

# Memorial Camels and Design by Committee: St Andrews Black Saturday Memorials

SUEANNE WARE

This paper examines a work in progress, the St Andrews Bushfire Memorial, which commemorates victims of the 7 February 2009 bushfires in Victoria, Australia. The paper's intent is threefold: to describe and reflect on a current and ongoing memorial design project; to frame this project within a larger series of design discourses; and to examine the processes by which this memorial, but also many other grassroots or 'bottom-up' memorials, come into being. By examining the design process, I aim to open up various memorialisation and consultation methods for review. More importantly, however, by framing this project in contemporary discussions regarding socially engaged design practices, I offer a critique of the dictator–democrat binaries mentioned above and offer another way forward.

Sir Alec Issigonis, the designer of the Morris Mini, coined the phrase, 'A camel is a horse designed by committee' (Montagu, 1958, p 22). Design by committee is, in this context, disparaged, where a project has many designers or hands involved but no unifying plan or vision. Participatory design critiques often refer to the *diminished qualities* that such a process may produce because of compromises between the participants, designers and funding bodies, as well as other common issues, such as needless complexity, internal inconsistency, logical flaws and banality (Simonsen and Robertson, 2013). Yet, in the design of commemorative spaces, James Young (2000) and Erica Doss (2010) advocate for inclusivity, particularly in relation to victims or those affected by trauma. Several highly aestheticised memorials and minimalist monuments attain design accolades but fall short of the expectations of the affected communities and the public (Doss, 2010; Young, 2000). An implicit and explicit conflict exists between designer as dictator and designer as democrat. For the past two decades, I have struggled with how to operate between the dictator and the democrat when designing commemorative spaces. This paper explores this struggle in detail with an emphasis on socially engaged design practice, where serendipity, process and the open-ended, emergent nature of landscape architecture converge.

## Processes, politics and framing practice

Recent discourse in landscape architecture, particularly landscape urbanism, stresses the profession's need to consider landscape performativity over its visual or spatial composition (Bowring and Swaffield, 2013; Girot, 2013; Waldheim, 2013). Landscape, by its very nature, is process driven and in a constant state of becoming. Critique of contemporary memorial projects often tends to consider the evolving, shifting nature of memory and temporality of landscapes in contrast to static memorial design (Ware, 2008; Young, 2010). In addition, a fair amount

*SueAnne Ware is Professor and Head of School, School of Architecture and the Built Environment, The University of Newcastle, Callaghan, NSW 2308, Australia.*

*Telephone: +61-2-4921-5783*

*Fax: +61-2-4921-6913*

*Email: SueAnne.Ware@newcastle.edu.au*

## KEY WORDS

*Design research*

*Socially engaged practice*

*Memorials*

*Bushfire*

## REFLECTION

of memorial scholarship is dedicated to understanding various notions of use and public (mis)appropriation of commemorative spaces as another kind of spatial flux (Bowring, 2006; Franck and Stevens, 2007; Till, 2005). While openness of programme and spatial occupation are critical to engaging in the emergent potential of a landscape as a social and ecological medium, so are the processes by which the design decisions emerge. In design scholarship, we review and publish critiques of built works but we rarely discuss openly how certain decisions came into being. This paper emphasises design processes and forms of social engagement over memorial artefacts.

Dean MacCannell (1992, p 17) calls for an:

... openly autobiographical style in which the subjective position of the author, especially on political matters is presented in a clear and straight-forward fashion. At least this enables the reader to review his or her own position to make adjustments necessary for dialogue.

I am interested in working with various forms of contestation, usually political and deeply public, because the medium of memorials or commemorative works is constantly imbued with various tensions and debates, which are fertile ground for my design practice. My politics are openly displayed in both the projects I engage in as well as my methodological approach to working with various clients and stakeholders. I am tersely critical of the so-called 'kumbaya' approach of community-led art and design, which marks two decades of landscape architectural practice in Australia and the United States (circa 1970–1990). This is where designers negotiate conflicting opinions, facilitate compromise and ameliorate difference to find an approach and outcome where all stakeholders are satisfied. I am also critical of more contemporary takes on *placemaking*, and adhere instead to Doreen Massey's (1991, p 24) critical call to look beyond nostalgia and fixed notions of place and placemaking as a progressive and continual process; a process that is not self-closing and defensive, but outward looking.

I spend a lot of time working through large political agendas during the design process and project. A plethora of commemorative spaces and objects exists in our communities, and it is important for me as a practitioner to believe that the project I am engaging with is not just another addition to these civic collections nor another attempt to report history. History is an inquiry into the past, while memory is a conviction about the past. Memorials do not help, assuage or begin to atone for what happened to the dead. The dead are not here any more. Memorials are for us, the living. Any sense of rage and pathos they inspire is for us. Memory is also selective: it is unreliable.

