Yizkor: Gallipoli
An exhibition featuring paintings by Kym Morris

11 November 2010 – 28 January 2011
University of Western Sydney Art Gallery
I live near Sydney, Australia and my academic and work experience has been for the most part in information technology and science. I have participated in various art workshops and tutorials over many years including traditional, expressionist and abstract painting and drawing, environmental art and more recently, printmaking. I have exhibited as a member of the Macquarie Towns Art Society since 2005 and in local and regional open exhibitions. I am currently undertaking a Master of Arts Practice (Visual Arts) at Charles Sturt University.
This exhibition explores the power of sacrifice in the context of memorial practices and its expression in the creative response of the artist. The World War I campaign in Gallipoli 1915, the battle most often associated with ANZAC soldiers has influenced questions of identity, historical revisionism, cultural debate and the role of the ANZAC legend in a modern Australia.

_Yizkor:Gallipoli_ is a study, a visual memorial book, the expression of a personal signature of a place and time, the landscape of Gallipoli, Turkey with emphasis on the influence of the 1915 campaign – its representation in art and the creation of new work.

In 2009 I joined the Spirits of Gallipoli Photographic Mission whose charter was to photograph every memorial and headstone for soldiers of the Australian Imperial Force who are memorialised at Gallipoli. A year later I travelled again to Gallipoli with the Conservation Volunteers of Australia assisting with the organisation of Anzac Day 2010. These projects and other associated research within my Master of Arts Practice brought me into more intimate contact with my own heritage, and to my mother’s Jewish traditions which formed the framework for this exhibition.

It is part of Jewish memorial ritual to recite the names of the dead in prayers which offer charity to redeem the soul of the deceased and ensure their place in the Garden of Eden. This ritual observance is _Yizkor_. The central part of _Yizkor_ is a single paragraph beginning _Yizkor elohim_ (may God remember). One of the material representations of _Yizkor_ in the twentieth century was the creation of Memorial Books. Jewish mourning literature is evident in biblical times and in modern Yiddish literature but flourished in the period following the European Holocaust. Developed by survivors of the Holocaust, these books are the guardian of cultural memory told in stories of place, of people and community and of naming the dead so they will continue to be remembered.

_Yizkor:Gallipoli_ comprises three pieces, each representing a part of the Yizkor memorial, each based on a particular landscape element and its relationship with the battle of Gallipoli. Each piece has also been associated with poetry that I found evocative of the mood and subject. In exploring the art of Gallipoli since 1915, the dominant theme I observed has been one of the battle itself, of men fighting and dying, even though most of the works were painted by artists with no personal knowledge of the Gallipoli campaign. I have also selected an iconic painting of Gallipoli as counterpoint to my own expression of the landscape, a visual harmony of stories of the people, the place and the naming of the dead.
The first painting of the trilogy “arrive, depart” is based on the water element and represents the arrival and departure point of the Australian troops at Gallipoli – the waters of Anzac Cove. It is the Yizkor chapter telling the story of people. The words of the soldiers while at Gallipoli and as published in the Anzac Book have been torn from a 1916 edition and collaged into the water images – last words drowned, drifting and lost in the quiet depths.

The following words, by Rupert Brooke (1887 – 1915), were found in his belongings by his friend Frederick Kelly. Brooke died at sea on April 23rd 1915, en route to Gallipoli, and was buried on the island of Skyros. The background sighing in the wind and the ocean’s timeless movement all form part of the pattern of rest – the silence following peace. This sense of stillness amid constant movement and change is what I want to suggest in this work, where the words of soldiers ebb and flow with the tides.

“... He wears
The ungathered blossom of quiet; stiller he
Than a deep well at noon, or lovers met;
Than sleep, or the heart after wrath. He is
The silence following great words of peace.”

Rupert Brooke"

The second work, “endure”, tells the story of place – the Sphinx, a rocky outcrop overlooking Anzac Cove, and the trenches and tunnels carved into the landscape, offering protection and concealment. The closeness and limited movement within this actual physical place fostered the spread of disease and added to the discomfort of the troops when stationed there. The element of rock, the cliffs which confronted the Australian troops as they came ashore and scrambled up the nearby slopes to take the ridges.

Leon Gellert (1892 – 1977), an Australian poet and journalist, enlisted with the Australian Imperial Force in 1914 and was in the ANZAC landing party of April 25th 1915. He published his poems of war, of Gallipoli and of recuperation in 1917 in a book Songs of a Campaign, the second edition of which was illustrated by Norman Lindsay.

Gellert’s war poems, unlike the romantic sonnet style of Rupert Brooke took a harder view of his experience at Gallipoli speaking of the harsh conditions, sometimes with dry humour at other times with pathos. He wrote several poems of life in the trenches, the wearing down of optimism, the creeping despair and the resigned acceptance of violent death.

