

Heartwork



Great arts stories from regional Australia

Heartwork

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This book follows a similar publication in 1998, *The Great Yarn Event and Other Arts Stories from Regional Australia*.
Cover image: Mallacoota's Easter Festival 1997, *Sunset Ritual*, Betka Beach Lagoon, artist: Catherine Larkins, photo: Lindy Bartholomew.



Heartwork

Great arts stories from regional Australia

Foreword Nicola Downer

President, Regional Arts Australia



Regional Australia is a vast and diverse landscape of people and communities with many stories to tell. The arts in regional Australia play an important role in telling these stories.

Heartwork: great arts stories from regional Australia showcases 35 arts projects from

across regional Australia, highlighting the quality and scope of artistic activity occurring beyond the major metropolitan centres.

This is Regional Arts Australia's second publication in partnership with the Australia Council. Its predecessor was published in 1998, *The Great Yarn Event and Other Arts Stories from Regional Australia*, which was a huge success in raising the awareness of the arts in regional communities.

Since 1998 many changes have taken place in the arts across regional Australia, including changes to funding arrangements so that more people are receiving arts funding that is delivered and administered at a local level.

There is a new enthusiasm for projects that revitalise communities through collaborative processes and celebrations. More projects/programs have greater emphasis on leaving skills and resources in communities so they can further their own arts activities. Many of the projects occurring now are larger in scale, involve more people, draw on new audiences and have specific outcomes for the participants.

Regional communities have used their respective strengths, most notably committed and passionate local arts volunteers, to ensure collaborative and cooperative approaches to the development of projects and the community recognition of these arts projects.

Regional Arts Australia works tirelessly to promote opportunities for regional communities to access and participate in the arts. We recognise how crucial the arts are to community development generally and the role that the arts plays in building community pride and regional distinctiveness.

During my tenure as president I have always been impressed by what can and what has been achieved when local communities share their vision and build arts projects and programs, which not only make them proud, but leave skills in the community for the benefit of future generations. The publication *Heartwork* clearly demonstrates the importance of the arts in regional Australia for communities

working together to build confidence, and develop new opportunities for themselves.

I commend *Heartwork* to you. I have no doubt that you will be both impressed and inspired by the commitment and energy of regional communities across Australia in demonstrating to us all that the arts can and do make a difference.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nicola Downer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nicola Downer
President, Regional Arts Australia

Foreword Jennifer Bott

CEO, Australia Council



This publication is proof that the cultural landscape of regional Australia is now even richer since *The Great Yarn Event* was published in 1998.

Heartwork celebrates and profiles the great talent and achievements of regional and remote artists in Australia. Regional creators are pursuing

more complex, challenging and sophisticated projects. Partnerships, multiple artforms, Internet technology and complex organisation over distances and time are all part of the mix. The dialogue includes city and rural exchange—going both ways—and a heartening involvement of young people, who often face difficult challenges as the regional economy changes. And the range here is from the backyard to, in some instances, the international stage.

Heartwork is aimed at a broad audience. It is intended to provide models, inspiration and ideas. It sends a clear message that artists can thrive in regional Australia. For audiences: there is no lack of excellent art out there, and you can be a spectator, or better still, you can participate too. And I'm sure city dwellers who read this publication will find a new motivation for packing their bags and heading to the country—they will be rewarded by a cultural experience probably unlike any they have had before.

Volunteers, community groups, local governments and many others have worked for years to create a rich cultural life in regional Australia, with or without government funding. The Australia Council has continued to pursue its regional arts development policy and has been pleased to join forces with Regional Arts Australia to achieve our common goals. Undoubtedly a vital factor driving the growth of regional arts over recent years has been the increased funding and strategic focus that government agencies have given to regional arts.

However, this is not the time to rest. Ensuring a sustainable future for regional and remote artists remains a challenge. The Australia Council recognises the tremendous efforts that organisations, governments and individuals have

already made. We will continue to push for all levels of government to work together and support the arts right across Australia. Regional and remote communities are reaping the benefits of a rich cultural life and they should continue to do so.

A handwritten signature in gold ink that reads "Jennifer Bott". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being larger and more prominent.

Jennifer Bott
CEO, Australia Council

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Preface

'If we don't design the future someone or something else will design it for us.'

Edward De Bono

It could be said that the older and more mature a society, the more the collective interests of that society seem to focus away from avarice and acquisition, towards spirituality and culture. Truly great nations that have had the opportunity to mature for, say, 60,000 years on great island chunks of a broken Gondwanaland, and to absorb recent events such as the Ice Age and the arrival of high-tech wind powered vessels, tend to determine their future through these twin preoccupations. This commitment to country and story used to seem naive to me. Now I can see its maturity.

Nations are narrations, and narration comes in many forms of story—literary, kinetic, statistical, musical, academic, political, philosophical. Stories are the way we discuss the future. This future is nothing more than an idea in the present, which we invent, detail and mull over. These ideas come to us packaged in story that we unwrap, in a discussion of ideas we call culture.

Although the arts is only one form of story used in this discussion, it's important in a young society because it is the one avenue where subjective, unsubstantiated and

maverick story making is legitimised as self-expression, alongside academic, statistical, empirical or political-based discussions. In our national narration, if you are a different colour, or a minority, or in prison, or if you live in locations or demographics that are seen as unimportant, then self-expression—your discussion of ideas—can be a very powerful act in re-designing a better future for you and your community.

Queen Victoria said, 'Beware of artists, because they mix with all classes and are therefore dangerous'. This is because the act of self-expression involves imagining the future, and this cannot be easily controlled by social policy.

We tend to let the media, politicians and the makers of social policy, among others, have the most influence in inventing our future, and as artists it is easy to abdicate our responsibility, and allow art to be viewed as merely recreational.

With social policy being mostly dispensed from the top down, with few opportunities for people to influence the discussion from the community up, the arts can work as a conduit for individuals and communities to have input into that discussion, through mentored self-expression and participation. Participation in excellent story making, when coupled with savvy use of the media, can spread through marginalised communities and marginal electorates. These stories can then be used to influence policy, to reduce marginalisation, and help invent a new future with a more inclusive narration.

In creating our future story, the media has its place, and so do politics and academia. And art is important too. However it would be a mistake to see the arts as either more important than other forms of 'story', or to miss its significance altogether.

The arts bring nuance, the arts act as a canary in the coalmine, the arts allow for the maverick vision, the arts ignore committee, the arts don't 'stay on message'; all vital for keeping the 'discussion of the future' inclusive. When participatory processes are used in making art, and it is facilitated by our best artists through strong craft, the work becomes potent and vital.

This publication documents a range of projects from communities that can play a vital role in remaking the national narrative. Our collective responsibility is to make sure our work enters the discussion, to keep making good art, to seek critique and to think long term. Geography, population, access, resource and infrastructure all affect the process of making art and inventing the future. Whether we live and work in a regional or metropolitan setting, some opportunities make it easier and some circumstances hinder it.

Congratulations to the story makers and those who make the story making possible.

Scott Rankin
National Artistic Director and co-founder, BIG hART Inc.

Scott has won two Premier's Awards for literature, a human rights award, the 2002 Ros Bower Award and is currently the recipient of an Australia Council Fellowship.

BIG hART is a multi-artform organisation established to make art with people or groups experiencing the effects of marginalisation in a rural, regional or isolated context. It was established by Scott Rankin and John Bakes in 1992 and was incorporated and registered as a tax-deductible charity in 1996. It is staffed by mid-career artists, trains young artists and mentors emerging artists.

Big hART has won an AFI Award, five CHOGM Awards, a Law Foundation Award, ATOM Award and been included in many film and arts festivals including Melbourne International Arts Festival, Adelaide Arts Festival and Ten Days on the Island.

Who, what and why

Information about the projects and programs profiled in this publication were supplied by their project coordinators or administering body. A reference advisory group of representatives from Regional Arts Australia and the Australia Council invited submissions from across Australia and chose 35 stories from 96 submissions. In this selection the aim was to present a broad range of arts activities from across regional Australia. However, this book is not a comprehensive collection of significant activities in regional Australia. Rather, it is a snapshot of a very complex and progressive cultural landscape.

All of the projects in this publication have accomplished the outcomes they set out to achieve. They have employed new ways of presenting, occurred in new locations or reached new audiences. A common thread linking them all is the great capacity of regional arts organisations and artists for innovation and responsiveness to change.

These stories explain what motivated the projects, and the key issues, processes and resources used to complete them. The publication also highlights the elements which contribute to successful arts practice, as well as the challenges.

The stories are categorised under six headings, each describing major themes or contexts for the arts in regional Australia.

- 1. Artists and communities**
working together to develop and present quality art
- 2. A springboard for young people**
providing new skills, life opportunities and a sense of self
- 3. Celebrating place and history**
promoting a distinctive regional identity
- 4. Sustaining arts practice**
enabling artists to develop skills and promote themselves
- 5. Creativity and diversity**
projects that draw on many Australian stories
- 6. Art out there**
providing art in remote areas or in new ways

Many of the projects could be placed under more than one heading. In the context of this publication, they are sorted by their most significant characteristics.

*The future can be influenced
by artists working with
community who share a vision
and have the courage and
determination to pursue it.*

Joise Black OAM, Secretary, Corangamite Arts Inc.



The A-maze-ing Labyrinth is a portable, reinventable, sculptural installation, which drew on the expertise of over 250 local residents in Mallacoota, Victoria.

Natimuk Frinj Festival relies on the talents of a strong arts community to produce a serious fringe festival in the small regional town of Natimuk, Victoria.

Choral Island involved over 400 people from choirs and vocal groups across Tasmania performing to an audience of 3000 at the Port Arthur Historic Site.

Bundaleer Weekend provides a unique experience for audiences and a chance for the community to tell others about Australia's first plantation forest in Jamestown, South Australia.

Alice Springs Beanie Festival started as a community development project to celebrate Indigenous fibre arts, and is now a community festival attracting fibre artists from across the country.

Decadent and Delicious Fringe Fashion in Victoria inspired young emerging artists and communities to create a fringe festival in their town and to take part in the Melbourne Fringe Fashion Event.

one

Artists and communities

The A-Maze-ing Labyrinth

Mallacoota Arts Festival

In the small town of Mallacoota, East Gippsland artist Catherine Larkins, assisted by a volunteer squad of 250 people—no less than a quarter of the town's permanent residents—constructed an extraordinary work of art: a very large, portable installation of 18 hexagonal rooms. Made of rip-stop nylon, bamboo and steel, the labyrinth was a beautiful and adaptable installation. With the enthusiastic participation of 20 Mallacoota organisations, the rooms of the labyrinth also became a series of marvellous art galleries celebrating local creativity.

The A-Maze-ing Labyrinth was Catherine Larkins' ambitious response to the theme of Mallacoota's 22nd Arts Festival called 'Collide-A-Scope: Choice, Chance and Change'. But her vision could only be realised with the technical and creative contribution of dozens of residents of this tiny Victorian coastal town. Catherine's close association with the Mallacoota community on other challenging community arts projects over 15 years meant she could count on this support.



Catherine conceptualised and designed the structure so that it could easily be dismantled and reassembled in various configurations and in many locations. Her first point of inspiration was the hexagon, which is the basis for the infinite possibilities of patterns multiplying and reforming through the lens of a kaleidoscope. Within the constraints of a tight budget, a structure of bamboo poles and metal brackets was created supporting a skin of rip-

stop nylon material. The structure's outer ring of 12 hexagons was 2 metres high and stepped up to a higher, inner ring of six hexagons that was 3 metres high, on top of which sat three Russian onion domes, each one adding another 3 metres.

Locals stepped forward in droves to construct, assemble and embellish The A-Maze-ing Labyrinth. A Swiss silver and goldsmith scaled-up the dome pattern from models to actual dimensions, working with a local welder. Patchworkers configured and sewed the intricate designs covering the six panels of each dome. Kite makers advised on the rip-stop nylon material. A retired upholsterer sewed up the sleeves in his backyard shed, while also transferring skills in cutting, measuring and constructing to his assistants. Fishermen and others provided advice about fine stainless steel cabling to counteract wind and stress factors. The State Emergency Services (SES) and a local farmer helped to install the structure on the local oval.

The finished structure was lavishly decorated with highly-coloured patchwork designs with eclectic inspiration drawn from Middle Eastern, Russian and Indian aesthetics. Locals compared it to a beehive, a sophisticated patchworker's block and a Star of David.

Once funding was sourced, Catherine began a residency at a local community centre where she consulted closely with the 20 community groups (double the expected number) that registered interest in participating. She



Top: The A-Maze-ing Labyrinth

Above: Community assembling The A-Maze-ing Labyrinth, Mallacoota Festival 2002

Right: Mallacoota SES hexagon interior designed by SES leader Hans Van Der Sant for The A-Maze-ing Labyrinth, Mallacoota Festival 2002

Photography: Catherine Larkins



emphasised that each group needed to conceive and design an exciting contemporary visual arts environment around the theme of choice, chance and change for the labyrinth.

'A truly wondrous and amazing entwining of many, many individual's creativity and love.'

Eighteen hexagonal spatial environments were designed and installed by 18 Mallacoota organisations and individuals, including: Coast Action, District Health, Friends of 'Coota, Mallacoota P-12 College, Youth Festival, Mallacoota Reconciliation Group, visual arts students in the TAFE Diploma of Visual Arts course, the kindergarten, the local FM radio station, the Surfboard Riders Club, Kim Gordon and the Mallacoota Patchworkers, and the Gabo Island lighthouse keeper.

One constraint was that most hexagons were without ceilings and open to weather, so people had to be very inventive in their use of fabrics and materials. The local radio station glued old vinyl records and CDs into a mosaic on the floor of one hexagon. The lighthouse keeper constructed a complex assemblage based on a traditional compass shape and made from materials found on Gabo Island, including animal skeletons and flotsam.