When an event is turned into a collective memory, it is not creating anything like a critical historical consciousness. It does not enable people to think about the past, only to gaze on images of heroes and anti-heroes. Thus, in my design practice, memorials must have agency beyond the particular event or tragedy itself; they need to engage in the debate of policy makers and future leaders about the events being memorialised but also comment on future possible events. Memorials, and their design, involve complex political, social and cultural processes of commemoration.

The processes of actualising memorials and the debate surrounding them constantly change and remain perpetually unresolved. This dialogue is as much about a memorial as the physical design work (Young, 1993, p 113). Thus, the procurers and consultation groups I work with need to be interested in an open-ended process of working, which may not lead to physical design outcomes, and to somehow trust in the journey as much as the memorial itself.

### St Andrews bushfire memorial(s)

The ferocity of Victoria's Black Saturday bushfires on 7 February 2009 overwhelmed the St Andrews and Christmas Hills communities. While Christmas Hills did not experience any fatalities, 13 people perished in St Andrews and another fatality occurred in nearby Mittons Bridge. Both communities recorded immense destruction to property: 71 properties were destroyed in St Andrews and eight in Christmas Hills. Smaller agricultural and trade businesses were also adversely affected, and there was considerable damage to local agricultural production areas and significant loss of local flora and fauna habitats, as well as damage to local waterways (Dunn, 2009, p 2; James, 2014).

In 2011, Colin James, the community development officer with the bushfire recovery team at Nillumbik Shire Council in Greensborough, Victoria, invited various experts to discuss processes and outcomes for memorials in a variety of contexts. The aim was to 'broaden the community's understanding of what was possible and to assist them [the community] in setting the direction for their own process' (James, pers com, 2011).

At my first meeting with the St Andrews Bushfire Memorial Working Group, in May 2011, I was convinced that the group members were open to seeing where the process would lead. It was clear they understood that it would take time and reflection to find the best ways forward for their needs but also that other stakeholder groups (including the council and members of the public) not directly involved should be openly encouraged to take part in these discussions. They were also acutely conscious of the larger implications and politics of memorial making. At the time of my invitation, the Victorian Black Saturday Inquiry was well under way. This working group critically and vehemently discussed the contentious nature of the state government's response to the bushfire emergency and national commemoration efforts.

Several members clearly articulated that the role of the memorial was not only to commemorate the loss of human life on a personal and local scale but also to acknowledge the strength and resilience that their community embodies. At a time in Australia's history when bush communities and regional settlements were (and are) quickly disappearing, St Andrews wanted to make clear that, more than recovering, the community would flourish post Black Saturday.

This memorial process was one of several efforts in which the St Andrews Community Bushfire Recovery Association (SACBRA) was involved. A range of tactics, policies, strategies and building projects was being used to ensure future resilience and community awareness in bushfire-prone regions. A previous memorial community group was also contributing, but it had a far from unified voice; there was an atmosphere of friction and tension and, at times in the early discussions, emotions were very raw. Several earlier attempts had been made to initiate a memorial process, but they had been unable to gain sufficient momentum.

The creation of a memorial is often a complex, emotionally demanding, multi-staged process (Huyssen, 1994; Savage, 2009; Young, 2010). Government agencies and well-meaning funding bodies often expect recovery efforts beyond the immediate physical community rebuilding to be completed within a one- to two-year cycle. While this gap between grief and recovery processes is widely acknowledged, fiscal organisations continue to ignore the needs of communities over the longer term (Bonder, 2009; Humphrey, 2002; Huyssen, 1995). Specifically, with St Andrews, two years after Black Saturday, working group committee members were in different phases of the grief and loss process; many were still working through the trauma of the fire event itself. Some were working towards a sense of stability and daily life; for others, building a memorial at this time was unthinkable but they knew they could contribute to the process by discussing ideas and approaches.

When Colin James convened the memorial working group in 2011, he collaborated closely with members to establish a climate of trust and mutual respect that would accommodate a diversity of approaches. The working group collectively devised a set of ‘house rules’ to enable safe, respectful and productive internal processes.

The working group acknowledged the competing requirements in St Andrews, and certain members felt the conflict between the need to create a memorial as soon as possible and the desire not to rush the process. Thus, initially as an *interim measure*, they designed and planned of a series of memorial events in the St Andrews Black Saturday anniversary process. Local glass artist Rob Hayley shaped a glass bowl, which was purchased and placed in the historical St Matthews Anglican Church on the anniversary day in 2011, 2012 and 2013. On these anniversaries, the church provided a place for quiet contemplation, and the bowl was a receptacle for a petal-floating ritual.

With the redesign of the St Andrews Community Centre by architect Greg Burgess, a more permanent home and display area for the bowl is planned, as a memorial niche. The memorial ritual is now embedded in the design brief of the centre, as a recurring event in the ongoing anniversary commemorative activities. The community centre redesign is also part of SACBRA’s efforts; construction commenced in late 2014. Thus, this initial event and ritual memorial will become embedded in the community’s shared daily space and its civic activities.

