

Petroglyphs, personhood and collaborative relationship

Dr. Sandra Adams, D.C.A.

Curtin University, Bentley, Western Australia

sandra.adams@curtin.edu.au

This paper addresses the concept of stone as an other-than-human collaborative partner in the making of petroglyphic works. Its findings are experienced based and are drawn from my own practice of carving petroglyphs which began in 2008 and continues to the present. These findings are mirrored and re-enforced in the theoretical discussions of several key scholars: Alfred Hallowell's discussion of Ojibwa personhood, Alejandro Haber's call to re-examine animism from within animist understandings; Andy Jones and Robert Wallis' reinterpretations of the rock art at Kilmartins Scotland; and Christopher Tilley, Sue Hamilton and Barbara Bender's use of artistic engagement in their reimagining of the Leskernick site in Cornwall.

Ultimately, this paper traces the evolution of a relationship - that of mine with stone - and how this has profoundly effected not only my understandings of the ways in which personhood and agency are manifest throughout the elements of the natural world but also how I see my place and role as an artist. My work through these ideas both conceptually and practically has incurred a shift in how I understand my engagement with stone as a collaborative relationship, the purpose of which, as Robert Wallis suggests, is the negotiation of harmony and in which the human artist is only one hand.