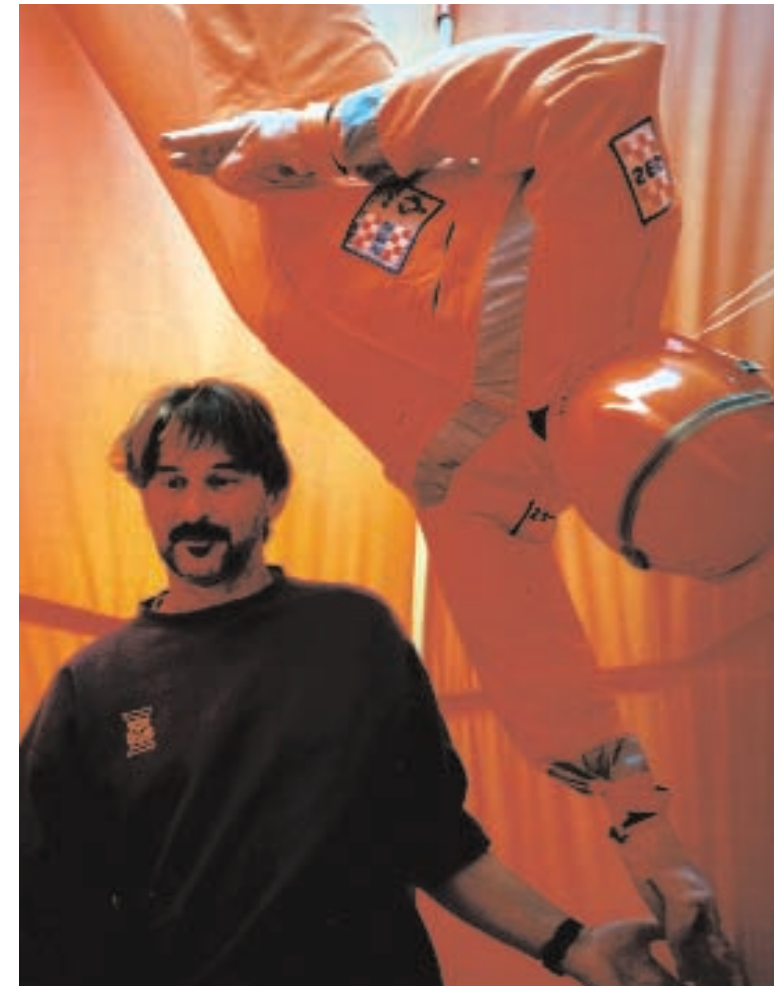
On opening day of the Mallacoota Arts Festival, long queues formed outside The A-Maze-ing Labyrinth. Visitors

were ushered into the labyrinth in groups of 15. By the end of one Easter four-day weekend, 2000 people, having paid their gold entry coin, had explored the maze of colourful rooms.

'A truly wondrous and amazing entwining of many, many individual's creativity and love. It's an inspiration. I am privileged to have been through it. Catherine Larkins' vision is a fabulous asset to this Festival,' wrote Susan Purdy in the visitors' book. 'What a maze! Fantastic. I loved the textures, concepts and colours,' wrote Tina.

The A-Maze-ing Labyrinth is fully portable and can be reconfigured for and by new audiences, thus ensuring that each reinvention speaks intimately to its new hosts. Each community that hosts The A-Maze-ing Labyrinth can construct new environments in each of the 18 rooms. Since the Mallacoota Festival, the structure has been reassembled as a large circle, fencing, and as an outdoor community centre. The local community is still discussing different ways in which the labyrinth can be used and housed. Some of the issues about touring this structure, such as insurance and the equipment required for it to travel safely and securely, have not yet been resolved.

During the Festival, the exotic beauty of The A-Maze-ing Labyrinth was highlighted by its erection in the centre of Mallacoota next to one of the town's heritage Mallacoota gum trees. As one resident wrote, 'As a vision at night and an adventure for the day, A-Maze-ing Labyrinth is magic. Truly inspired.'



Funding/support: Arts Victoria, Mallacoota Arts Council, East Gippsland Institute of TAFE, with in-kind support from the Mallacoota community

For more information about this project contact:
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Mallacoota Arts Festival
1 Larkins Place, Lake Tyers Beach VIC 3909
Telephone: 03 5156 5995

Natimuk Frinj Festival

The Arapiles Community Theatre Group



The second 'Natimuk Frinj Festival' in 2002 was a high-quality weekend event which attracted over 2000 people to the township of Natimuk, and united a diverse population in a celebration of culture and community.

Like many regional Australian towns, Natimuk, in the Wimmera region of Victoria, is changing. Traditional farming and business people share their community with a recent influx of artists, performers and dedicated rock climbers attracted to the adjacent Mount Arapiles. In fact, of the town's 500 people, about 50 identify solely as rock climbers, while about 15 artists/performers are also serious rock climbers.



In 2001, one of these artist/rock climbers, Greg Pritchard, received a small grant to promote Natimuk as the fringe event to the larger, annual 'Art is...festival' at nearby Horsham. The Arapiles Community Theatre Group, which had been creating small performances in the Natimuk Soldiers Memorial Hall for many years, now hosts the festival.

The centrepiece of the second Natimuk Frinj Festival was *Colony*, a combination of aerial dance and projection by members of a local physical theatre company, Y Space. The 30 metre wheat silos were transformed through lighting, sound design and music into a performance space enabling the use of rock climbing skills in an

astonishing work of art atop the wheat storage systems. Costumed Y Space angels silently climbed the interior silo steps to the top and then flew out and over the lip. Working with the theme of 'a vigil for tolerance' the first segment of their performance enacted a clash of opposites with two angels coming together from high and low to fight each other. The next segment enacted the counterbalancing of opposites and the final section was pure joy in flight. As a local commented after this dazzling 40 minute aerial dance performance, 'This is the best thing since the tractor pull'.

'This is the best thing since the tractor pull'.

With the support from local state member for Lowan, Hugh Delahunty, Y Space negotiated the use of the silos with GrainCorp, who enthusiastically supported the event. The 2002 Frinj Festival Committee—Greg Pritchard, Shiree Pilkinton, Jillian Pearce, Anthony Pelchen, Mary French, Peter Hill, Jill McLeod and Lynne Quick—drew confidence in this support and a greater sense of belief in their ambitious goals.

The Frinj Festival was an inclusive process. In the lead-up to the Festival, workshops were held with the 70 pupils of Natimuk Primary School during which the children made huge angel wings attached to lengths of bamboo and

Top: Y Space Angels colonising the Natimuk GrainCorp silos, March 2002

Photo: David Fletcher, Wimmera Mail Times

Bottom: Y Space Angel, Tom Andrews performing in *Colony* Photo: courtesy of Next Wave Festival

Right: Visual projections by Ian Corcoran on Natimuk silos as part of *Colony*

Photo: courtesy of Ian Corcoran, Next Wave Festival



wrote down their ideas for an ideal world. These were transferred onto more than 100 small cloth flags like Tibetan prayer flags and strung up to carry messages of hope on the wind. At Goroke P-12 College, 45 kilometres from Natimuk, students were asked: 'If you saw an angel, what would you like to ask them?' Their responses inspired a gospel song, 'Across the Fields', about angels visiting the district during harvest time.

Performance night also included local acapella quartet, In Spiral, a choir of 30 school children and a choreographed sequence in which children manoeuvred the giant angel wings they had made during school workshops. A soundscape of children's voices talking about what was important to them was edited together with a music track and played while computer-generated landscape images were projected onto the silos. The images were produced by the Horsham Secondary College and the Horsham Camera Club.

On the night of the arts festival Natimuk experienced an unprecedented traffic jam of 1600 cars. It was bumper to bumper back to the bridge with local Lions Club members offering traffic management for people who had driven to Natimuk from all over the Wimmera region. Some even travelled the 320 kilometres from Melbourne.

Before Frinj Festival performance night 2002, a random art event saw the appearance of a giant haiku, 3.5 kilometres long inscribed on the road in lime:

dry autumn
paddocks
yellow
stubble
and blown
dust
a hawk
hangs above

Instead of wearing away as expected, the haiku has endured and become something of a local tourist attraction. The Natimuk Frinj Festival is also likely to endure. Having started out as a small self-funded enterprise, in 2003 the Frinj attracted significant funding. Also in 2003, the local farming and arts communities celebrated a new level of understanding and cooperation with a 'Hay and Thespian Mardi Gras'. The ideas continue to flow in Natimuk...and also the anarchic fun, bringing together the best of the old and new in the community.



Funding/support: In 2002 Natimuk Frinj Festival was assisted by Regional Arts Victoria through the Regional Arts Fund, an Australian Government initiative, VicHealth, Sidney Myer Foundation and Arts Victoria (Sharing the Festivals Fund). In-kind support was also received from Art is...festival Horsham, local community organisations and GrainCorp allowed use of the town's wheat silos.

For more information about this project contact:
Greg Pritchard, Vice President
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Website: www.natimuk.com

Alice Springs Beanie Festival

It all started in 1996 with a 'Beanie Party'. Back then it was an opportunity to show and sell the surplus of beanies made by Indigenous women at remote crochet workshops organised by the Aboriginal Development Unit. Now the 'Alice Springs Beanie Festival' has elevated the humble beanie—that practical garment to keep the head warm during desert winters—into a fashion statement and a unique, Central Australian artform.

The 2003 Alice Springs Beanie Festival was the largest so far. Over four days, thousands of entrants from all over Australia exhibited and sold their beanies, watched fibre and textile demonstrations, participated in workshops such as Indigenous basketweaving, and enjoyed music and storytelling.

Adi Dunlop and Merran Hughes form the original core group of the Festival with Joanna Nixon and Pamela Blaydon. 'In the early years we did it all on love and elbow grease,' recalls Merran. 'As the Festival has grown larger, it has required more planning and more time from the volunteer committee. We haven't always developed policies or planned ahead, but wonderful people seem to magically appear when we need them. The Beanie Festival is run on goodwill and unlikely friendships, as much as on planning and procedures. We have learnt a lot on the run, yet the Festival always ends up happening, people always enjoy it and that is the miracle.'

The 2003 Festival opened with a fashion parade of winners in the hotly contested 'Flashiest Beanies in Australia' competition. The beanie competition aims to encourage wild and creative concepts, so beanies have been



decorated with quolls (furry, native animals), antennae and embroidered desert ranges. As well as the traditional knitted and crocheted forms, beanies have been made using felt, weaving and sewing techniques. Indigenous women in remote communities have developed a highly distinctive style of beanie, using gorgeous painted seeds and the signatory swathe of emu feathers. Competition winners in 2003 were exhibited for one month in the Araluen Galleries in Alice Springs, alongside exhibitions of works by Sidney Nolan and Albert Namatjira.

'The Beanie Festival is run on goodwill and unlikely friendships, as much as on planning and procedures. We have learnt a lot on the run, yet the Festival always ends up happening, people always enjoy it and that is the miracle.'

Prior to the Festival, volunteers pitch in for the herculean task of cataloguing and keeping track of the beanies. In 2003 there were 3000 to 4000 entries and items for sale. But none of this back-room work is obvious to the visitors who become engrossed in the thrill of the chase to find a perfect beanie in the Araluen Centre at the Alice Springs Cultural Precinct. Organisers have maintained the community cultural focus of the Beanie Festival, resisting any attempt to reduce it to a retail event at which stalls would be set up to sell beanies. They're intent on

Top: Panjtiti Lionel, a senior artist from Ernabella in her award winning beanie. Winner of the craziest beanie, 2002

Bottom: Alice Springs Beanie Festival competition winners 2003

Top Right: *Quoll in winter on Mt Wellington*, by Bhoomi Redpath, Tasmania. Winner of the committee prize for wonderful and unusual work 2003

Bottom Right: Tjunkaya Tapaya, a senior Ernabella artist shows some of her beanies, 2003

Photography: Merran Hughes



maintaining a playful, casual atmosphere where people are encouraged to try on lots of beanies before they make their choice. People have been seen in a cafe drinking coffee wearing a blue beanie with floppy ears which they might ultimately decide not to buy, but everyone has a great time in the process.

The Alice Springs Beanie Festival has already been used as a model for other festivals such as the Craft Council of Victoria's first scarf festival. Following contact between the Beanie Festival and the Canberra Spinners and Weavers, a bus load of women from Ernabella community in Central Australia travelled to the 'Canberra Folk Festival' to sell beanies and demonstrate traditional fibre art. Indigenous women have also exhibited their beanies at Walkabout, the World Vision gallery in Sydney.

'We would crochet hundreds of beanies each year and then still be scared there wouldn't be enough for sale. We'd be running around setting up the tables to display the beanies and cooking stews for the Aboriginal ladies who had come to town to demonstrate fibre-spinning techniques,' says Merran.

Partnerships with Aboriginal organisations Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunjatjara (NPY) Women's Council and Ernabella Arts are integral to the unique character of the Festival. Crochet workshops in remote communities are still an important part of the lead-up to the event. At the Festival itself, senior artists from remote Indigenous communities showcase traditional spinning techniques involving rubbing a simple wooden spindle on the thigh. This has become a Festival highlight and a means to



encourage cultural exchange between Indigenous and non-Indigenous women.

'We have strong partnerships with various indigenous organisations in the area and because one of the main aims of the Festival is to promote the fibre industry of Central Australian Indigenous women, we are really open to input from these organisations,' says Merran.

Following each Beanie Festival, organisers hold a big planning meeting, open to anybody who wants to participate, at which they discuss successes, difficulties and begin to plan the next Festival. Merran: 'There are a lot of skills involved in making the Festival happen such as administration, budgeting, project managing, sourcing funds, exhibition concepts, as well as cross-cultural reconciliation. One person can't do all of that, so being able to work as a team and respect each other's skills is integral to our success. We need to have a lot of trust to nurture our ideas to fruition. The process of making a Festival is dynamic and it changes every year according to who has input and ideas. Flexibility and creative thinking are our biggest assets.'

The Alice Springs Beanie Festival celebrates traditional women's crafts—Indigenous and non-Indigenous—as well as bringing together a community of fibre artists from around Australia.

The humble crocheted or knitted beanie, celebrated, flaunted and sold in thousands during this Festival draws outsiders into Alice Springs for a unique hybrid experience, bringing art and community together.

Funding/support: The Northern Territory Arts Sponsorship Program through the Regional Arts Fund, an Australian Government initiative. The Alice Springs Town Council auspices the project. Cleckheaton provides some beautiful yarns for the workshops and the famous Beanie Festival prizes. In-kind support also comes from the Araluen Centre.

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Bundaleer Weekend

Belalie Arts Society



The 'Bundaleer Weekend' in 2003 at Jamestown in South Australia was an opportunity for two days of immersion in fine art, music, adventure, heritage and local community culture. This community celebration was developed to increase interest and tourism in the region and protect a local environmental treasure; at the physical and emotional heart of the event was the Bundaleer Forest, Australia's first plantation of pine trees, dating back to 1876.

The Belalie Arts Society in Jamestown takes a leading role in promoting the arts in the mid-north region of the state. The Society was formed in 1985 with a view towards acquiring local art. Today, as well as being custodians of a permanent collection in the Belalie Art Gallery, the Society runs the Bundaleer Weekend, a massive cultural event involving the whole town as well as smaller communities around Jamestown. The inaugural Bundaleer Forest Concert Weekend took place in 1999; in 2003, organisers estimate 10,000 visitors came to enjoy fine art and community in a beautiful natural setting.

The planning committee for Bundaleer Weekend has various sub-committees, including artistic and production, marketing, finance/administration, environment, community relations, accommodation and food and beverage. Each sub-committee has a key worker responsible for implementing actions for their sub-group. Planning for the event starts a minimum of two years in advance, with community consultations eliciting a commitment from groups and individuals to participate, including poets, weavers, knitters, performers, artists and sporting and musical groups. In the months prior to the

weekend, various professional artists work with the community groups on skills development and participation in the artistic program.

The carnival atmosphere of Bundaleer Weekend in 2003 greeted guests as they arrived on the festival Friday. There were street stalls, street bands, a curated art exhibition in the gallery, art in the street, guided walks through surrounding country, and gourmet dining.