Perhaps in a more *guerrilla memorial* fashion, members of the working group in 2012 and 2013 developed plaques with powerful and poetic text penned by Elizabeth Savage Kooroonya. The plaques were poignantly located at several burn sites in the township (figures 1a and 1b). Although well known to members of the community, these sites are a bit hidden from the general public. They are part of a very local memorialisation effort and remain in place today. Other spontaneous memorials were abundant, notably those on former properties of individuals who perished, and a small memorial garden was formed at the edge of the main street in town (figures 2a and 2b).

Throughout this process, the need for some community members to write, make, create or act in the physical landscape as a response to the fire trauma has emerged as a constant. Twenty-five local women worked together on a mosaic bench in 2010 located at the St Andrews Hall (Figure 3). When the memorial



Figures 1a and 1b: Memorial plaques in St Andrews bushfire sites. (Photo: author’s own.)



working group first convened, several of these women joined. They adamantly discussed the bench as specifically being not *a community memorial* but an important personal process, a catharsis, for working through the mixed emotions they had endured as victims of the bushfires. It helped them to express their gratitude to the community at large for its efforts during the immediate after-effects of the fire (St Andrews Memorial Working Group (SAMWG) meeting, 5 May 2011).

Two local residents, Jim Usher and Mac Gudgeon, chronicled the fire event and self-published a book entitled *Footsteps in the Ash: The Story of St Andrews and Strathewan in the 2009 Bushfires* (2010). This, too, recorded a version of the history of the bushfires and their significance to St Andrews' community members. However, several working group members were concerned over the book's lack of accuracy and felt it was really a particular version, not a collective vision, for commemorating the events of Black Saturday (SAMWG meeting, 5 May 2011). This process acknowledged a need for numerous memorials: official, informal, collaborative, individual and even contested.

The understanding and recognition that a single voice, design, event, ritual or work could not capture and express the emotions or needs of this community were crucial in the working group's process. This ethos supported many of the broader community engagement activities that informed the current design proposition. I recognise that the working group's design is one of many memorials in the St Andrews region, and that it is part of greater efforts towards increasing knowledge and awareness of living amongst bushfire ecologies.

In summary, two years into the consultation process, the working group achieved several shared understandings; both informal and formal, individual and collective memorials (temporary and permanent) were important to this community. The working group committee required an open door, in terms of membership of the group, to facilitate community members' engagement in relation to their own emotional processes, and it had not decided if an official or a

Figures 2a and 2b: Memorials to the St Andrews bushfires. (Photo: author's own.)



Figure 3: St Andrews memorial mosaic bench. (Photo: author's own.)

more public memorial should be put in place. So it developed a wider consultation process to gain an understanding of the specific needs of the greater St Andrews community. This provided the impetus to go forward, and the public feedback provided a series of sentiments, which the committee shaped into a design brief for the public memorial. The committee then ran a series of memorial design workshops where community members were invited to comment on and critique the brief and provide alternative visions.

The workshops became a pivotal place for the development of a physical design, but were also an important site of productive friction. Many design workshop hours were spent working out how to provide alternatives and, rather than seeking consensus or amelioration of disagreements, the process became an open one where all sorts of proposals came forward. The final design proposition has multiple authors and, while it satisfies the brief, the committee accepted that not all of the constituents would be pleased. The public memorial, being part of a collection of memorials, does not need to represent the entire community's aesthetic predilections or desires; it is of a time and a place and captures the negotiations of this process. I describe the details of this process further in the remainder of this paper.

As a part of the wider design consultation, the committee developed a set of postcards that called for community ideas about memorials. These were sent to community members on the SACBRA mailing list, to every residence in the St Andrews postcode and to bereaved families through the auspices of the Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement. The first postcard posed the question, 'What does a memorial mean to you?' (Figure 4). Thirty-five written responses were received, which ranged from specific ideas around the memorial's form, to protests over the state government's bushfire recovery efforts, to personal stories and narratives of Black Saturday. These responses collectively and clearly indicated that there was a desire for a public Black Saturday memorial in St Andrews. The

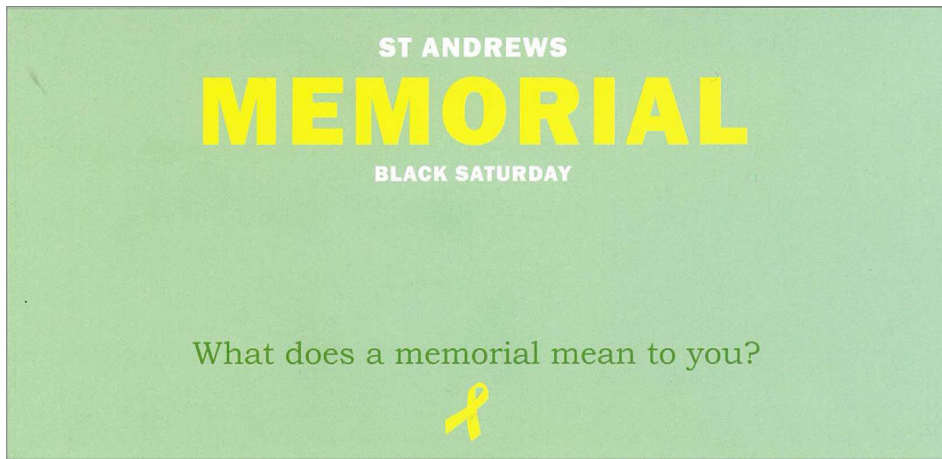


Figure 4: First postcard consultation.

second postcard postulated ‘What would you like to ...? Feel ... See ... Touch ... Hear ... Smell ... Other ...’ (Figure 5). Of the 20 written replies received, most provided a lot of detail on the envisioned experience of a public memorial.

