

Anne Graham's work addresses the notion of milieu, accommodation and dwelling somewhat differently. The elemental milieu is shifted from an anonymous nowhere to very particular sites with distinct cultural and natural features, to which very close attention is given. Indeed, Graham's site-specific work could be said to be guided by an extreme sensitivity to site best expressed by Heidegger's notion of 'tarrying alongside'.³² This mode of being, tarrying alongside, suggests companionship and fellow-feeling, but with the most minimal of interventions into the existence of the other entity. Through this example an alternative ethics of dwelling is suggested. Graham's 'tents' accomplished precisely this: they sat, as it were, alongside various sites, illuminating them with startling clarity but not dominating or subduing the site nor marking it in any permanent way. Her first work, *Installation for Walla Mulla Park, 1992* demonstrated this illuminating capacity perfectly: a large tent suspended under a section of the railway bridge at Woolloomooloo highlighted this site as the urban detritus formed by the savage cut of the eastern suburbs railway. The site, a kind of overlooked non-site, came into view as at once no-man's land – a barely habitable urban off-cut – and makeshift shelter for the homeless who camp in the adjoining park. This contradictory status of the park, at once uninhabitable and yet inhabited, was underscored by the installation itself which signalled a very fragile kind of temporary dwelling: an efflorescence of welcoming warmth marked by its extreme transience. This illumination of urban blight was not achieved by the kind of overt and aggressive political posturing which leaves one accused and abused, but rather through an encircling of the problem, allowing it to come to light in its many and various ways.

A much later work in this same series *The Nuns' Pool, 1995* (Wollongong beach) (fig.3) marks another kind of intervention. Graham refers to this work as a counterbalance to the masculine history of labour in Wollongong, revealing 'a female history of a gentler battle with the elements'.³³ Rather than carving up the earth to deliver coal which characterises the rugged masculine battle with the elements in this region, we have a battle with the ocean or to be more precise a battle to create suitable conditions for the enjoyment of sea-bathing by an order of nuns, appropriately named St Mary's Star of the Sea. The nuns' strategy was to work with the natural features of that labile zone where land meets sea. They transformed a secluded and enclosed rockpool: between the sheltering rocks were strung eight chains with handholds. By this simple addition the nuns could use the pool with safety and confidence. The sea is tamed in this enclosure: it enters the pool at two points, waves wash in but are robbed of their capacity to overwhelm and carry away.

With the simple addition of a row of tents a further more subterranean battle comes to light. The tents are aligned with the land – they are tall, thin, white beings, like the erect and upright lighthouse, silent and watchful sentinels patrolling the fringes of the land and guarding against the dangers of the sea. They emitted a gentle glow at night in contrast to the more masculine linear nocturnal emission of the lighthouse. In this contrast the tents are feminised, suggesting the modest and watchful nuns similarly swathed from head to toe. But the tents are not just terrestrial beings, they are also oriented towards the sea and sensuous bodily enjoyment. They look like bathing tents – the crucial point of transition from the concealment of everyday dress to the loosened inhibitions of the near-naked bather. In the light cast by the tents, the site seems to be shot through with the tensions between restraint and enjoyment: the lighthouse is pure and upright and yet decidedly penile, the rockpool allows modest shelter but also acts as a symbol of the sexual act: the enclosure is constantly penetrated by the ebb and flow of the waves. In this movement between outer and inner landscapes it becomes clear that nature is not just the force of the waves and formation of the rocks, but the surges, currents and ripples that animate us.



Fig.3, Anne Graham, *Nuns' Pool, 1995*, mixed media, dimensions variable, Wollongong beach, photograph: Tony Bond