'A weekend of music, arts, good food and good company at every turn in the forest'

On Saturday afternoon hundreds of local school children paraded through the forest, carrying banners and flags, and performing on wacky musical instruments made in community and school workshops. The musical procession led the crowd towards an eccentric sculpted musical instrument made by artists and other locals. The unveiling of this 7-metre-high sculpture in the forest was followed by a high-energy performance by Cirkidz, the South Australian circus/theatre company of young performers.

On Saturday evening, Bundaleer Forest Amphitheatre hosted a twilight concert presenting artists of international stature, such as opera singers Yvonne Kenny AM, Elizabeth Campbell and tenor David Hamilton. They performed with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra,

Above: Title: *Talking Head* Actor: Astrid Pill
Right: Title: *Bird of Light* Mandala. Artist: Evette Sunset, with Jamestown community
Photography: Clive Palmer Photography, Jamestown



conducted by Nicholas Milton, in the world premiere of *Towards Unlit Skies*. This commissioned choral work was composed by a young South Australian, Natalie Williams, with a libretto written by Adelaide director and composer Pat Rix and poet Kim Mann, in collaboration with two local writers groups and two groups of local school students. The performance was supported by a regional choir (including children) and the renowned Tutti Ensemble Holdfast Choir. Music continued late into the night with FRUIT and The Borderers getting everyone up on their feet. On Sunday the musical feast rolled on with the Australian String Quartet, Little Black Dress, R@que and Clarinet Capers.

A Sunday afternoon highlight was the opportunity for visitors to be surprised, amazed and delighted as they walked through Bundaleer Forest by the discovery of more than 30 performances of music, poetry, theatre, acrobatics, sport and dance. Two established, signposted Bundaleer Forest walks became pathways to the outrageous, the magical or whimsical.

Roz Hervey, artistic director of Bundaleer Weekend Forest Walks, choreographed this event. Some of the delights discovered by walkers were: Adelaide actress Astrid Pill, apparently buried up to her neck, improvising songs or stories; aerial dancers towering above the ground in massive gum trees; opera singers on swings; fencers duelling with violin accompaniment; a music-box ballerina on a rotating musical seat; two local artists painting a canvas hung between trees; a tango demonstration with opportunities for tango classes on a rostrum; and Ngadjuri Aboriginal storytellers. A line of seats at the top of Panoramic

Walk comforted the weary who could rest their feet, sip iced tea, take in the view, and enjoy a gentle massage while being soothed by the sounds of a heavenly harp.

The large-scale theatricality of this event depended upon the professionalism of the artists and particularly their improvisational skills, since a full dress rehearsal was out of the question. Many practical solutions needed to be found by organisers to sustain lengthy performances by artists in outdoor environments. One was solved by giving each artist a packaged gourmet lunch. The audience on the other hand revelled in their complete freedom to listen, observe and see performances from many angles. 'A weekend of music, arts, good food and good company at every turn in the forest,' said Jane Brummitt. 'We brought Canadian visitors with us who were very impressed and this made us feel very proud of SA's country creativity.'

Local involvement and participation in this event has expanded over the years as the communities become more confident about being involved artistically as well as organisationally. Local artworker Kate Jenkins says community members surprised themselves. 'They're very skilled and with the help of facilitating artists, can make miracles happen.'

Bundaleer Weekend has evolved into a biennial event. The next one is scheduled for March 2005.



Funding/support: Country Arts SA through the Regional Arts Fund, an Australian Government initiative, Arts SA, Festivals Australia, Tourism SA, Environment Protection Authority SA, Forestry SA, local council and private businesses.

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Decadent and Delicious Fringe Fashion

Regional Arts Victoria and the Melbourne Fringe Festival

When Regional Arts Victoria (RAV) and the 'Melbourne Fringe Festival' wanted to appeal to the creativity and energy of young people in the region, Decadent and Delicious Fringe Fashion was the answer. Across Victoria, over a three month period in 2002, hundreds of people produced inventive, beautiful and provocative fashion/wearable-art garments.

Decadent and Delicious Fringe Fashion was created in response to a felt need. Some established regional arts groups had noted a decline in participation by the younger generation. And some regional artists felt that their own local communities were not fully tapping into their professional skills. The challenge was to create a project through which regional artists could take a lead in their communities; by which art could be seen as something more intrinsic to community culture than simply a weekend elective, and which would encourage participation by young people.

Decadent and Delicious Fringe Fashion took shape as a multi-faceted arts project. It would provide a structured mentorship program through which experienced regional artists could pass on their skills to young emerging artists. Participation by a wide range of community members, especially young people, would be encouraged. It would create links between regional communities and the Melbourne Fringe Festival (a major cultural event for young artists and young audiences). And four regional communities would participate in the Melbourne Fringe Festival.



First there were calls for expressions of interest, followed by a series of six information sessions organised by RAV with arts and community groups across the state. This helped organisers to refine the project. Following submissions, the four selected regions—Mallacoota, Bendigo, Horsham and Portland—received ongoing support from RAV through structured forums on contracts, copyright, event risk management, documentation, marketing and project evaluation.

To guide the project and guarantee quality artistic outcomes, RAV artistic director Donna Jackson, supported by Rochelle Carmichael (2002 Melbourne Fringe Festival's fashion director/choreographer) were contracted to create an overarching aesthetic structure. Donna and Rochelle also provided structured workshops in each of the four regions on issues such as project planning, event staffing/management, and presentation of a quality artistic product, including choice of venue, story-boarding, scheduling, publicity, programming choreography, and so on. These formal sessions were supplemented by continuous informal support and guidance.

The Mallacoota project was led by Gizelle Regan. It brought together about 40 women from all walks of life and age groups, and encouraged skills exchange and collaboration between local emerging artists (high school and TAFE students), local professional artists and older women belonging to traditional craft guilds. A dedicated sewing circle of older women knitted Glad Wrap and cross-

Top: *Candy Queen* by Katrina Heard, columbine encrusted bodice, trimmed with candy tassels for the 'Pulse of the Wimmera' Horsham Regional Arts Association and Regional Arts Victoria Fringe Fashion Event, 19 September 2002
Right: *Colour and Movement*, a collection of *Art-IcIes* for the Pulse of the Wimmera
Photography: Bindi Cole



stitched sections of an overgarment with erotic images from the *Kama Sutra*. These 'delicious' overgarments, which referred to restriction, binding and the Victorian era, were peeled away during the outdoor parade to reveal more contemporary, 'decadent' undergarments.

Horsham's 'Pulse of the Wimmera' was coordinated by Christine Smith and Marion Matthews. Gorgeous sculpted outfits made from artificially-coloured and locally-grown lentils and chickpeas were stuffed into bubble wrap. These garments signified the decadence of industrial food production. Deliciousness was also celebrated with outfits like a Lipton's tea frock.

'A total cultural success... We are fortunate to have such a wealth of talent to stage such a remarkable event in such a small remote town.'

In Bendigo, Colleen Hurley and Bridget Robertson of arts group the Kapoozies, coordinated 80 artists, volunteer staff and stage crew for a jam-packed, pub-style night to remember at a local hotel favoured by young emerging artists and students. Vinyl costumes fashioned from bar-mats, plastics and pegs were displayed, along with intervals of trampolining, balancing and dance sequences.

At Portland, Emma Ikin coordinated the 'bizarre to the beautiful', a project which encouraged budding fashion designers to stretch their imaginations. Outfits included a hoop-skirted gown designed to fit six people at a time, bicycle dresses ready to travel, and dresses to house the wearer.

From each of these four events, 12 regional artists were invited to exhibit one of their creations at the Melbourne Fringe Fashion Event. The regional visitors had their first behind-the-scenes experience of a professional fashion parade involving media calls, dress rehearsals and the final event. Horsham designer Rosemary Kingsmill won the Metro Night's *gluttonous, gastronomic gala* category award for her *Vanilla Ice-Cream* garment, much to the delight of 93 people who had travelled to Melbourne from the four regions.

The Decadent and Delicious Fringe Fashion project had many benefits. It inspired the involvement of younger emerging artists in their communities; encouraged cross-fertilisation between emerging artists with fashion design skills and people with expertise in traditional textile crafts; refreshed some established regional arts groups with youthful energy; provided a new generation of emerging artists with the experience of working collaboratively; and developed local professional skills in art production and exhibition. It also attracted participation by community members, such as staff at a Horsham hairdressing salon who were inspired to design, make and model an entire range of outrageous headwear.

The project may have been decadent and delicious in theme but the participants were thoroughly professional. Their final evaluation noted the need for improved communication strategies between far-flung participants across the state as well as between regional and metropolitan managers. And such efforts are well worth it. As June Drake, a Mallacoota resident observed of the experience, 'A total cultural success... We are fortunate to have such a wealth of talent to stage such a remarkable event in such a small remote town'.



Funding/support: Regional Arts Victoria through the Regional Arts Fund, an Australian Government initiative, VicHealth and Arts Victoria's Sharing the Festivals Program.

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Choral Island

Ten Days on the Island

'Choral Island' was a one-day music festival of performances by 22 choirs plus soloists. It drew 4000 people to the Port Arthur Historic Site during Tasmania's 'Ten Days on the Island' 2003 for a powerful and healing day of music.

Choral Island was initiated by Ten Days on the Island following the success of an eclectic community music event in 2001. Musical directors Mara and Llew Kiek, supported by project coordinators Peter Tanfield and Maria Lurighi, were engaged to work with what organisers estimated might be 10 community choirs. But the Kiek's two-week process of community consultation, liaison and research revealed a far bigger and more vibrant Tasmanian musical scene than expected. Twenty-two community choral groups—some 400 singers—were eager to participate in the project.

Some of the unique and unusual groups which became visible through this project included the Island Coes, an Aboriginal group performing Kentucky bluegrass in a tradition reaching back to the earliest colonial interactions between Tasmanian Aboriginals and American sealers on Flinders and Cape Barren Islands.

Though delighted at this high level of interest, it was clearly going to be a challenge to double the scale of the project. Mechanisms were devised to ensure the project met the highest professional standards. Memorandums of understanding were signed by all community choral



groups, clearly outlining their responsibilities and expectations in relation to matters including rehearsal and performance. Budgets were re-allocated, replacing beds in hotels with billeted accommodation and simplifying travel and food arrangements.

'Port Arthur has been for me a place of ineffable sadness. All this has changed. Our weekend of singing together has exorcised all the uneasy spirits. I feel sure that Port Arthur will never be the same for any of us.'

Mara and Llew are professional musicians and singers with experience in many musical forms. They had some experience of working with large community choral groups, but nothing to rival the scale and scope of Choral Island. Travelling from NSW to Tasmania, they conducted formal coaching and workshops with each group in three development periods. They provided coaching about the anatomy and physiology of voice mechanics and the use of vocal techniques for control and effect. They delivered workshops on rehearsal and performance techniques.

Top: Company: Holy Tantra Jin-Gang-Dhyana Buddhism. Performance Title: *Dragon Dance*. 30 March 2003, Port Arthur Historic Site

Bottom: Hobart based group *Jessica*, 30 March 2003 Port Arthur Historic Site

Top Right: Company: Gait Productions. Performance Title: *Urban Safari*. 30 March 2003, Port Arthur Historic Site

Bottom Right: Massed finale front row, Tasman District School, Nubeena, singing the 'Reconciliation Song'. 30 March 2003, Port Arthur Historic Site

Photography: Michael Rayner



And, because each choir had its own repertoire, Mara and Lew also tailored specific workshops to address technical or other problems identified by individual choirs.

Organisers bussed all project participants from their communities to the outdoor venue at Port Arthur Historic Site for a full day of rehearsals in addition to the day of performance. Choral Island was then presented twice on one amazing day. Grassy spaces at the site became open air stages as did historic buildings such as the penitentiary and its cells, the chapel, ruined church, asylum and old town hall. Events occurred simultaneously during the two-hour time slots in the morning and afternoon. The performances included a Sudanese calling/response song by Ajak; the Island Coes; a Russian soloist, Zulya; the North Coast Singers performing an anti-war song and the Southern Gospel Choir.

One large central stage was constructed for the finale of each session. The finale included all the choirs and featured 'The Reconciliation Song', written and sung by 16-year-old Dewayne Smith and his friend Tom Coulson. The six-part vocal arrangement by Mara and Lew, with the help of the boys, included the Southern Gospel Choir and the massed choir (including the audience), with the chorus sung and presented in sign language by the local Peninsula school choir.

Choral Island performances left audiences and choir members glowing with pride and satisfaction. It was the



first opportunity for members of many choirs to 'hear each other'. If there's such a thing as 'a community voice' or 'a cultural voice' it was possible to hear it and see it expressed through the unity, harmony and diversity of Choral Island.

'Port Arthur has been for me a place of ineffable sadness, a place to which I would gladly not return. All this has changed. Our weekend of singing together has exorcised all the uneasy spirits. I feel sure that Port Arthur will never be the same for any of us,' said one project participant, Neil Parker.

Choral Island provided an opportunity to renew the historic sense of Tasmanian community ownership of Port Arthur Historic Site and reclaim it as a place important in the state's cultural makeup. Choral Island is the largest project produced so far by Ten Days on the Island and was arguably the largest and most extensive community cultural development project ever undertaken in Tasmania. The careful guidance of the project team ensured that this unexpectedly large community project became a festival program highlight.

Funding/support: Tasmanian Regional Arts through the Regional Arts Fund, an Australian Government initiative and through the Australian Government's Festivals Australia Fund. The State Government of Tasmania, principal supporter of Ten Days on the Island. The Port Arthur Historic Site provided both in-kind and cash support to stage the event. Support from the corporate sector, 32 sponsors and business partners that sponsored Ten Days on the Island (2003).

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The company believes in providing young people with brilliant creative opportunities regardless of their geographical limitations.

Sarah McCormack, General Manager, Stompin Youth Dance Company



Stompin Youth Dance Company's tour of **SYNC** in Tasmania was an incomparable experience for young performers to tour regionally and inspired youth-driven activities wherever it toured.

'**Pardar Kerkar Noh Erpei**' **Catching a Future** was an exhibition of works by school children from the Darnley Island State School in the Torres Strait, where a new cross-curriculum art focus is dramatically raising literacy levels.

Drama Wild project, in Western Australia, allowed young people to break down barriers of cultural understanding through an intensive performing arts experience.

Rope Story project from the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands in South Australia enabled young Anangu people to explore cultural knowledge with their elders, leading to healthier lifestyles and increased self-esteem.

Skudda Arts Powerhouse program provided opportunities to youth at risk in Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia through a flexible and mobile arts program.

Young Australian Concert Artists program is supporting young musicians in regional areas where there is high demand for music training and professional development.

twwo

A springboard for young people

SYNC

Stompin Youth Dance Company



Launceston's Stompin Youth Dance Company prides itself on being young, bold and hard-working. When SYNC toured Tasmania during the Ten Days on the Island festival in 2003 it made a huge splash—quite literally—with regional audiences of all ages.