The working group distilled the results of the postcard consultations and put forward the main aims that would eventually inform the design brief. These are summarised below.

1. A personal, reflective, quiet element (possibly more than one site) amidst nature and most likely in the burnt area. Primarily catering to members of the community who experienced loss on the day and designed to be used and maintained by them whilst the need is still current.
2. A permanent, public element which will officially recognise the impact of the day; remembering those lost; honouring the efforts of the community in both the fighting of, and recovery from, the fires. It should also serve an educative role into the future about the implications of living in a bushfire prone area such as St Andrews. It should be sited within the township. The community centre is discussed as a sustainable and maintainable site for an element of the memorial.
3. A simple anniversary commemoration should take place on the 7th February each year. Rob Hayley’s bowl and a framed textual acknowledgement of the fires should be housed at the Community Centre during the year and taken to the St Andrews Church on the anniversary date, providing for the simple petal-floating-ritual opportunity and an accessible space for quiet contemplation in the town on the anniversary date. (James, 2012)

Figure 5: Second postcard consultation.



**WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO.....?**

**Feel...**

**See...**

**Touch...**

**Hear...**

**Smell...**

**Other...**

Yes I give permission to publicly display my response. RSVP ?/?/2012

In September 2012, Colin James held a public forum to discuss these elements. A number of residents attended and had specific ideas about the form of a public memorial. The working group then extended an open invitation to the rest of the community to come on board.

### Siting the public memorials

Because significant, individual commemorative places already exist in the community, 'the memorials in development by the working group represent a societal remembrance, acknowledging the losses on behalf of the wider community and supporting educative roles of a memorial' (James, 2014). So the public memorial(s) are not about replacing the existing ones; they have different and complementary roles. It was clear that a single site for the public memorial could not fulfil all the expectations of the community and working group members. The desire for a quiet, reflective setting in the surrounding bushland within the burnt area was in direct conflict with proposals to site a memorial centrally within the township. Thus, the working group incorporated memorial elements into the St Andrews Community Centre's refurbishment, both inside the building and in its landscape. A memorial vestibule was incorporated into the entrance of the new building, and seating and planting elements were placed within the grounds.

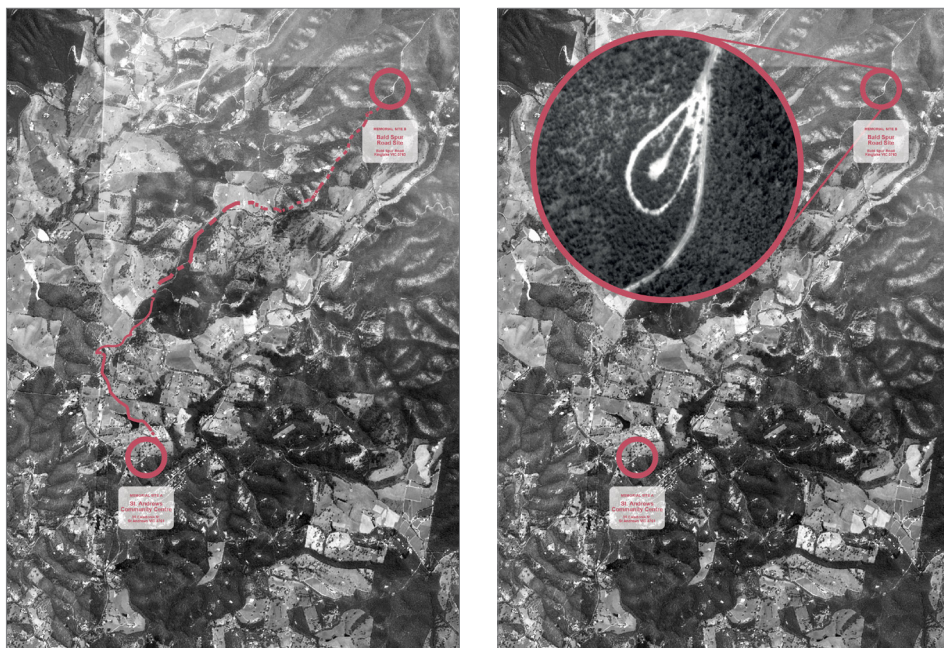
The working group searched extensively for an appropriate memorial site in the St Andrews' burnt areas, consciously prioritising the qualities described in the postcards and meetings. Public land is scarce in St Andrews, and a site could not be located that matched the requirements for personal, reflective and quiet memorial spaces. The Victorian State Government had a *buyback scheme* where community members in bushfire-affected areas, who did not want to return to their properties, could sell them to the government as part of a public lands acquisition effort (St Andrews, no date).

