

Two films predominantly about trees.

Irene Proebsting 2018

Some of my earlier films included trees, not deliberately, but they were in the landscape where I travelled.

Mayana, shot on Super 8 at Booligal where my sister was living with her family at the time, saw river red gums along the banks of the Lauchlan river and near the end of the film the sun hits a magnificent paddock tree, standing like a golden idol in the plains.



Harmonic Ghosts also includes trees. Roadside Sycamore Maple saplings – leaves and branches swaying and fluttering in the breeze – the scene of a car crash where someone had sadly died and a roadside cross had been erected at the site.





Trees in *Luna Berlin* are growing on the foreshore and loom and disappear as we drive past boats, automobiles and buildings along the Danish Flensborg Fjord.



... and *Postlude* ends with rows of smouldering tree debris after a plantation has been cleared to make way for housing, with one lone skinny tree remaining at the top of the hill, which feels like a pathetic attempt to leave some vegetation intact.

My interest in trees grew exponentially when about two years ago some beautiful old gum trees that grow along the Latrobe River near my home in the Latrobe Valley were earmarked for removal by VicRoads when the Labor Government came to power in Victoria and were courting this marginal seat of Morwell.

Trees were being removed everywhere in the name of progress. Almost 900 beautiful and significant ancient redgums were cut down on the Western Highway in a planning blunder by VicRoads, where they had originally reported that 221 would be cut down.

There was an outcry and people chained themselves to trees. The roadwork had to be suspended as a result and now it is in the courts. During this time I met the people involved and became active along with some other local residents and community groups in defending the 'Tyers Trees'. We had discovered from the Biodiversity reports that the trees were Strzelecki Gums (*Eucalyptus Strzeleckii*) and were listed as Vulnerable and Threatened under government environmental acts.

The film *Edge of the Range* is one roll Kodak Tri X B&W Reversal and one roll Ektachrome Colour Super 8. I had purchased a bunch of film from Kodak before they stopped making Ektachrome and these were some of the last remaining rolls in my possession. They were faithfully processed and digitised by Dianna & Richard at Nanolab.

I wanted to document the gums before the possibility of their demise even though I am preparing a case for VCAT (*Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal*) which will be heard later in the year. For all that it is worth this is the last of two years of actions by the community to try to protect 49 of the gums and two hectares of habitat.

Along with the trees the area is home of many birds and animals including the sacred kingfisher, turtles, possums, bats and possibly burrowing crayfish.

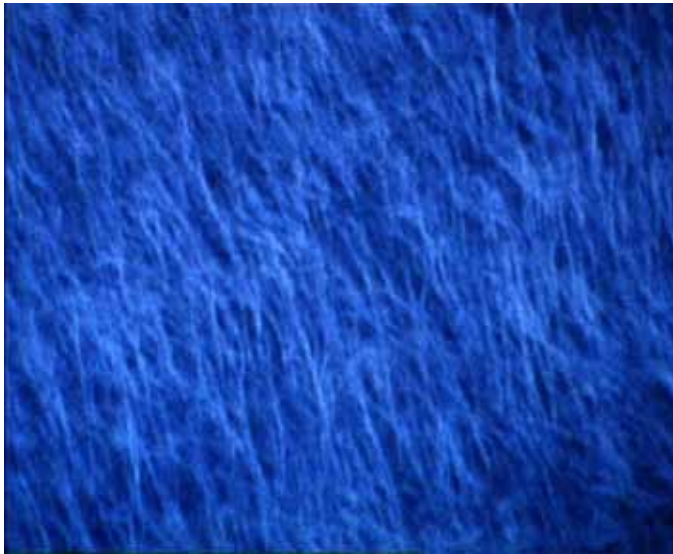


Edge of the Range was screened at the home of Corinne & Arthur Cantrill on April 15th 2018.

The second film that hasn't yet been shown, is in need of a title and soundtrack and made up of two rolls colour, one B&W. Shot on Mt Hotham, the first roll in Autumn 2010 on a drive across the mountain to visit my brother in Freeburgh. Bushfires had burnt through the mountain in the 2006-7 Great Divide fires that burned for 69 days. Over 1 million hectares were burnt and most of the trees had been destroyed. What remained were white skeletons and now three years later, green regrowth underneath.

In 2017 I stayed on the mountain for four days during winter when some of the best snow had fallen. I filmed the snow drifting and snowgums on the first day, the weather progressively improved and on the latter days shadows and trees and snow formations in an area at the edge of the village.

Hopefully the film will eventually have a soundtrack by Barry Brown. His soundscapes can give an otherwise ordinary film a sense of mystery, foreboding or lightness depending on the mood of the piece. Maybe I will call the film *Tonal Drift*...



No one can deny the importance of trees, especially those that are large, old and ancient. They act as critical habitat for birds and other creatures, and vital carbon sinks.

The loss of these trees in bushfires and due to logging, burn-offs, roadworks, land clearing, farming and numerous other reasons is something that can't continue if we want to reverse the status quo.



Meanwhile I have met many wonderful people all of whom have a passion as I do for protecting trees and the environment and I'm always pleased to see any landscape films of the experimental kind as I know a lot of artists and filmmakers also have an ongoing interest in nature and conservation.