SYNC grew from a previous Stompin Youth Dance Company work, *Joyride*, which was performed in the pool at Launceston's swimming centre. Artistic directors Luke George and Bec Reid's love of MGM classic films led them to think about the cross-overs between art and sport in 'SYNChronised' swimming and they were keen to develop another work for swimming pools; public places frequented and favoured by young people.

The cast of 16 performers, aged between 15 and 20, first rehearsed as a single group in Launceston. To facilitate the tour and to accommodate the young performers' commitments to study, jobs and families, the cast split into two groups. Each group learnt the whole show. Stompin travelled in two groups to eight towns for 10 performances of SYNC in only 10 days. The show went to Queenstown, Huonville, Oatlands, St Marys, Scottsdale, George Town, Campbell Town and Smithton.

Project development involved Luke and Bec making site visits to each community, and particularly the swimming pool and local schools. A central aim of this project was to strengthen connections between the dance company and the young people in each locality and this was achieved by

encouraging youth participation at each performance. School students and youth groups from each of the eight tour locations were invited to provide pre-show entertainment. When audiences arrived at their local pool they were met by local young people who might be playing in a band, cooking a barbeque, or working as ushers. This created a special atmosphere prior to each performance, building a sense of local ownership of the event. It also created an opportunity for young people to be seen in a public context which they had chosen and created.

'There's a beautiful, cyclical model in place where young people come in and out of the company in different capacities bringing their experiences as young professional artists back to Tasmania.'

SYNC opens slowly with a lazy, summer holiday feeling, including playful teenage flirtations. It builds into a synchronised swimming routine which pays homage to 1950s films starring Esther Williams. It ends with a wild scene of thrashing water, the pool resembling a watery mosh pit.



Top: Dancers: Melita Gul, Tara Boyd, Rachel Taylor, Jenna French, Mark Brazendale, Immogen Ryan, Chelsea Billett and Janita Foley

Bottom: Dancers: Immogen Ryan, Bec Livermore, Pip Griggs and Josh Smith

Top Right: Gemma Gray, Cassie Anderson, Mark Brazendale and Rachel Taylor

Bottom Right: various dancers

Photography: Mark Webster



The tour was made possible through the generosity of local communities and regional councils who provided free accommodation for the entire cast and crew. The team would arrive in town with a mini-bus driven by the tour manager and a technician's truck. They would bump in (that is, set up) the show, rehearse the dances in the water, do the show, pack it up and head off to the local scout hall, classroom or teacher residency house where they'd roll out sleeping bags and swags. Stompin also negotiated with councils to provide out-of-season maintenance of swimming pools in each location, with staff such as life-guards, electricians and pool managers supporting each performance.



Stompin offers an open invitation to young people not necessarily trained as dancers but who are into youth culture—music, dance and performance. Every year the company holds auditions which attract young people aged 14–25. All those who pass through the company are encouraged to retain their strong ties. For example, the costumes for *SYNC* were designed by Katie Stackhouse, a former member of Stompin who returned to Launceston after studying costume design overseas. As Bec expresses it: 'There's a beautiful, cyclical model in place where young people come in and out of the company in different capacities bringing their experiences as young professional artists back to Tasmania.'

Each year Stompin Youth creates site-specific works, often outdoors, which are accessible to all young people and their experiences. The company is producing a new site-specific work for 2004, *Age of Consent*, about young people's relationship to law and authority and its impact on their lives.



Funding/support: *SYNC* was supported with funding from Ten Days on the Island. Stompin Youth Dance Company receives annual funding through the Australia Council's Dance Board (Key Organisations) and Arts Tasmania (recurrent funding).

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'Pardar Kerkar Noh Erpei' Catching a Future

Cairns Regional Gallery

'I am 11 years old and I live at Dadamud Village, Darnley Island. I painted the tiger shark because it is scary and the squid because I like to catch them and eat them.' Morgan Waiganna is one of a group of children from a remote island in the Torres Strait who was part of a student exhibition at Cairns Regional Gallery. For Morgan and his classmates, art became an avenue to literacy and expanded life opportunities.

Darnley Island is a small volcanic island 100 kilometres from Papua New Guinea and 180 kilometres north east of Thursday Island. Simply to get to Darnley Island from Cairns requires one day's flight in a light plane. Discussions between Darnley Island State School staff and the 360-strong island community about their vision for the school and the children's futures led to a long-term plan called Catching a Future.

'I am 10 years old. I live at Mogor Village on Darnley Island in the Torres Strait. I have painted a coral trout and a mantaray because they look so beautiful when they swim.'



Darnley Islanders maintain a rich cultural and spiritual heritage particularly linked to the sea, together with strong family ties. But most adults are employed through a work for the dole scheme (Community Development Employment Program). Catching a Future was designed to secure a more diverse, vibrant future for all members of this community. In particular, the whole community was involved in supporting literacy initiatives at the school, and a cross-curriculum focus on art was an important part of this process.

Cairns Regional Gallery was established less than a decade ago with majority funding from local government. It runs a vibrant public education program highlighting the advantages of learning and visual awareness. Lynnette Griffiths of the Darnley Island Arts Centre visited Cairns Regional Gallery. During her meeting with the gallery's programs manager Paul Brinkman, the idea of a children's exhibition in the gallery was born. The exhibition was timed to coincide with NAIDOC Week 2003, whose theme was 'Our Children, Our Future'.

Over a five-month period in 2003, local and international visitors to the Cairns Regional Gallery viewed an exhibition of work on sea themes produced by 19 Darnley Island students aged 9–13. The exhibition consisted of ink and gouache works, wax resist and watercolour works, photographic boards, 8-foot-high wooden puppets depicting traditional dancers, and a book with computer-generated illustrations by the students. Each work was

Top: Title: *Shark and Dugong* Artist: Arthur Ketchell. Photo: Paul Brinkman

Bottom: Title: *Shark and Stingray* Artist: Kathleen Ketchell. Photo: Paul Brinkman

Right: Junior school students from Darnley Island State School with the male and female dance puppets created by Lala Gutchen. Photo: courtesy of Darnley Island State School



accompanied by statements written by the artist. 'I am 10 years old. I live at Mogor Village on Darnley Island in the Torres Strait. I have painted a coral trout and a mantaray because they look so beautiful when they swim,' wrote Beryl Ghee. Lala Gutchen, whose drawings inspired the two exhibited puppets, wrote: 'I am ten years old. I live at Green Hill Darnley Island. I drew the Erub kebi neur (small Darnley Island girl) and Erub kebi le (small Darnley Island boy) representing merba omasker or piccannini blo youmpla (small children who belong to everybody). They danced in these traditional clothes for our Native Title celebrations last year. My mum, Racy Ama and Aka Nola made the skirts and sarzee (tops) for the girls and boys out of the trunk of the banana tree.'

The main challenge in mounting the project was distance. The project relied heavily on communication by email and illustrated the huge advantage of having new technologies in remote and regional areas.

While the exhibition succeeded in its intention to introduce Indigenous culture to gallery visitors, the success of the project in the lives of the Darnley Island community has also been substantial. It was a source of wonder and pride for the children to see their artworks carefully packed into modular containers and then stacked on board the weekly barge, bound for the walls of the Cairns Regional Gallery. The need to produce exhibition signage and a book for exhibition created valuable opportunities to motivate the children to higher literacy levels in standard Australian English.



Two children travelled to Cairns to attend the 'Catching a Future' exhibition which was opened by nationally recognised Torres Strait Islander artist, Ken Thaiday. The children returned to Darnley Island with stories to share about this famous Islander who earns his living as an artist, and this, in turn, introduced the children to the possibility of a career in the arts. A presentation made at the Cairns Gallery by art teacher Lynnette Griffiths was attended by about 40 people, many of them regional school teachers who were uplifted by the Darnley Island model of arts education as a key element of strategic planning in remote communities.

Now the Queensland Government has provided \$250,000 to fund the Darnley Island Arts Centre. The centre will link the art and cultural initiatives of the school with the broader community, and provide future employment possibilities for secondary and tertiary school leavers when they return to their island home. Catching a Future showed how an art and education project may be used to achieve a broader strategic business plan. And it highlights the benefits that can be achieved by close collaboration between regional arts centres.

Funding/support: This project was fully financed by passionate individuals with the assistance of the Cairns Regional Gallery's Public Programs and the Darnley Island community.

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Drama Wild

Karratha Youth Theatre and Freefall Theatre

When two youth theatre companies in Karratha and Kalgoorlie—located about 2400 kilometres apart in Western Australia—decided to collaborate on the Drama Wild performing arts project in May 2003, Geraldton was the obvious half-way point. Drama Wild brought 60 young people (13–18 years) to join a live-away-from-home project aiming for intensive concentration on arts skill development, exposure to professional performing artists, networking with other young people and valuable workshops in leadership and cultural communication.

Drama Wild was conceived by Robyn Barrett (Karratha Youth Theatre) and Sandy Oxenburg (Freefall Theatre) to offer performance skills to young people living in isolated communities, where they rarely get the opportunity to engage in youth arts activities. The organisers could also see the need to bridge the cultural chasm which can separate Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth by bringing them together to learn, have fun and exchange ideas. The participants came from diverse backgrounds: boarding schools because their families live in remote settings; foster families; and about one quarter of them were Aboriginal youth. Not all of these came from the same Aboriginal language or culture groups, however, so these young people were also exchanging information about their inter-cultural differences.

The intensive week of performing arts training was delivered by professional tutors from Karratha Youth Theatre and Freefall Theatre with help from local, Mid West



and Perth artists. Outdoors under the trees or inside the Bluff Point Camp School, a training program took shape which rotated four groups of participants between six tutors who taught them juggling, stilt walking, diabolo, group formations, choreography, fire twirling and Capoeira (Brazilian dance and fighting style), hip hop dance, costume making, acting, and contemporary Aboriginal dance and storytelling.

The aim was to take young people out of their usual comfort zones, get them moving, encourage them to make new bonds and new friends. The organisers were interested in assisting the students to develop personal confidence through the acquisition of arts skills and to develop trust through teamwork, such as acrobatic manoeuvres. The participants discovered new ease in communication as they talked and related to young people from other cultures. They revelled in this opportunity to immerse themselves in an intense experience which was fun, challenging, and broke through personal or physical performance barriers. Even boys who were very shy about dancing got up on their feet in no time.

Participants came from the towns of Geraldton, Mullewa, Wandalgu, Karratha, Kalgoorlie, Boulder and Coolgardie, and were sponsored by: Partnerships for Success Program (after school care for Aboriginal students) in the Pilbara and Goldfields region; the Youth Centre and Christian Brothers Agricultural College at Mulla; the Wandalgu boarding school for Aboriginal students;

Above: workshop
Top Right: main street performance
Bottom Right: main street performance
Photography: Robyn Barrett



Creative Works Youth Theatre Company; and the Arts and Cultural Development Council in the Mid West. Participating organisations had input into the design of the project and paid a \$50 participation fee for each student. They nominated between four to eight young people to attend and sent one representative to the camp to offer personal support, supervision and guidance.

Practical support for the Drama Wild project was demonstrated by Job Futures, Karratha, whose mini-bus transported Pilbara participants to the campsite. Participants from the Goldfields obtained discounted Qantas airfares, and the Mullewa Shire Council also helped transport participants to the camp venue.

Even boys who were very shy about dancing got up on their feet in no time.

This experience has meant these young participants are now part of a new regional youth arts network, which will provide an ongoing focus for them. At the end of the week, a community performance, *Bust-a-move*, was attended by about 200 people in a venue donated by Geraldton City Council. Organisers have plans to make Drama Wild an annual, statewide event that will target WA regional youth arts organisations as participants.



Meanwhile, the parents of participants from the town of Geraldton expressed such disappointment at their exclusion—on the basis of age—from this exuberant program, that Cerrie Beech, coordinator of the 'Geraldton Sunshine Festival' for the local Arts and Cultural Development Council responded by applying for a quick-response grant for Jealous Rage, workshops in circus and performing arts for adults who want to get in on the act.

Funding/support: Community Cultural Development Board of the Australia Council, Country Arts WA through the Regional Arts Fund, an Australian Government initiative and Country Arts WA's Community Arts Project Scheme, Office of Multicultural Interests and Department of Indigenous Affairs, WA Reconciliation Fund and Arts and Cultural Development Council of Geraldton.

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Rope Story

Ananguku Arts and Culture Aboriginal Corporation



Imagine 30 tonnes of red sand shaped by many Anangu hands into a sculpted rope 40 metres long. Now envisage this rope sculpture in the rich green surrounds of the Adelaide Botanic Gardens. And finally, imagine 'WOMADelaide' festival-goers held enthralled as Anangu elders recount their stories, using the rope sculpture as an allegory for a unified life, woven together by the three strands of people (Anangu), place (Manta) and spirit (Kurunpa).

The Rope Story begins in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands, which occupy an area almost the size of Ireland in the far north-west of South Australia. Young people in the APY Lands experience extreme disadvantage in an environment characterised by poor health, poor education and employment prospects and substance abuse. The Rope Story became a powerful vehicle for Anangu elders Peter Nyangu and Bernard Tjalykurin to help young people, and particularly young men, explore the difficult issues confronting them.



During one young men's camp in 2001, the elders brought their story to life with a rope sculpture carved in the earth. Whenever the story dealt with disturbing issues such as drought, contact with white people, petrol sniffing, the erosion of culture or even the impact of new technologies, the strands of the rope parted in the sand and the rope was weakened. The elders had created a powerful metaphor, and a way of encouraging young people to take pride in their culture and to strive for successful, healthy

and balanced lives. In 1994, Dora Dallwitz, a South Australian visual artist, made a rope sculpture with Anangu children at Umuwa, the administrative centre of the Lands.

In 2002 Colin Koch, coordinator of the Ananguku Arts & Culture Aboriginal Corporation, proposed that the corporation collaborate with the elders, Dora, Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council and WOMADelaide to create a monumental Rope Story as a means of bringing Anangu culture and issues to a broad and sympathetic audience.

Ananguku's programs are aimed not just at improving visual and performing arts outcomes for the region but also at using contemporary art practice as a way to build community capacity and employment. The organisation—which is comprised principally of women—is especially keen to engage men and young people in activity that supports personal development and maintenance of culture. The Anangu elders well understand from a traditional perspective that art is a powerful way to pass on cultural knowledge to young people, and hope that through awareness of cultural inheritance their people will be uplifted by cultural pride rather than pulled down by lack of opportunity and disempowerment.