A number of properties that were involved in the State Government buyback scheme were also comprehensively investigated as possible sites. Most of these also either didn't meet the requirements as above, and/or raised concerns with proximity to neighbours (James, 2014).

The working group selected a lookout site, currently part of the Kinglake National Park, on Bald Spur Road. The site's topography provides a comprehensive view down the valley to the St Andrews area burnt on Black Saturday, neighbouring Strathewan and across to Christmas Hills. It has an upper and a lower terrace: the upper holds a large space for gatherings and the lower is a flat, circular walk around the spur with steep slopes on each side. Glimpses of the larger valley are available from both terraces, but the upper terrace feels incredibly enclosed. The vegetation regrowth is extensive post fire, so the flora is rich in this location (Figures 6a and 6b). There are concerns regarding the site's distance from the main road and its accessibility in wet weather conditions. The site is on the crest of the hill, hence the incredible views, but Bald Spur Road is unpaved and steep.

The final decision required compromise but, given the consultation and design brief, the Bald Spur Road site was selected as the most appropriate. The site selection was closely informed by the postcard consultation in terms of the qualities desired for a public memorial site. After the initial debate over the Bald





Figures 6a and 6b: Memorial site.  
(Image: Karolina Bartkowicz.)

Spur Road site, the working group committee and community residents have come to acknowledge that the site is actually quite special.

In subsequent design workshops, various participants have commented on how *right this particular site feels*. Parks Victoria, the local landowner, agreed in principle to the memorial design on the proviso that Nillumbik Shire Council undertakes to maintain the site. Nillumbik Shire Council has subsequently, in principle, agreed to this stipulation. The cross-organisational collaboration and the willingness to work across institutional boundaries for the occupation and use of this site are unusual. In an era where risk aversion and public liability prevail, it is commendable that Parks Victoria and Nillumbik Shire Council can collaborate on behalf of the fire-affected communities in this way.

### Public memorial(s) design process

In 2013, the working group convened for a design charrette with landscape architect Karolina Bartkowicz and myself. We spent a lot of time working through how visitors should encounter the memorial spaces and the physical qualities of the memorial. Members of the working group selected stone and other materials that would not burn; this choice was interesting, given their deep appreciation of the bush and fire ecologies. With the trauma of Black Saturday still strongly resonating, another important decision was to ensure the memorial itself was fireproof. Group members required two significant numbers to be represented in the design: 14 for the number of St Andrews community members who perished and 173 for all the victims of Black Saturday across Victoria.

Initially, Karolina and I worked through several options; beyond the two memorial sites, we included a virtual memorial and a calendar of community events. We knew some residents had left the community permanently and may only be able to access the memorials via the internet. We also felt that the community events around the anniversary, education and bushfire recovery, alongside several other community activities, would be better facilitated in a virtual

calendar of events. However, while the working group members appreciated the ideas and continuation of events as a part of future memorial activities, they felt that upkeep of the calendar and website would take resources from the physical memorial, so these ideas were taken no further at the time.

Karolina and I proposed a number of options and configurations for the Bald Spur Road site. One had 14 large stone seats in a circle on the upper terrace, and on the lower terrace a series of 173 stones set in an open gabion basket, for visitors to make cairns on their walks. Another option had a small, open, crescent-shaped area on the upper site with 173 stones set in the pavement, and on the lower terrace 14 stone monoliths, which could be positioned as benches horizontally or as podiums vertically or could be buried in situ (figures 7–10).

We decided that grieving family members should choose the location of the monoliths along the path as well as their standing position(s). We also presented numerous options for a bench, to tie the site together with the community centre. We worked through regimes of care for the bush landscape on the slopes of the upper and lower terraces, using cold burns, selective pruning and landscape regeneration techniques to maintain the open views, stimulate various landscape ecologies, diversify habitat and reduce fuel loading, thereby lowering the future fire risk.

With the initial options before them at the next design charrette, working group members made crucial decisions. They combined several elements from the first session and inventively added new elements for the final concept plan.

On the upper terrace, the current design encompasses an open circle of 14 stone benches, which form a concentric ring around a circular steel band. The band is flush with the ground and has poetic text inscribed in honour of the St Andrews



Figure 7: Upper terrace option – stone circle. (Photo/image: Karolina Bartkowicz.)



Figure 8: Upper terrace option – open semi-circle. (Photo/image: Karolina Bartkowicz.)



Figure 9: Lower terrace option – stone gabions for cairns. (Photo/image: Karolina Bartkovicz.)

bushfire events, as well as 173 circular imprints in remembrance of all the lives lost across Victoria in the bushfires at the time. The lower terrace entrance has a series of burnt posts and signage, with educational information regarding fire history and ecology of the region, as an avenue of knowledge. Within the looping path on this terrace, the 14 monoliths are sited in relationship to the landscape and in varying positions (horizontal, vertical and buried).