These Men
Men moving in a trench, in the clear noon,
Whetting their steel within the crumbling earth;
Men, moving in a trench ‘neath a new moon
That smiles with a slit mouth and has no mirth;
Men moving in a trench in the grey morn,
Lifting bodies on their clotted frames:
Men with narrow mouths thin-carved in scorn
That twist and fumble strangely at dead names.

These men know life – know death a little more.
These men see paths and ends, and see
Beyond some swinging open door
Into eternity.
Leon Gellert²
The word, “abide”, in English means to dwell or rest and in Turkish it is a monument to the dead, which is what the landscape at Gallipoli has now become. The necrology – the names and memorials of the dead, are suggested in this painting using the landscape element of wood. Trees historically have a long association with the gaining of knowledge and the cycle of life. The Lone Pine, which has now become the symbol of the Australian soldiers lost at Gallipoli, is represented within this image; one of its cousins now grows in the grounds of the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. Other historical associations with trees referenced within this work are, the Judas tree flowering purple, a symbol of betrayal and the Cypress pine, which have long been associated with cemeteries and mourning, here to remember all those at Gallipoli.

Also within this painting are the transfers of two gravestone rubbings. The first from my parents, my father’s memorial carrying the insignia of the Australian Armed Forces, an Australian soldier; my mother’s memorial, the symbol of her faith, the Star (Shield) of David. The second rubbing is from the memorial tablet of Sergeant Jessie Herbert Taylor, an ANZAC soldier who had been without a grave marker for 94 years. The Spirits of Gallipoli team discovered the oversight and reported it to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission who placed a new headstone for Sgt Taylor within weeks. The Conservation Volunteers of Australia conducted, in 2010, a small memorial service for Jessie Taylor and his family.

One of the Jewish symbols of remembrance for the destruction of Jerusalem and the Holy Temple over 2000 years ago and the exile of people from their homeland is to leave a portion of a wall unpainted, or unfinished reminding us that we cannot truly find happiness until the Temple is re-built. For my Gallipoli landscape, the unfinished corner is a reminder that I cannot fully understand the tragedy of the battle of Gallipoli only to express my relationship to the landscape that I have seen.

Wallace Stevens (1879–1955) was an American poet and lawyer. The artist David Hockney produced a book of etchings, The Blue Guitar, inspired by a poem Stevens’ wrote after seeing a work of art by Pablo Picasso. This book introduced me to Steven’s work and to the poem which spoke to me of my time in Gallipoli – *The Owl in the Sarcophagus*. The opening stanza introduces three archetypes, the Brothers of Death and Peace and the Earth Mother. The brothers reminded me of the brothers spoken of by Atatürk, the military leader of the Turkish troops at Gallipoli who in 1934 said, “. . . your sons are now lying in our bosom, and are in peace. After having lost their lives on this land, they have become our sons as well.”
The Earth Mother, “she who says goodbye in the darkness . . .” – I identified as myself, wandering among the cemeteries reading the epitaphs aloud . . . saying goodbye not only to those long dead but to old ideas, old beliefs, the former self.

The Owl in the Sarcophagus
Two forms move among the dead, high sleep
Who by his highness quiets them, high peace
Upon whose shoulders even the heavens rest,
Two brothers. And a third form, she that says
Good-by in the darkness, speaking quietly there,
To those that cannot say good-by themselves.
Wallace Stevens

Kym Morris, November 2010

References
1 Hamilton and Brandon, Jill Douglas-Hamilton, 2003 From Gallipoli to Gaza: the desert poets of World War One/Jill Hamilton Simon and Schuster, East Roseville, N.S.W.
2 Gellert, Leon, & Lindsay, Norman, 1917 Songs of a campaign/by Leon Gellert; with pictures by Norman Lindsay Angus & Robertson, Sydney.
3 Sourced from inscription at Kemal Atatürk Memorial, ANZAC Parade, Canberra.

List of works
Kym Morris. arrive, depart. 2009-2010. Acrylic mixed media on 18 canvas boards. 183 x 122 cm.
Kym Morris. endure. 2009-2010. Acrylic mixed media on 18 canvas boards. 183 x 122 cm.
Kym Morris. abide. 2009-2010. Acrylic mixed media on 30 canvas boards. 305 x 122 cm.
Kym Morris, May God Remember, CD, 168 minutes

Books on display
Hockney, David. & Stevens, Wallace, 1977 The blue guitar/David Hockney; The man with the blue guitar/Wallace Stevens Petersburg Press, London.
Gellert, Leon, & Lindsay, Norman, 1917 Songs of a campaign/by Leon Gellert; with pictures by Norman Lindsay Angus & Robertson, Sydney.

 Acknowledgements:
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Nolan, Sidney
(Drowned Gallipoli soldier), 1958
textile dye, wax on coated paper
25.4 x 30.4 cm
Australian War Memorial (ART91277)

Silas, Ellis
Roll Call, 1920
oil on canvas
101.8 x 153.1
Australian War Memorial (ART02436)

Lambert, George
Anzac, the landing 1915 1920-22
oil on canvas
190.5 x 350.5
Australian War Memorial (ART02873)