The process of transferring Rope Story from a private experience in the APY Lands to a public, urban environment was a challenging one. Colin Koch coordinated the logistical and fundraising arrangements. Dora Dallwitz and

Top: Preparing the sand. Wiltja secondary students compacting the damp sand with feet, hands and spades
Bottom: Carving the strands. Dora Dallwitz training Wiltja students to carve the individual strands
Top Right: Telling the story. Pitjantjatjara storytellers, Bernard Tjalkurin and Peter Nyangu with the WOMADelaide audience
Bottom Right: Telling the story. Ushma Scales interpreting for Pitjantjatjara storytellers, Bernard Tjalkurin and Peter Nyangu
Photography: John Dallwitz



her partner John worked alongside the elders to design the rope sculpture. Anangu Lands community health worker Ushma Scales was engaged to liaise with Anangu children at Adelaide's Wiltja Pitjantjatjara High School, who would participate in the project. Peter Nyangu and Bernard Tjalykurin were joined by elder Andy Tijlari to work with the Wiltja students and develop the story, with its representation of times both good and bad.

The elders had created a powerful metaphor, and a way of encouraging young people to take pride in their culture and to strive for successful, healthy and balanced lives.

Together, the elders, Wiltja students and Dora worked for three afternoons creating a 40-metre sculpture from 30 tonnes of red sand in the Adelaide Botanic Garden. In five storytelling sessions at WOMADelaide—which were not scripted and which gained new perspectives with each telling—the elders and children gathered around the sculpture to tell the graphic story of the rope to an estimated audience of 4000 people.

Rope Story was an important milestone in fostering awareness and respect for Anangu culture. It was also an opportunity to raise the self-esteem of the children involved. WOMADelaide, Australia's pre-eminent celebration of the world's cultural diversity through music, arts and dance, was a valuable stage for this project. Many who heard the Rope Story expressed their respect and support for the Anangu elders, referring to them as 'living Australian treasures'. And while the story of the rope focused on Anangu culture, those who saw and heard the Rope Story at the festival were moved to consider the interaction of these same three elements—people, place, spirit—in their own lives.

Representatives from other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities have now expressed interest in presenting the Rope Story as a means of exploring personal and communal stories with youth from other Aboriginal communities, ethnic minorities and youth 'at risk'.

The project was a landmark success and has led to the Anangu Arts and Culture Corporation forming a new committee of senior *wati* (initiated men) to help develop more art projects that address youth and men's issues.



Funding/support: WOMADelaide; Country Arts SA through the Regional Arts Fund, an Australian Government initiative; NPY Women's Council and the Ara Irititja archival project. Anangu Arts & Culture Aboriginal Corporation is supported by the Government of South Australia and Arts SA, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board of the Australia Council and ATSIIS.

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Skudda Arts Powerhouse

Mangkaja Arts Resource Agency

For Aboriginal teenagers in the town of Fitzroy Crossing in Western Australia, 'skudda' means 'cool', 'excellent', 'deadly'. Skudda Arts Powerhouse is a community arts initiative which connects with teenagers by blending an arts skills development/arts education program with what teenagers perceive to be 'skudda'. It is designed to open doors to personal creativity, giving teenagers appealing options for learning and having fun, while connecting them to the wider community.

'Within five minutes they were at the door wanting to know whose music it was, whether we liked this music and what we were doing.'

Skudda Arts Powerhouse is a specifically targeted addition to the artistic support activity of Mangkaja Arts, an Aboriginal Corporation that supports Fitzroy Valley artists by providing paint and canvas and assisting with the marketing and selling of artworks. Mangkaja Arts has been operating since the mid-1980s through a small capital grant from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board of the Australia Council. Mangkaja's Youth Arts program has been running since 2001, with the goal of providing youth throughout the entire Fitzroy Valley—a 250 kilometre radius—with the opportunity of involvement in various artforms.



After the pilot phase of Mangkaja's Youth Arts program, elders and community members expressed concerns about the wellbeing of a large group of teenagers in Fitzroy Crossing. Known as the town's 'floating population', these young people were either too old for school, didn't regularly attend school, or were short-term visitors from remote communities staying in town with extended families. This group was not being reached by the regular youth arts activities. Mangkaja Youth Arts therefore initiated the Skudda Arts Powerhouse program to engage 'at risk' youth in 2003 with funding from the ArtsWA Indigenous Arts Panel (New Projects).

After finding that a direct approach to teenagers to join Mangkaja's Youth Arts program was unsuccessful, they realised that creating the right formula to attract these teenagers to after-hours activities was not going to be easy. Organisers decided it might be more effective to provide the right conditions for them to make their own decision to join in. The opportunity came one evening when Rachel McKenzie, Mangkaja's youth arts coordinator, and Philip Maynard, a Sydney ceramic artist, were cleaning up following a regular arts workshop. A group of older teenagers, hanging out nearby were instantly attracted by Rachel's Eminem tape playing loudly.

'Within five minutes they were at the door wanting to know whose music it was, whether we liked this music and what we were doing,' remembers Rachel. *'Before they knew it we had them painting ceramic bowls as they listened to*

Top: Bracelet workshop held at the Sport & Recreational Oval, Fitzroy Crossing

Bottom: Shadow play held at Wangkatjungka community

Right: Tina Lawford and Kirsten Carter during a ceramics workshop held at 50c House in Kurnangki community, Fitzroy Crossing

Photography: courtesy of Mangkaja Arts



music. The next evening they came back earlier with their own music to play and they painted bowls again. This was our first stepping stone to get this group to join our arts program.'

What followed was a series of arts workshops tailored to interest this group, including designing and printing T-shirts, a music-making workshop using sound boards, dance workshops with a visiting African dance instructor in the sport and recreation hall for up to 45 people, and a popular jewellery workshop for teenage girls on the grass in the evening following basketball training. Shadow play performances in the remote Wangkatjunga community about 120 kilometres from Fitzroy Crossing were run in conjunction with Filipino artist, Alwin Reamillo, art and craft lecturer at Fitzroy Crossing's Karriyli Adult Education Centre.

The relationships between the youths and Mangkaja has developed to the point where teenagers now come into the Arts Centre enquiring about workshops.

When the organisers reviewed this program of arts activities, they saw that the common success factors were mobility and flexibility and the program's ability to take workshops to the teenagers, wherever they were. In their search for a more successful workshop formula for this group, Mangkaja Youth Arts has applied for and received funding from the Office of Crime Prevention for a dedicated vehicle to be their local art studio on wheels. This vehicle

will be permanently equipped with a range of art equipment which can be driven to any spot around town, or to more remote communities, for mobile arts workshops with teenagers. Mangkaja Youth Arts are also hoping for assistance from the local Aboriginal Police Liaison Unit for this initiative.

Fitzroy Crossing can be a hot, dry, dusty place without possibilities for the kinds of interaction city teenagers take for granted. Skudda Arts Powerhouse is proving to young people in Fitzroy Crossing that they're talented and creative and it's helping them to get in touch with art forms they might only see on television. In a town where a movie may be screened in the hall only once a month, Skudda Arts has a lot to offer.



Funding/support: Community Cultural Development Board of the Australia Council, artsWA, Office of Crime Prevention, Department of Premier and Cabinet WA, and many local organisations who helped by allowing workshops to be held on their premises.

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Young Australian Concert Artists

Australian Youth Orchestra



'I was unsure in what direction I was heading with my future studies. I really enjoyed playing, but thought there must be thousands of better French horn players out there. The most important thing I got out of these weekends was the self-motivation and confidence in myself and in my playing.' Melanie Brodie, a Year 12 music student from Warrnambool, sums up the benefits of the Australian Youth Orchestra's (AYO) Young Australian Concert Artists program, which targets professional support to music teachers and students in regional communities.

Since 1948, the AYO's national touring music programs have benefited more than 10,000 people across Australia. The AYO has encouraged many talented young musicians to reach their musical potential and a number have gone on to become stars in the music world.



In 1999, the pilot program of Young Australian Concert Artists was inaugurated to address the specific issues facing regional students, particularly their geographic isolation and subsequent lack of exposure to musical culture. Students often need to drive—or be driven—long distances to attend music lessons or to gain access to resources such as musical equipment or specialised workshops.

Young Australian Concert Artists was conceived as a direct result of AYO's research and discussion with music education officers of the Sydney Symphony; Musica Viva in Schools; and the Sydney Conservatorium's Access

Program. By collaborating with these peak organisations, AYO ensures the best use of available resources and creative opportunities.

The Young Australian Concert Artists program also takes into account the history, tastes and style of music education in each community and provides tutors and AYO ensembles to suit. 'Each town has its own musical personality which has been built through its teachers and students and our program responds to that,' says Alison Harbert, assistant artistic administrator of the Young Australian Concert Artists program. 'We give them a shell of what we can do and how we'd like to structure the program, but they share artistic responsibility for the program.'

The touring program unites three types of musicians: an ensemble of Australian Youth Orchestra members drawn from annual, national auditions of Australia's most talented young musicians; the program tutors, who are experienced, leading musical professionals drawn from major symphony orchestras across Australia; and the regional program participants who are young artists and teachers from the local community.

In Stage 1 of the program, the tutors provide an intensive weekend of workshops, tutorials, seminars and masterclasses for the AYO ensemble and local musicians. This culminates in a performance by the AYO ensemble. In Stage 2, the AYO ensemble returns to each community

Top: AYO Wind Quintet—Melissa Doecke (flute); Li Ling Chen (oboe); Mitchell Berick (clarinet); Robert MacMillan (French horn); Kristen Scholes (bassoon)—inspire the musicians of tomorrow at a local school prior to YACA Warrnambool
Bottom: AYO Wind Quintet and its tutors, Southern Cross Soloists, join musicians from Bundaberg Youth and Bundaberg Symphony Orchestras in Bundaberg on 5 September 2003
Right: AYO bassoonist, Kristen Scholes, participant in YACA Warrnambool in May 2003, with a budding young bassoonist in Apollo Bay
Photography: courtesy of the Australian Youth Orchestra



and local project participants rehearse alongside them. A public performance at each location shows off the combined talents of the AYO ensemble and young local participants. One local participant, Susan Scott of Bathurst noted, 'Alongside our wonderful tutors were the five AYO representatives whose talent and musicality amazed and inspired us all. It is through such inspiration that the motivation to practise and challenge yourself is born'.

'The most important thing I got out of these weekends was the self-motivation and confidence in myself and in my playing.'

In 2003 the Young Australian Concert Artists program went to Albany (WA), Grafton and Bathurst (NSW), Bundaberg (Qld) and Warrnambool (Vic.). By the end of 2003, this program will have been resident in 15 regional communities across Australia. 'The opportunity for local students to work with professional musicians was invaluable. All the teachers noticed an increase in practice and motivation by our local students,' says Emma Luxton, a strings teacher from Albany.

The cost of the program to regional music students is currently set at only \$15 each. Nevertheless AYO can only afford to visit a limited number of regions in any one year,



even though demand for the program could justify a great many more. Another constraint is the travelling time involved. However, the success of the program has meant other regionally-based endeavours are being considered, including the possibility of longer-term residencies.

Through its Young Australian Concert Artists program, AYO is building a great long-term legacy; a vibrant musical culture in regional Australia and the opportunity for all of Australia's talented young musicians—no matter where—to reach their full potential.

Funding/support: Corporate sponsorships, such as the Nelson Meers Foundation, contribute to the Young Australian Concert Artists program. Since its inception, collaborative support, including resources, venues, marketing and organisational assistance has been provided by Country Arts WA, Regional Arts NSW, Queensland Arts Council, Regional Arts Victoria and Arts NT. The Australian Youth Orchestra receives core funding from the Australian Government through the Department of Communications, Information, Technology and the Arts, and the NSW Ministry for the Arts.

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Highlighting your uniqueness to the outside world is an excellent way to stimulate understanding and interest in your region, together with building pride and strength within.

Paul Brinkman, Public Programs Manager, Cairns Regional Gallery

Federation! But who makes the nation? explored the role of four regional towns in New South Wales in the lead up to Federation in 1901.

On The Day was a remarkable response by Japanese artist Nakahashi Katsushige to the Cowra Breakout of 5 August 1944.

Mumkurla-nginyi-ma Parrngalinyparla 'From the Darkness into the Light' Gurindji Freedom Banners tells the Gurindji version of The Wave Hill Station Walk-Off on 23 August 1966, the beginning of the struggle for Aboriginal Land Rights.

Bob Cat Dancing was a massive outdoor performance in Mount Isa, Queensland as part of the Queensland Biennial Festival of Music. The Festival's philosophy is to create work that reflects the culture of place.

The Alan Marshall Precinct and Discovery Trail in Noorat, Victoria brought together different sectors of the community to improve the appearance of their town and increase cultural tourism.

three

Celebrating place and history

Federation! But who makes the nation?

Museums and Gallery Foundation of NSW

'Federation! But who makes the nation?' (2000–01) was an exhibition about the role of four regional New South Wales towns—Albury, Bathurst, Broken Hill and Murwillumbah—in the lead up to Federation in 1901. The project was initiated by the Museums and Galleries Foundation of NSW and carried out in partnership with six regional galleries. Each regional venue provided considerable support in research, expertise and local knowledge, and three galleries developed their own local exhibition to accompany Federation! But who makes the nation?

Regional towns were instrumental in the process of Australian Federation. The votes of people in regional NSW were critical to the final decision to join the colonies together as one Australian nation. Three of the four participating communities in Federation! But who makes the nation? had a particular interest in ending the old arrangements: as border towns they were subject to cumbersome customs duties.

Eight project consultants, representing the Museum and Art Gallery in each town, worked alongside project curator Gillian McCracken to develop concepts for the travelling exhibition. Collections in each centre yielded a rich source of historic Australian visual arts, crafts, cartoons, photography and even some three-dimensional exhibits. The Bathurst collection included photographs of important events, such as the Bathurst People's Convention (1896), as well as images of workers, families and local businesses of the era. Bathurst Wiradjuri elder, Gloria Rogers, initiated and coordinated a community quilt



combining images made by inmates of Bathurst's prisons, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, and members of the Wiradjuri community. Works by 25 visual artists, mostly professional artists from Albury, Bathurst, Broken Hill and the Tweed River region, were also exhibited.

The exhibition toured to Albury, Bathurst, Broken Hill, Murwillumbah, Gosford and the University of Technology Sydney Gallery. It was accompanied by a comprehensive education program produced by Gillian McCracken and Bruce Pennay including exhibition text panels, an extensive free catalogue, and an education kit for schools which was also made available on the Museums and Galleries Foundation of NSW website. Total audience numbers for this exhibition were 10,984 including 2070 school children.



Smaller exhibitions in each region supported the travelling exhibition. Albury Regional Art Gallery initiated a satellite exhibition, 'We Came This Way', which was hung at Albury Railway Station and focused on the importance of Albury as a meeting place for the river, roads, Aboriginal people and migrants. In the Tweed River Regional Art Gallery at Murwillumbah, a local exhibition, 'Federation on the Tweed', showed historical objects from the time of Federation drawn from local collections and families. In Bathurst, local oral history recordings could be heard through headsets, and a child's room at the time of Federation was recreated. This exhibit invited interaction with historic children's toys as well as providing an opportunity to write in a parchment notebook with an old fashioned pen, nib and ink.