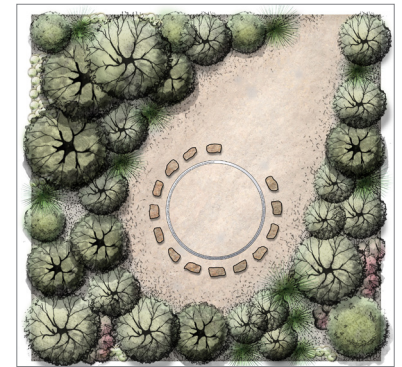
The working group committee identified the 14 sites, and affected families will choose from these locations; some with views out, some with enclosed spaces and others with detailed flora in the ground plane as well as the standing, sitting or lying position of the monoliths. The monoliths have a stainless steel band set within them, including names and sentiments, as requested by the bereaved families. The bands encourage touching and tactility, literally connecting visitors with those being remembered (figures 11a–12b). A monolith bench will be sited at the community centre in town, along with fire regenerative plantings (for example, *Xanthorrhoea* – grass trees). These features will help to connect the two sites while allowing each site its own specific contexts.

The regimes of fire-based landscape maintenance were seen, at the end of the design process, as too risky. Calling to mind the very element that caused considerable trauma was just too difficult an option for a memorial landscape, which has enjoyed a five-year process of regeneration. No doubt, as the project moves towards construction, other changes will occur, as is the case when designs are realised. These too, unless they are minor, will need discussion as a part of the working group negotiations.

This extended consultation process has included another public viewing and further feedback from bereaved families on specific elements to be included on the memorial. The current design proposal was developed over 14 months and included 12 meetings with the working group committee; four design workshops, four public open forums and numerous informal discussions with the council, community members and other stakeholders. This slow-paced approach, which incorporated reflection, iteration and discussion in the decision-making process, and entailed patience with each other, helped in finding ways forward. It involved



Figure 10: Lower terrace option – various stone positions. (Image: Karolina Bartkovicz.)



*Figures 11a and 11b: Current proposal for upper terrace. (Photos/images Karolina Bartkowicz.)*

acknowledging the need for time to think through proposals but also allowed us to reconsider what we were prioritising. Specifically, we felt that the fire maintenance regime was integral to demonstrating community resilience and living with fire but, clearly, the community wanted to prioritise resilience through other means. The designing, of course, is still in progress, which is purposeful and deliberate.

## Conclusions

Over the course of the project, the Bushfire Memorial Working Group was guided by a core group of community members from St Andrews. Several individuals made significant contributions to the memorial process along the way and then left the group in the interests of their personal recovery or for other personal reasons. Others joined the process later and made equally important contributions. This combination of openness of invitation and continuity allowed a range of initiatives to continually evolve.

One important question around my design practice is: how can participatory processes be both open and focused? The working group was open to anyone who wanted to join, but meetings always had key ideas and a set of actions as a way of continuing on. In particular, Colin James carried the community liaison work forward, and his skill at opening up dialogue, as well as his patience for processes, was pivotal in achieving the current memorial design.

Grieving processes paralleled the memorial decision-making processes, which is often the case. I argue, however, that, as designers, we often work towards physical and spatial ends, rather than finding various ways of remembering. One of my methodologies, therefore, includes considering how the processes of marking and making commemorative places help community members to traverse stages of grief and loss.



*Figures 12a and 12b: Current proposals for lower terrace. (Photos/images: Karolina Bartkowicz.)*

It is absolutely necessary to have appropriate resources available for those who are grieving, and to respect individual grief processes in approaching the work. In this instance, we spent the first two years discussing whether or not there was a tangible need for a public memorial; then, when we solicited community-wide sentiment, there became a directive for one. Having the flexibility to let the community decide when and if the timing was right, as well as to consider how the working group committee might facilitate other types of commemoration activities, was essential for individual and collective grieving processes.

The acknowledgement of individual spontaneous memorials, planning for annual commemorative events and the creation of an unsanctioned series of memorial plaques opened up possibilities for the future public memorial. These 'soft' memorials could have been the culmination of the project but, instead, they created momentum and instigated a series of design tests. Further, when the working group committee engaged with the wider community through the postcards, the desire for a more formal public memorial became clear. Hence, the process moved into a more normative design workshop format. Because of the trust established within the working group, and the initial work of the committee, the workshops also evolved into a transformative process. Ideas came forward and were debated and, after several sessions, the current design proposal was reached.

Certainly, the current design incorporates compromises, including the Bald Spur Road site itself and the exclusion of fire ecology as a maintenance regime. Yet it acknowledges the amalgamation of ideas and the more than five-year process of inception and, ultimately, provides a site of quiet reflection and mourning.

