
JON LEWIS  
EUAN MACLEOD  
MANDY MARTIN  
TRACEY MOFFATT  
JOHN MORRIS  
DAVID NOONAN  
DEREK O'CONNOR  
BERNIE SLATER  
DAVID STEPHENSON  
ANN THOMSON

THORNTON WALKER  
STUART WATTERS  
RICHARD WOLDENDORP  
JOHN WOLSELEY