Top: Title: *Jan Gunn off to China* 1914 Artist: Albert Edward Gregory. Photo: courtesy of Bathurst District Historical Society

Bottom: Title: *Pauline: Garment in the patriotic colours of the old and the new imagined homeland* 1998 Artist: Greg Leong. Photo: Peter Clark

Right: Title: *Bathurst Community Quilt* 2000. Photo: courtesy of Bathurst Regional Arts Gallery



The exhibition highlighted the identity of the four regions: in Albury it was a 'meeting place', in Bathurst 'democracy', in Broken Hill 'workers rights and trade unionism' and in Murwillumbah 'sustainable environment'.

Federation! But who makes the nation? encouraged regional Australians to take pride in the role of the regions in Australian history.

Prior to the travelling exhibition, extensive public programs were organised in each town and helped reach new audiences for the regional galleries. The Bathurst community's topic for debate, 'Is Bathurst on the Map?', chaired by Richard Fidler, asked if the people of Bathurst were as convinced of their town's importance as their forebears in 1896 who proposed Bathurst as the seat of federal government. A public debate at the Albury Regional Arts Gallery was titled, 'That all border cities should amalgamate', with a second debate at Tweed River Regional Arts Gallery aimed at school children. About 500 local school students visited the Tweed River Regional Art Gallery and listened to exhibition talks by gallery staff. Children also attended a workshop by Bruce Pennay on the history of Federation in their region. Other public

programs included a two-hour workshop in Sydney by artist Greg Leong (a participating artist in the travelling exhibition), and school holiday programs such as a hat-making workshop for Bathurst children and a flag-making workshop for children in Broken Hill. Public talks were delivered by curator Gillian McCracken at Murwillumbah, Gosford, Bathurst, Albury and Broken Hill.

Federation! But who makes the nation? encouraged regional Australians to take pride in the role of the regions in Australian history. It provided an opportunity to compare and contrast the issues that defined the identity of regional Australian communities in 1901 and in 2001, and encouraged people to value opportunities for democratic participation with the possibility of influencing national outcomes.



Funding/support: National Council for the Centenary of Federation. Each regional venue provided considerable support with research, experts and local knowledge. Three of the four partner galleries developed their own local exhibitions to accompany the overarching exhibition.

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On The Day

Cowra Art Gallery



Japanese contemporary artist Nakahashi Katsushige came to Cowra in NSW as part of a continuing mission to engage with his nation's troubled war history. But his two months in Cowra led to an extraordinary artistic collaboration with a whole township, and a solemn ritual in contemplation of the effects of war.

Like so many in Japan, Nakahashi Katsushige's family had stayed silent about its World War II experiences. His father broke that silence with the belated and startling revelation that he had helped construct Zero fighter planes. For Katsushige, the Zero plane became a metaphor to question Japan's historical amnesia—his nation's 'zero' memory.

Throughout the 1990s, at seven sites in Japan and America, Katsushige constructed photographic installations of Japanese Zero fighter planes. Katsushige accepted an invitation to participate in the 1999 Asia-Pacific Contemporary Art Triennial in Brisbane. He travelled to Darwin to see the Zero fighter plane piloted by Toyoshima Hajime, which had been retrieved from its 1942 crashlanding on Melville Island. Katsushige then constructed a massive photographic installation of a Zero fighter on the floor of Darwin's new parliament house—a highly symbolic act given that this was the site of the Darwin post office destroyed during Japan's first bombing raid on Australia.

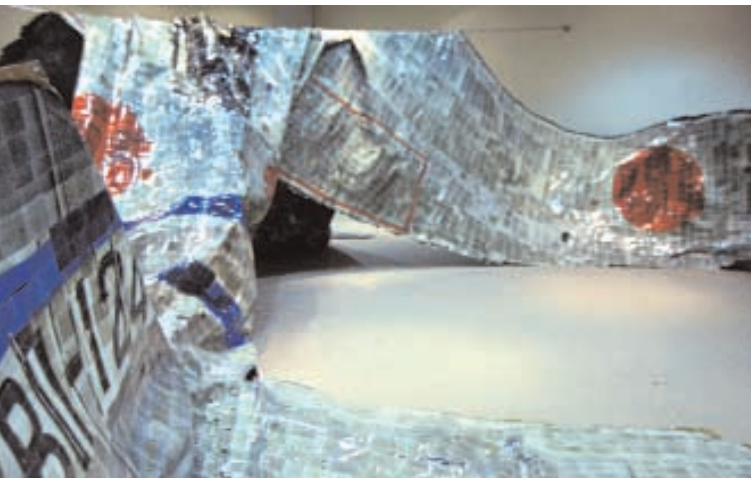
In 2000 Katsushige arrived in Cowra looking for the grave site of Toyoshima Hajime, who became the first Japanese

prisoner interned at the Cowra Prisoner of War (POW) Camp during World War II. During the famous Cowra break-out of 1944, 1000 Japanese prisoners attempted to escape. A total of 231 Japanese men died, including Toyoshima Hajime, who committed suicide. When Katsushige met with the Cowra Art Gallery Management Committee, 'On The Day' was conceived.

On The Day had three related components. First, Katsushige set about assembling 25,000 photos from his carefully-gridded Zero fighter plane model, one-thirteenth the size of full-scale Zero Fighter No B11-124. These 3 x 5 millimetre sections of the model airplane were enlarged and assembled into an awe-inspiring full-scale replica of a Zero, with the photo images draped across a wire strung above the floor of the Cowra Art Gallery.

'This was my first exhibition to experience such a logical amalgamation of the piece, people, the history and the place.'

The assembly process was time consuming. Katsushige was helped by the Cowra community, some of whom remembered the war and the POW Camp break-out. Members of Cowra's artist community also came forward. A total of 130 volunteers, aged from 12 to 80, worked



Top: Walking the Zero to POW Camp

Bottom: Title: *Zero Plane*

Top Right: Walking the Zero to POW Camp

Bottom Right: Burning the 'zero'

Photography: courtesy of Cowra Art Gallery



alongside Katsushige for up to 18 hours each day over two and a half weeks to assemble the Zero plane installation under Katsushige's direction. Student groups visited from local high schools, Canberra's National Art School, Australian National University and College of Fine Arts, NSW University, and Orange and Bathurst TAFE Colleges. The Zero was on exhibition for six weeks during 2002, during which time locals related memories of the break-out, including a Cowra woman who had given tea and scones to an escaped Japanese POW, striking up a life-long friendship.

For the On The Day project Katsushige also created a full-scale photographic representation of a section of the ground outside Cowra's POW Camp. Scattered on the ground were 231 eucalyptus leaves inscribed with the POW numbers of the Japanese prisoners who died during the Cowra break-out. On the 58th anniversary of the break-out, August 5 2002, Katsushige took 5000 photographs—one every seven seconds—from sunrise to sunset (with a five minute break each half hour). The assembled photographs, measuring 4 x 8 metres, were hung in strips down the Cowra Art Gallery walls, producing an astonishing three-dimensional effect. Colours graded from the darkness of sunrise, through rich orange tones detailing frost and dew drops on the grass, to bleached midday tones and then ever deeper towards sunset. Keen eyes could pick out the 231 gum leaves among the grass and soil, bearing the numbers of the prisoners who died.

The final element in the project was a ritual burning. Many Cowra residents, with visitors from Sydney and Canberra, lifted the Zero from the Gallery installation and carried it

about 3.5 kilometres through the streets to the perimeter of the Cowra POW Camp. The plane's fuselage was filled with shredded paper and balloons and set alight at sunset.

Katsushige was surprised and delighted by his intimate collaboration with the people of the town who embraced his artistic and philosophic vision in a way he had not experienced at any other site.

'This was my first exhibition to experience such a logical amalgamation of the piece, people, the history and the place,' said the artist. 'I would like to remember my experience with this Cowra project and use this experience to enhance my future projects.'

The Cowra community's active participation in this project heightened the town's intimate connection with the symbolic meaning—the wasteful futility of war—embedded in the ritualised burning of the Zero plane's photographs at the conclusion of the exhibition.

Local resident and Gallery Management Committee member Margaret Stent reflected on the experience. 'Katsushige Nakahashi's project captured the hearts of many local residents,' she said.

'We were intrigued by his concept and many of us joined in the assemblage of his thousands of photographs for the final exhibition. This period of working with the artist saw some wonderful exchanges of ideas relating to culture and art. Local residents who had remembered the break-out came to tell their stories and listen to Katsu's philosophies. We all learned much from the experience.'



Funding/support: NSW Ministry for Arts, Cowra Arts Council and Cowra Art Gallery

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Mumkurla-nginyi-ma Parrngalinyparla

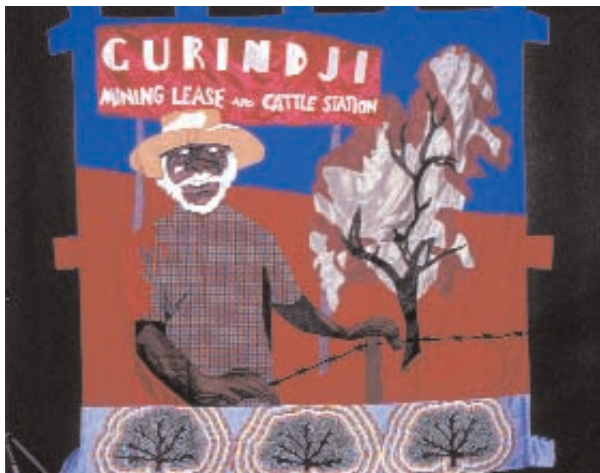
'From the Darkness into the Light' Gurindji Freedom Banners

On August 23 1966, Vincent Lingiari led a walk-off of Gurindji workers from Wave Hill cattle station in the Northern Territory. Conditions for the Aboriginal stockmen and the women who worked as domestics for the British Vestey group amounted to virtual slave labour.* The defiant action of the Gurindji workers set in train the events that culminated in the first successful land rights claim in Australia in 1976.

Gurindji Freedom Banners was a project to record, commemorate and celebrate these historic events. Ten banners standing a total of 1.8 metres high and 16 metres long conveyed the story. The banners formed part of a larger project to tell the story of the Gurindji people from Daguragu and Kalkaringi.

The defiant action of the Gurindji workers set in train the events that culminated in the first successful land rights claim in Australia in 1976.

The Gurindji Freedom Banners project was seeded in 1999. The Katherine National Aboriginal and Islander Day of Celebrations committee had invited Gurindji people from Daguragu and Kalkaringi—500 kilometres south of the town of Katherine—to be their guests of honour. Even though non-Indigenous supporters of the Gurindji, such as author Frank Hardy (in his novel, *The Unlucky Australians*) and musician/songwriter Paul Kelly (in the song 'From Little



Things Big Things Grow') had set down versions of the Gurindji Walk-Off, the Gurindji people themselves had never before collectively documented the events.

The celebrations in 1999 included a parade in which large, bold, celebratory banners were carried. They had been made by Aboriginal people in Katherine working with community cultural development textile artist, Joanna Barrkman. Gurindji elders visiting Katherine admired these banners and subsequently invited Joanna to attend their own Freedom Day celebrations. These are held in Daguragu and Kalkaringi each year on August 23 to commemorate the 1966 Wave Hill Walk-Off.

After the Freedom Day celebrations, Joanna was invited to stay in the community and visit Jinparrak, the old Wave Hill cattle station, where Gurindji elders recalled their stories of this historic event. Joanna then successfully sourced funding for a larger project.

In 2000, Joanna and graphic artist/poster maker Chips Mackinoly worked with over 35 members of the Daguragu and Kalkaringi communities to record and represent their history in 10 large freedom banners. They had assistance from linguist Erika Charola, researcher Ceinwen Grose and trade unionist Brian Manning who had provided practical support for the Gurindji in 1966 by driving hundreds of kilometres across outback terrain in a truck carrying food and blankets. At all stages, Gurindji people controlled the project's processes and made the decisions about the representation of their history in these banner images. They also received skills development and participated in embellishing the fabric banners using appliqué techniques, embroidery, printing and painting.

Top: The Gurindji Mining Lease and Cattle Station sign and a barb wire fence were used by the Gurindji to claim their traditional lands when they returned to Daguragu in 1967. This banner includes the Ngamanpurru bush at the base of the banner, a Dreaming for the site of Daguragu. Photo: Michael McRostie
Bottom: Billy Bunter Jampijinpa gives a speech at the launch of the Gurindji Freedom Banners on 23 August 2001 on Gurindji Freedom Day. Photo: Joanna Barrkman
Top Right: Gurindji women explain the story of the Wave Hill Walk-Off and show the banners as works in progress to the students of the Kalkaringi School. Photo: Joanna Barrkman
Bottom Right: Gurindji women draw a map and record stories to indicate where the various tribes, Gurindji, Mudbura, Walpiri and Bilinara, Ngarinman were camped at Old Wave Hill Station. Photo: Joanna Barrkman



Almost half the people who participated in the Wave Hill Walk-Off are now deceased and the surviving adults are, in Aboriginal terms, very old. Joanna Barrkman and Chips Mackinolty recorded interviews with Gurindji women and men respectively. They photographed re-enactments at Jinparrak and the Wattie Creek camp, where Gurindji sat down throughout the 1966 wet season, and other culturally significant sites on Gurindji land. Archival photographs of actual events were also sourced.

These pictures and interview transcripts were collated to inform the ultimate choice of story images and design for the freedom banners. A meeting of elders approved the work at this stage and named the project. All the historical data was compiled into a CD-ROM and booklet edited by Erika Charola. It now forms heritage which can be easily accessed by young people in these communities.

The first three banners depict the stories of work and living conditions for Aboriginal workmen and their families at Wave Hill Station prior to the walk-off. The fourth banner represents the walk-off and carries the full list of 258 names of people who participated in the strike. Banner seven represents the Gurindji's staking their original claim to their traditional lands and banners eight and 10 show dancers celebrating the return of these traditional lands. Between them, banner nine is a representation of former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam's hand over of traditional lands to Gurindji elder Vincent Lingiari. This hand over was symbolised by the Prime Minister holding out a fistful of red dirt which trickled into Vincent Lingiari's outstretched hand, an image immortalised by photographer Mervyn Bishop.



In 2000 the Gurindji Freedom Banners were launched by Gurindji elders and Brian Manning. The banners were also formally unveiled by former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser at the Vincent Lingiari Memorial Lecture held at Northern Territory University and attended by over 20 Gurindji elders. A special component of the 2001 'Yeperrenye Dreaming Festival' held in Alice Springs was the story of the Gurindji's historic walk-off. Over 30 Gurindji travelled to Alice Springs to carry their freedom banners. Victor Vincent Lingiari (Vincent's son) re-enacted the hand back of tribal lands on stage with Gough Whitlam. But this time there was a reversal and Victor Vincent trickled a fistful of red dirt into Gough's outstretched hand.

The banners are used every annual Freedom Day in the community as part of their celebrations. They have also been exhibited at Coomalie Cultural Centre at Batchelor in the Northern Territory, and toured to regional Northern Territory galleries through Artback NT Arts Touring.

