



## Perception of grass

Sarah Ryan

This is a composite image of photos taken in Central Australia which feature the shadows of dried grass stalks on the rocks and the ground in the late afternoon. I like the idea that their shadows create such vivid patterns when their life is practically spent; as if the ground and rocks are prolonging the memory of their life. In chasing these shadows, I learnt to look very carefully at where grass was growing, and found that almost every large rock had a grass plant growing at its base, I presume because the rock provides a tiny amount of runoff and perhaps some shading of the soil and reduced root temperature. In some places dried grass stalks sweep the ground in the wind and make circular patterns in the sand.

This work relates to my presentation at this Forum, which I called 'Perceptions and values of grassy ecosystems'. The artwork is an exploration of the visual qualities (values?) of grass and, like other environmental art I have done, an attempt to extend people's awareness of the richness of experiences possible in nature.



Dr Sarah Ryan has had a distinguished career as a researcher and research leader at CSIRO, both in Wildlife & Ecology and in Land & Water. For seven years she chaired the ACT NRM Council, including chairing the national committee of Chairs of the 56 NRM bodies. Sarah was an Honorary Research Fellow of CSIRO, and currently is Deputy Chancellor of University of Canberra. She is often called on to research and write about ACT natural resources and their management.