However, by over-emphasising the final form of the memorial, we are really missing the point. For example, the working group committee has gone on to liaise directly with the quarry and grieving families to select the exact rocks and their placement sites, which overlook the valley. Community members who shared the bushfire trauma established a different kind of trust, and no doubt the personalisation of this aspect of the work could not have occurred without it. In this instance, my role was to take a step back and let others engage with the bereaved families and friends. As designers, we acknowledge that our spatial sensibility and aesthetic concerns are also implicit in the design outcome but they do not override the ongoing memorialisation processes. The physical design work is a framework for further processes of engagement.

In grassroots community memorials, it is often through catalytic activity that things come into being. It can begin in response to something, when an individual or small group is stimulated into action, but, for a memorial to move towards something more participatory, the action also has to motivate others to undertake further acts. Numerous spontaneous memorials come to mind as examples; one in particular is the occupation of the square where Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated (Doss, 2006; Maddrell and Sidaway, 2010).

In November 1995, when Rabin was assassinated, hundreds of thousands of mourners gathered at the site of his shooting. Young people especially turned out in large numbers, lighting memorial candles, building small shrines and singing peace songs. The square where he was assassinated, Kikar Malkhei Yisrael (Kings of Israel Square), was renamed Rabin Square in his honour and, within six months, the spontaneous memorials were disassembled in favour of a

more traditional, designed memorial. With the public still in mourning, the new memorial was deeply criticised for its inability to allow people to interact with it. As a result, it has been subjected to many redesigns and additions; it is scheduled for decommissioning in 2016 (Vinitzky-Seroussi, 2010). While this is an official or state memorial, it seems that another kind of process may have been more appropriate in this instance.

The Black Saturday memorial process, meantime, attempts to recognise the existing informal memorials in the public realm, while the design encourages others to interact with the public memorial work and make their own interventions.

Jeffrey Hou (2010, p 15) writes that while insurgent acts 'may be informal and erratic, they have helped destabilize the structure and relationships in the official public space and release possibilities for new interactions, functions, and meanings'. Thus, it is important to consider how the public memorial might destabilise certain structures further, which may also allow for continual openings for others to act within. The memorial site in Kinglake National Park has a degree of isolation, but the park also has various humpies (Aboriginal shelters) and signs of appropriation, which may open up opportunities for further bottom-up appropriations and, hence, another kind of engagement process could begin post construction.

Many official (sanctioned) and unofficial (spontaneous) memorials to Black Saturday exist in the St Andrews, Kinglake and Strathewan communities. So, while this paper stresses the design engagement process is equal in importance to various outcomes, it also just as importantly accepts numerous memorial forms.

By opening up memorial outcomes to commemorative events and singular and collective actions, an informally and formally designed space considers memorials and memorial processes to be active, alive and agents of change. This perspective is crucial and emphasises the need to consider emergent notions of place and identity in memorial designs, which are often fixated on a particular time and event.

The latest proposal for the St Andrews public memorial suffers somewhat from its static nature, but viewing it collectively as one of many memorials to Black Saturday may untether it from this critique. Yet, I suspect it will not be until after I have seen how others engage with the physical site or respond to what eventuates that I will be less critical of my own capacity as a designer to make emergent memorial spaces. Perhaps because this memorial endeavour has been considered as a process rather than a product or a built outcome, the work is both more sympathetic with landscape and human processes and less a singular statement about design intent.

I certainly cannot claim sole authorship of the public memorial process nor of the proposed outcomes; these emanated from various suggestions and critical discussions. It takes another kind of design confidence to work in these situations. This work is about exposing personal design methods and expecting consultation processes to critically inform one's work. The designer's expertise in making space and form must be part of the conversations but not the focus of interactions. For me, it is not about letting go of being a designer and becoming a facilitator; it is more about finding a blurry space where consultation processes and design space are opened up to other territories.

This blurriness helped to inform the project discussed in this paper, but it also underpins a significant body of my work, which is positioned within socially engaged art and design practices. It offers methodologies for other designers and ways to approach process-driven design work. While the memorial work is ongoing, its agency is becoming clearer to me as the project progresses; nevertheless, this *modus operandi* is also fraught with issues around power relations and the authority to act.

British critic and curator Claire Bishop discusses what she perceives to be the inadequacies of an ethical turn in art criticism, whereby socially engaged works are no longer judged by their aesthetic quality but, rather, according to their social value as models for collaboration. Bishop (2006, p 183) states:

The discursive criteria of socially engaged art are, at present, drawn from a tacit analogy between anti-capitalism and the Christian ‘good soul.’ In this schema, self-sacrifice is triumphant: the artist should renounce authorial presence in favor of allowing participants to speak through him or her. This self-sacrifice is accomplished by the idea that art should extract itself from the ‘useless’ domain of the aesthetic and be fused with social praxis.