A measure of the significance of these history banners to the Gurindji community is the story of their fate during an emergency evacuation of the entire communities of Daruragu and Kalkaringi during a flood in 2001. The morning after this evacuation Joanna Barrkman received a phonecall in Darwin to let her know that special care had been taken, in spite of the haste caused by such an emergency, to carry the banners safely away from the rising flood waters.

* Anthropologists Catherine and Ronald Berndt, 1940s. Noted in the banner catalogue of *From the Darkness into the Light*.

Funding/support: Community Cultural Development Board of the Australia Council and Daguragu Community Government Council with support from Diwurruwurru-jaru Language Centre, Katherine, NT Oral History Unit, Northern Land Council and Central Land Council.

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Bob Cat Dancing

Queensland Biennial Festival of Music

Bob Cat Dancing was an extravagant community theatre event staged on the bed of the Leichhardt River in Mount Isa, Queensland. Against the backdrop of the mine's smokestacks, audiences enjoyed three action-packed 70 minute shows. In a unique tribute to the town's lifeblood industry, *Bob Cat Dancing* incorporated a trio of 3-tonne bobcat machines that spun, twirled and balanced with balletic precision, supported by a live band playing country, pop, rock and gospel music. Audiences of 18,000 drove to Mount Isa from miles around and others flew into town for the free evening performances.

Lyndon Terracini has been artistic director and CEO of the 'Queensland Biennial Festival of Music' (QBFM) since 2000. In 2003, the Festival of Music was staged in 17 regional Queensland communities, nearly six times the number involved in the 1999 Festival. The Festival aims to make music accessible and exciting to thousands of regional people across the state by reflecting the distinctive culture of each community. The Festival begins each year with a dawn ceremony in Barcaldine, and progressively the whole of Queensland is wrapped in a musical blanket. Unlike a set music program which tours to every community, however, this Festival involves the staging of a special event in each community, and most of these are new, commissioned works.

When Lyndon Terracini visited Mount Isa with a view towards that community's participation in the 2003 QBFM, his strongest impression was of the interdependence

between people and machinery—from the massive numbers of bikes and cars right up to 35-tonne mining excavators. And as he observed the people, the town and the mine in action, the idea of heavy machinery being part of a music/theatre performance took hold. Mount Isa Council was very supportive of the idea, as were the corporate sponsors. The creative team was then assembled: dramaturge and director Sean Mee (artistic director of La Boite Theatre Company, Brisbane), composer John Rodgers and writer Philip Dean.



Bob Cat Dancing was conceived and developed over eight months, with plenty of opportunities for community participation. Local auditions brought forward two teenage actors and singers, Megan Samardin and Karl Lloyd. They

travelled to Brisbane for initial rehearsals and were supported and mentored by Peter Marshall, a professional Brisbane actor and singer. The three performers led the show with a love story between the young couple, and the tales of an older drifter, who has a special affinity with machinery. In Mount Isa the drifter finds plenty of blokes (and women too) who also have intimate relationships with machinery. He decides to settle there because the town embraces him, as they embrace his secret, namely that machinery has a softer creative side, expressed in this show through music and dance.

After watching the turning circle and speed of this machinery, as well as the possibilities for amazing tricks—bobcats can balance on two wheels while they spin—it was clear that special consideration would need to be given to safety. An occupational health and safety consultant and a risk management consultant became part of the team. In fact they became part of the show. Safety considerations were built into the script, so at no point were people and machines moving on stage at the same time.

Local contractor John Hetherton sponsored the three dancing bobcats and two excavators, and the drivers undertook an intensive week of rehearsals. Communication equipment was installed into the cabs, ensuring that directions could flow between stage management and the drivers. John's drivers then put these heavy machines through their paces on stage.

Top: *Bob Cat Dancing* Mount Isa
Top Right: Artist Graeme Leak and the Musical Fence, Winton
Bottom Right: *Bob Cat Dancing* Mount Isa
Photography: Rob Maccoll



The stage area was half the size of a football field. It was prepared by trucking in quantities of dry filling to cover the sandy river bed with extra stabilisation making a rock hard surface for dancing bobcats, 35-tonne excavators, utes and trail bikes. Sophisticated, new lighting technology and an outdoor concert sound rig were installed on giant scaffold towers.

The Festival aims to make music accessible and exciting to thousands of regional people across the state by reflecting the distinctive culture of each community.

With over 2000 kilometres between Mount Isa and Brisbane, coordinating this production—not to mention a statewide festival—created some challenges. But the results were well worth it. The final count was that 155 local people were directly involved in the show, including the Mount Isa School of Dance, Just Rock and Roll Dancers, Harley Davidson Riders Club, Restored Car Club, SES in Mount Isa, St John's Ambulance in Mount Isa and children from three primary schools. The local member, Tony McGrady, lent his support to the project. *Bob Cat Dancing*

was a heartfelt expression of local culture by townspeople, who worked alongside theatrical and musical professionals from Brisbane. The event neatly coincided with the celebrations for the town's 80th year.

In addition to Mount Isa, the 2003 QBFM staged events throughout regional Queensland. In Rockhampton, the botanic gardens provided the inspiration and setting for the performance of a commissioned work, *Rockhampton Gardens Symphony No 2*, and in Winton a 'musical fence' is now a permanent installation and tourist attraction.

Lyndon Terracini asked himself how to measure the success of QBFM in 2003. He concluded that a great outcome would be that in 10 years time, QBFM wouldn't need to exist—by then, communities that have participated in this Festival will have their own locally grown arts events of a similar nature.



Funding/support: Mount Isa City Council, La Boite Theatre, QR Traveltrain Holidays, CS Energy, MIM, Remploy, Telstra Foundation and the North West Star. QBFM is funded by the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland. The Australia Council provided additional funding for QBFM 2003 (jointly through Council funding and the Regional Arts Fund, an Australian Government initiative).

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Alan Marshall Precinct & Discovery Trail

Corangamite Arts Inc.



It started off as a way to pay tribute to a great local artist. But the process of creating the Alan Marshall Precinct and Discovery Trail became a vehicle to increase the vitality and confidence of a whole community.

Noorat had once been a lively service centre for the local dairy industry. The town had grown up around a stunning physical feature, Mount Noorat, an extinct volcano listed for its international significance. By the time Josie Black OAM came to Noorat in 1981, however, it was a very quiet place. Over the previous two decades, two local butter factories had closed and a number of small family dairy farms had been subsumed into larger holdings. Many Noorat businesses had closed their doors and people had moved away.

But Josie and others in a small group, Corangamite Arts, were passionate about Noorat's role in Australian literature and history. Alan Marshall, best known for his autobiographical work, *I Can Jump Puddles* (1955), was a Noorat boy, born in 1902 in the house behind Noorat's Beehive Store. While Alan Marshall's books were works of imaginative fiction, the town, the local people and surrounding landscape were formative influences on his development as a writer and a social activist. Having contracted polio when he was six years old, he was a vocal campaigner for equal rights for people with a disability, women and Indigenous Australians.

Corangamite Arts initiated the development of a walking tour of *I Can Jump Puddles* to honour Alan Marshall,

designed to highlight the links between the writer's life and his literature. Key sites associated with Alan Marshall's upbringing in Noorat include the public hall where his father stored grain to be sold at the Beehive Store, the store itself, the primary school, Lake Lolly, and the Presbyterian manse where two local ministers encouraged the budding writer's passion for reading literature. The book walk tour was the most popular event of Noorat's inaugural 'Alan Marshall Arts Festival' in 1996, which included visual art exhibitions by members of the Disability Arts Forum. The book walk tour has led to a permanent interpretative installation, launched in 2000 by children's author Paul Jennings, called the Alan Marshall Precinct and Discovery Trail. The Trail is now linked to the Corangamite Dry Stone Walls Heritage Trail and Cross Regional Volcanoes Discovery Trail.

Yet this project was not as straightforward as it sounds. Even many local people who knew that Alan Marshall had grown up in their community remained unaware of the breadth of his accomplishments, including the translation of *I Can Jump Puddles* into 30 languages; the 11 other books he published in his lifetime; his international reputation or his contribution to social change. And some of those who were aware of him were uneasy about honouring the man who became a member of the Communist Party, an atheist and radical social commentator. Some people were also hesitant that an influx of tourists would endanger the physical shape and quiet, authentic quality of their town.

Top: Nick Linehan, 12, of Terang, dressed as Alan Marshall as a boy, riding Smokey through Noorat at the Centenary Festival, 26 May 2002
Right: Actors Ben Bakos and Andrew O'Flynn read from *I Can Jump Puddles* as part of the book walk tour Alan Marshall Precinct, Noorat
Photography: courtesy of Corangamite Arts Inc.



These concerns were only overcome by a thorough process of consultation. The commitment of Corangamite Arts to inclusive processes meant that many of the town's 200-strong population came to offer enthusiastic support for the project.

The design and installation of the permanent Alan Marshall Precinct and Discovery Trail was led by a professional urban design and landscaping team from Melbourne. Extensive consultation took place through meetings and questionnaires. It was a slow and difficult process over two years, finally resolved by a majority vote at a community meeting to consider two final designs, which incorporated as many local ideas as possible. Aiming for harmony between the natural and built environment, the community chose unobtrusive, simple aluminium interpretative plaques mounted on red gum posts, supported by extensive landscaping. This involved culling some established trees of introduced species, in favour of native trees and shrubs. The traditional look of the town was enhanced by a red gum post-and-rail fence proposed by the community to suggest the town's historical rural identity.

The project was powered by the enthusiasm of Corangamite Arts, but also by community volunteers, in-kind contributions of materials and community working bees. The precinct and discovery trail have led to increased tourism numbers in Noorat, as well as increased community pride. There is general agreement that the

patient, thorough process of revitalisation has paid off for the town's infrastructure and local culture.

'Alan Marshall's imaginative works have influenced this community's understanding of their history.'

In 2002, a one-day Alan Marshall Centenary Festival became a proud testament to the success of the town's endeavours. This event was funded by the Corangamite Shire through the Victorian Department of Innovation and



Regional Development Events Program, and these funds were paid to participating festival performers, singers, poets and storytellers. In telling contrast to the initial attitude of the local community to Alan Marshall memorials, the first planning meeting for the Centenary Festival was attended by large numbers of townspeople keen to volunteer time, skills, money and in-kind support of all kinds to ensure a successful event. Di Daffy, current chair of Corangamite Arts, organised the 2002 Festival highlight, Yarn Spinning and Bush Poetry in the pub, which attracted locals as well as participants and audience members from Ballarat, Colac, Warrnambool and Port Fairy. A special, impromptu addition to this event were four local school children reading children's poetry. 'The Alan Marshall projects have created a fantastic culture of writing stories and verse in the local primary school at Noorat,' says Di.

Josie sums up the journey. 'Alan Marshall's imaginative works have influenced this community's understanding of their history. The community have come to accept change and learnt how to benefit from change by careful management of the processes.' Indeed, this project demonstrates how carefully managed links between art and cultural tourism can genuinely invigorate a community.

Funding/support: Arts Victoria for the Alan Marshall Inaugural Festival (1996 Festival); Victorian Arts Council for Disability Forum (1996 Festival); Department of Infrastructure, Victorian Government for the Alan Marshall Precinct and Discovery Trail; Victorian Department of Innovation and Regional Development Events Program for the Alan Marshall Centenary Festival (2002). The whole project has also been supported by Corangamite Arts Inc., Corangamite Shire, community volunteers, in-kind contributions of materials and community working bees.

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We acknowledged that there are many people in the community who would love to learn skills but could not for lack of access to such opportunities.

Annette Gordon, Outback Arts



Playing for Queensland is an ambitious, large-scale initiative aimed at providing professional development of a lasting nature for regionally-located performing artists.

The Artist Mob program in Western Australia has set out to improve the level of professional skills for Indigenous and regional artists.

National Limestone Sculpture Symposium was a successful networking and professional development opportunity for artists in South Australia interested in working with the limestone of the region.

Purrelayde Shell Residency program is helping Indigenous elders pass on to younger women the practice of traditional shell necklace making.

Murray Time brought together writers and illustrators in the Riverina to create an illustrated progressive novel.

Nothing Came by Road was a large-scale sculpture project that gave artists in Port Hedland, Western Australia the opportunity to build skills in public and community arts projects.

four

Sustaining arts practice

Playing for Queensland

Queensland Arts Council

Take more than 200 performing artists, eight regional towns and an enthusiastic mentoring team, put them together over 12 months and what do you get? Playing for Queensland, an ambitious, entertaining and warmly received program of community shows.

Playing for Queensland is the brainchild of Queensland Arts Council (QAC). It began as a pilot program to give emerging artists in regional communities the rare opportunity to work with a full professional team, build artistic networks, develop performance skills, and enrich the eight communities—Cleveland, Maleny, Childers, Yeppoon, Dysart, Blackwater, Monto and Warwick—in which they lived.

‘This project promoted local talent getting in amongst the big guns.’...‘It enabled regional artists to improve and showcase their skills.’

A key decision was finding the right creative leadership. To succeed, the project required professional artists with plenty of flexibility and empathy. Their challenge would be to uncover and harness the diverse skills and experiences of the participating local players. Marcus Hughes, an

established music theatre director and choreographer, was appointed project director and Michael Vagg as assistant to the director. The rest of the team consisted of five brass players, including trumpet, french horn and trombone, from the popular and versatile Brass on Tap band, which had conducted two highly successful tours through regional Queensland in 2001 and 2002. The core creative team was also fully supported by QAC’s regional network of arts councils in each of these communities.

Given the physical scale of the exercise—simply to visit all eight communities required a 3000 kilometre round trip from Brisbane—Playing for Queensland was carefully planned in five stages.

The project development stage involved intensive liaison between the QAC and local arts councils. Itineraries, timelines and a promotional campaign were devised. Next came the auditions in each town, which uncovered an exhilarating diversity of interests and talents: singers, bush poets, actors, magicians, dancers (line, jazz and belly), and classical, rock, jazz, brass and blues musicians. The artists ranged in age from primary school children through to people in their 60s. The communities also proved to be well supplied with enthusiastic crew members. Local directors, designers, costume, sound, lighting and production personnel were keen to work with, and learn from, QAC’s professional touring production crew and tour manager.



Above: Brass on Tap musicians Shane Hooton, Oliver Redfern, Michael Potts, Jacob Shaw and Chris Hudson
Facing page left to right: Musicians warm up behind the scenes for the Warwick performance of Playing for Queensland, The Monto Performance Max Dancers wait eagerly prior to their stage debut
Photography: courtesy of the Queensland Arts Council



Following auditions, Marcus and the musicians returned to each community for full-scale rehearsals, skill development workshops, classes and sometimes individual tuition. And then came the final programming and preparation for eight very different community performances, including technical and production aspects.

To develop the repertoire that would support each local performance, Brass on Tap conducted intensive rehearsals in Brisbane. The logistics were coordinated by Annette Kerwitz, QAC coordinator for Ontour onstage.

The immense practical benefits of Playing for Queensland arose from the process as much as the performances.