Although I take issue with Bishop’s didactic approach to authorship and social praxis, I wonder if others – peer reviewers and critics – stifle their commentary because of the socially embedded nature of the propositions. The ‘do-gooder’ polemics posed by a socially and community-engaged practice are not the only ones that confront my personal ethics; I also need to consider the systems that allow me to engage at the outset. I recognise the project presented here was permitted and endorsed by various authorities. I was allowed and invited to act within, and usually as a part of, a controlled discourse, a highly selective form of engagement. Is this in reality an open community practice?

Kirk Savage, Professor of Art and Architectural History at the University of Pittsburgh, speculates that, once a memorial is built, society and the public at large seem to feel at ease with forgetting (2009, p 21). Further, Young (1993, p 39) writes:

It is as if by building or making a memorial, there is a conscious placating of those affected, but also collective minds are put at rest as guilt is eased. So, memory must undergo continual renewal in order for the subject of remembrance to stay vivid in our collective conscious.

The memory work discussed in this paper was used to elicit discussion and ongoing debate as well as to interrogate place, space and identity through memorial design. That, perhaps, is why it is most important I write about it now, before the public memorial in St Andrews is built, and at a moment when recalling is still active in the minds of those involved.

Returning to the title of this paper, ongoing and useful critique of design by committee, and participatory approaches to design do occur. By exploring various methodologies through specific projects, I hope to add to this discourse and to work through the difficulties of this type of practice. Take into consideration the paradox of a camel’s *design*. Camels are resilient, efficient and adaptive in their challenging Sahara Desert environments. They are a marvel of evolution. So, while they may have a distinct awkwardness or peculiarity in their appearance, they have a strange beauty, which perhaps is something we, as designers, need to celebrate.

## REFERENCES

- Bishop, C (2006) The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents, *Art Forum* February, pp 178–183.
- Bonder, J (2009) On Memory, Trauma, Public Space, Monuments, and Memorials, *Places* 21(1), pp 62–70.
- Bowring, J (2006) The Smell of Memory: Sensorial Mnemonics. In *The Landscape Architect, IFLA Conference Papers May 2006*, Canberra: Australian Institute of Landscape Architects, pp 156–170.
- Bowring, J and Swaffield, S (2013) Shifting Landscapes in-between Times, *Harvard Design Magazine* 36, pp 96–104.
- Doss, E (2006) Spontaneous Memorials and Contemporary Modes of Mourning in America, *Material Religion: The Journal of Objects, Art, and Belief* 2(3), pp 294–318.
- (2010) *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Dunn, M (2009) Those We Have Lost in Victoria's Bushfires, *The Herald Sun*, 11 February, p 2.
- Franck, K and Stevens, Q (2007) *Loose Space: Possibility and Diversity in Urban Life*, Oxon: Routledge.
- Giroi, C (2013) Immanent Landscape, *Harvard Design Magazine* no 36, pp 6–16.
- Hou, J (2010) *Insurgent Public Space: Guerrilla Urbanism and the Remaking of Contemporary Cities*, New York: Routledge.
- Humphrey, M (2002) *The Politics of Atrocity and Reconciliation: From Terror to Trauma*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Huysen, A (1994) Monument and Memory in a Postmodern Age. In *The Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History*, JE Young (ed), New York: The Jewish Museum Press.
- (1995) *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*, New York and London: Routledge.
- James, C (2012) St Andrews Black Saturday Bushfire Memorial working party meeting discussion, email summary sent to all members, 21 August.
- (2014) St Andrews Black Saturday Bushfire Memorial Proposal, *Victorian Bushfire Appeal Funding Application*, March.
- MacCannell, D (1992) *Empty Meeting Grounds: The Tourist Papers*, London: Routledge.
- Maddrell, A and Sidaway, J (2010) *Spaces for Death, Dying, Mourning and Remembrance*, London: Ashgate.
- Massey, D (1991) A Global Sense of Place, *Marxism Today*, pp 24–29.
- Montagu, A (1958) Who Has the Culture?, *Vogue Magazine* July, pp 21–25.
- Savage, K (2009) *Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Simonsen, J and Robertson, T (eds) (2013) *Routledge Handbook of Community Participatory Design*, New York: Routledge.
- St Andrews (no date) *Bushfire Buyback Scheme*. Accessed 12 January 2014, <http://standrews.vic.au/government-resources-and-information/bushfire-buyback-scheme>.
- Till, K (2005) *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Usher, J and Gudgeon, M (2010) *Footsteps in the Ash: The Story of St Andrews and Strathewan in the 2009 Bushfires*, Victoria, Australia.
- Vinitzky-Seroussi, V (2010) *Yitzhak Rabin's Assassination and the Dilemmas of Commemoration*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Waldheim, C (2013) Landscape as Architecture, *Harvard Design Magazine* 36, pp 17–20.
- Ware, S (2008) Anti-memorials and the Art of Forgetting, *Public History Review* 15, pp 61–76.
- Young, J (1993) *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- (2000) *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- (2010) Memory and Monument after 9/11. In *The Future of Memory*, R Crownshaw, J Kilby and A Rowland (eds), New York: Berghahn Books, pp 77–92.