Participants had the opportunity to experience every aspect of developing and producing a professional public performance, from radio and press interviews, auditions and workshops through to final technical and dress rehearsals and project debriefing. Individual players were able to realise and extend their artistic skills, as well as obtain advice and support for further training. They gained the confidence and expertise to develop and produce their own local shows in the future. And they gained a new network of local artistic colleagues for mutual support and encouragement.

The best way to sum up the outcomes of Playing for Queensland is to let the participants speak for themselves. 'This project showed what people in the community are

capable of achieving,' said one participant. Another offered, 'It gave me confidence to return to my community to skill others'. Still others focused on the professional opportunities that might arise: 'This project promoted local talent getting in amongst the big guns.' And, 'It enabled regional artists to improve and showcase their skills'.

Planning for the next Playing for Queensland project in 2005 has already begun. QAC was always very conscious of the ambitious scale of the project, but plans allow for a longer lead time in 2005. The feedback to QAC from communities was that they needed more notice; rural and regional Australians have heavy commitments and are often pressed for time. And some artists travelled for more than two hours to attend rehearsals!



Funding/support: Queensland Arts Council through the Regional Arts Fund, an Australian Government initiative, and the Arts Regional Touring Service (ARTS), a Queensland Government initiative. The project was also partnered by Fusions: The Australian Network of Clay and Glass Artists.

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Artist Mob

ArtSource and the Artists Foundation of WA

Artist Mob is a new program aimed at delivering professional skills development to Western Australia's Indigenous and regional artists. Since the beginning of 2003, many artists have been helped to achieve an improved level of professionalism in the creation of their portfolios, CVs and documentation and become better informed on marketing, funding options, public art and copyright. The result is a steadily growing number of Indigenous and regional artists achieving exhibitions, public art commissions and collaboratively accessing project funding.

'Barry, who is a Ballardong Nyoongar man...has been able to access and gain the trust of many communities that simply would not have responded to a "wadjela" (whitefella) approach.'

ArtSource is the employment and referral branch of the Artists Foundation of WA (AFWA). ArtSource links artists with commissioning clients and galleries. Public art in



Western Australian is commissioned through the Percent for Art Scheme (whereby 1 per cent of the total capital works of a building over \$2 million is allocated to arts commissions within that building); via local government authorities (there are 144 in WA); and through private commissions by developers, architects and private schools. In 2003, ArtSource passed \$2.6 million worth of art projects onto members.

Before the Artist Mob program began there were only four Indigenous artists on the ArtSource Register. Today 25 Indigenous artists are registered. In an early result for the program, four of these artists were selected to provide designs for Edith Cowan University's Indigenous studies

campus that will be translated into mosaic. The growth in numbers of registered Indigenous artists means that ArtSource is now able confidently to promote Indigenous works to clients. For example, a recent client of ArtSource, the Chamber of Minerals and Energy, wished to begin an art collection of emerging regional and Indigenous artists. ArtSource has been able to access works through its database from the Goldfields, Mid West, Kimberley and Great Southern regions to facilitate this project.

Barry McGuire is the regional and Indigenous coordinator of the Artist Mob program. Wherever possible, Barry has established informal working partnerships with Regional Development Commissions, regional shires, the Department of Indigenous Affairs and the Office of Aboriginal Economic Development. In the first months of the Artist Mob program, a one-day workshop in Laverton, a few hundred kilometres east of Kalgoorlie, drew 11 artists from town with some coming from 100 kilometres further east. 'Barry, who is a Ballardong Nyoongar man, has been fundamental to the success of this program,' says ArtSource manager Jude van der Merwe. 'He has been able to access and gain the trust of many communities that simply would not have responded to a "wadjela" (whitefella) approach.' Barry has also been able to provide cultural advice to art coordinators who are keen to ensure that Indigenous artists are included in public art projects. A good example is the way he worked closely with three Indigenous artists as they prepared a submission to Main Roads WA for a \$40,000 public art commission. Together

Above: *Untitled* Artist: Dinni Smith Medium: acrylic on canvas. Photo: courtesy of ArtSource

Top Right: Title: *Bobtail Tale* Artist: Kelvin Penny Medium: acrylic on canvas. Photo: courtesy of ArtSource

Bottom Right: Wonguntha Birni Artist Mob Workshop, Kalgoorlie workshop participants (left to right) Carmichael Johnston, Delson Stokes, Catherine Noble, Elton Polak, Dawn Ranger, Duncan Pilson, Edward Polak.

Photo: courtesy of AFWA



they worked through the brief, the contract and the requirements for a successful tender.

Wherever possible, the activities and outcomes from Artist Mob are led by the mainly Indigenous artists who use the program. Jude says 'the heroes and leaders of this program are the participating artists'. Since the beginning of 2003, the Artist Mob program has been providing training workshops to about 140 mostly Indigenous artists at different stages of professional development. Artists are encouraged to bring their art to the workshops and talk about it with other participants, thus building the possibility of local arts communities. The workshops are oriented towards practical assistance and output so, by the end of



a workshop, artists may have a workable portfolio. Photographic documentation is saved to a computer and archived (at this stage) by ArtSource. Artist Mob also provides one-to-one advice on curating an exhibition, pricing work, taxation law, selling work overseas and finding retail outlets such as galleries. Barry is supported in this last area by consulting Perth-based artists.

Julie Weekes is an Indigenous artist. She says there are plenty of people who need basic information about the reality of art work practice. 'Are they painting for a hobby, or to make a living? And if so, they need to take the appropriate steps towards recognising they are running a small business,' she says. A two-week artist-in-residency project by Julie with the Wongutha Birni Indigenous community near Kalgoorlie resulted in an exhibition of paintings by a dozen artists called 'Buyu' (smoke), sponsored by Healthway and the Telethon Child Health Institute. Other outcomes of Artist Mob include a new Indigenous section added to the Biennial Art Prize in Katanning, a town in the Great Southern Region and three teams of Indigenous artists who are being mentored through the processes of tendering for a public art commission on the Roe Highway, Perth.



Funding/support: The State Government of WA through ArtsWA, the Department of Local Government and Regional Development through the Western Australian Regional Initiative Scheme, the Department of Industry and Resources through the Office of Aboriginal Economic Development, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board of the Australia Council, Country Arts WA through the Regional Arts Fund, an Australian Government initiative and the Lotteries Commission of WA. Other forms of support are received from the Regional Development Commissions (networking and office support), ATSIS, regional galleries, local shires, Aboriginal corporations and individuals.

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National Limestone Sculpture Symposium 2003

Country Arts SA and City of Mount Gambier

During the first 'National Limestone Sculpture Symposium', widely known, emerging and regional artists were invited to spend one to two weeks together to create artworks from limestone found and quarried near Mount Gambier in South Australia. The Symposium was a response by Country Arts South Australia, in partnership with the City of Mount Gambier, to a recent upsurge in interest by regional South Australian and Victorian artists in the sculptural possibilities of Mount Gambier limestone. The Symposium was carefully designed as an opportunity for artistic exchange, networking, skills development, promotion of Mount Gambier as a site for arts and tourism, and a way of increasing local knowledge and interest in the work of arts practitioners.

At the core of the National Limestone Sculpture Symposium were the four South Australian guest artists: Silvio Apponyi, Tony Bishop, James Darling and Ivo Tadic. The opportunity to spend a week sharing ideas, techniques and tools with these artists drew registrations from a further 36 sculptors from around Australia, including some locals.

'The Symposium has been a new and significant development for arts practice and arts education in South Australia,' says James Darling, a guest artist from Keith in South Australia. 'It has been a very public event and attracted artists and visitors from interstate. It touched a core with the people of Mount Gambier.'



The Symposium took place in a very large secure paddock adjacent to the Old Mount Gambier Gaol. A few months before the event, the four guest artists were invited to select from large, hand-cut limestone blocks set aside by the local quarry, Stafford & Earl. All other Symposium artists were provided with a selection of stone delivered on pallets to the Old Gaol paddock direct from the quarries. Local residents were intrigued by the project and school groups turned up to watch the fun and spectacle of 40 sculptors breathing life into large rectangular blocks of stone. Each day between 500 and 800 people could be found enjoying the creative atmosphere of the paddock.

For the sculptors, this was a rare opportunity to watch each other work, to share, question, discover and learn from each other. 'As I work with clay, the Symposium was a fantastic opportunity to work with a different medium and with such an inspirational and generous group of people,' says Clementine Underdown. One emerging artist established a formal mentorship with a guest artist, and each of the other guest artists worked informally with all other registrants.



'It was a great chance for me to bring out my creative skills in wombat carving and to be given the opportunity to be mentored by Silvio in animal skeleton structure,' says Rosemary Kain. Marny Fenton adds, 'It was pure joy to have a week of self-indulgence. Good for the soul. It was amazing watching such a variety of artists, some experienced, some not, and the many different tools they have mastered and also their own inventions.'

Top: Artist Hamish McDonald with his limestone sculptures
Bottom: Reidy Park Primary School students join in the fun
Right: Merran Koren of Mount Gambier—nearly finished!
Photography: Marilyn Cox



Each of the guest artists gave formal talks, with particular reference to the development of their artistic processes in the sculptural form and its relationship to contemporary Australian visual arts. They also led workshops, capped to a maximum of 10 participants per workshop, in the Old Gaol's exterior courtyard and indoor spaces. Silvio Apponyi, renowned for his granite sculptures, completed his first two sculptures from Mount Gambier stone during the Symposium. Silvio told participants that while it had taken him a month to sculpt a cockatoo from granite, the same sculpture made from limestone had taken only four days.

When the sculptures were put on sale at the conclusion of the Symposium, the event attracted an estimated 2000 people. The City of Mount Gambier has now established a sculpture park in front of the Old Mount Gambier Gaol with sculptures made during the Symposium by three of the four guest artists: Tony Bishop, James Darling and Ivo Tadic. Two of Silvio Apponyi's sculptures were bought by paper manufacturer, Kimberly Clark Australia, a national company with a regional base in South Australia. Its newly constructed headquarters near Millicent in the south-east of South Australia now gives pride of place to a whole wall of Mount Gambier stone carved by Silvio representing the red-tailed black cockatoo.

The success of this first Symposium means that more limestone sculpture workshops will be offered in the south-east. Consideration is also being given to making this



Symposium a biennial event on the national arts calendar. Enquiries have already come from Bulgaria, France, England and the Netherlands, so if the event does become biennial it could be opened up as an international event.

As Tony Bishop says: 'We often ask...is this journey really necessary? The question presumes an outcome that cannot be predicted. I believe all sorts of discoveries and experiences made the Symposium a success. I hope it's the first of many.'

'It was amazing watching such a variety of artists, some experienced, some not, and the many different tools they have mastered and also their own inventions.'

Funding/support: Country Arts SA through the Regional Arts Fund, an Australian Government initiative, Government of South Australia, Arts SA, City of Mount Gambier, Stafford & Earl Stone Supplies, Limestone Coast Tourism, and corporate sponsor Kimberly Clark Australia Pty Ltd.

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Purrelayde – Shell Residency Program

Arts Tasmania

The Purrelayde project was designed to help Aboriginal women elders pass on their traditional skills in shell necklace making to younger Aboriginal women. Purrelayde are tiny, mother of pearl maireener shells. They grow in seaweed beds off the coast of the Furneaux Islands (Flinders and Cape Barren), about 30 nautical miles north-east of mainland Tasmania. Today there only about 10 Aboriginal women with the skills to make these traditional necklaces. With only a very few among these who regularly practise, the craft and art of women's shell necklaces was at risk of being lost. Arts Tasmania, with the Australia Council's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board, conceived this project as a means to nurture this traditional Aboriginal craft for future generations.

The Purrelayde project revolved around 80-year-old Dulcie Greeno, Muriel Maynard in her late 60s, and Corrie Fullard who is in her early 70s. Each of these women came from the Furneaux Islands but now lives on mainland Tasmania.* They are each classified elders of shell-necklace making and have exhibited locally, nationally and internationally.

The project included the passing on of collection, cleaning, threading and stringing techniques, but also important oral history about places, people and methods. A crucial element of the project was therefore the trust between the shell necklace makers and their chosen students.



Dulcie chose to teach her daughter Betty Grace, who lives on Flinders Island. Between April and May 2003, Dulcie and Betty Grace collected maireener shells from many different beaches, took them back to Betty's house to clean, wash and pierce holes in them, prior to sizing, polishing and threading. Dulcie made suggestions for combining shells into eye-catching patterns. Betty Grace found innovative ways of combining shells and pearls into a necklace. 'My grandmother used to do shell necklaces, and a couple of my aunties. We'd go round with them on the beach and collect shells. We had to walk everywhere then...we still walk for miles... There are a lot of places that you can't get to by car,' says Dulcie.

'We remember when the older ladies used to string them... I feel like I'm the next generation carrying it on and I'm proud of that.'

Corrie also shared her knowledge with her daughter, Jeanette James. After they collected the shells they took them home to Hobart to make necklaces and bracelets.

In traditional times Aboriginal women collected shells in baskets, smoked them in wood ash to clean them and

Above: Delia Summers wearing Maireener shell necklace made by Lola Greeno. Photo: Peter Clark, Black and White, Launceston

Top Right: Detail of necklace by Lola Greeno. Maireener, Black Crow, Stripey Buttons and Toothy Shell Necklace. Photo: Uffe Schulze, Concept Photographics, Hobart

Bottom Right: Rachel Quillerat and Muriel Maynard. Photo: courtesy of Arts Tasmania



polish them, and then threaded them onto kangaroo sinew. These days, only some of these processes are similar. Muriel passed her knowledge to community elder, Rachel Quillerat. 'In one way I suppose I am the custodian of knowledge about our culture,' says Muriel. 'We remember when the older ladies used to string them... When we go back to Cape Barren I can imagine those old ladies over on those beaches, walking that far and taking whatever they had to eat, boiling the billy on the rocks and making the fire, cooking and eating shellfish. I never forget things like that. I feel like I'm the next generation carrying it on and I'm proud of that.'

Dulcie, Corrie and Muriel are very conscious that, for economic and environmental reasons, traditional techniques and processes need to be protected. There are fewer maireener shells to collect these days and it's important that shell collection locations are protected. The women know their twice yearly collection will not seriously deplete the supply, but are concerned that consumer demand for these objects could place a strain on some shell resources. They are also concerned about the possible impact of pollution on the shells and are supporting a research project with Tasmanian scientists to find ways to protect and preserve the shell collection seabeds.

The main challenge for the women in this project was to fill in an Arts Tasmania grant application and gather quotes for their budget because they are more comfortable with oral than written expression. They were assisted by the

Aboriginal arts program officer with Arts Tasmania. The project was supported by the Flinders Island Aboriginal Association and Cape Barren Island Council, that provided letters of support for the participants.

There were also logistical matters to be arranged, including accommodation and freight, and calculating weather conditions and tides for shell collection. It's an expensive, 35-minute charter flight to the Furneaux Islands from the mainland. There are few cars and scant accommodation. The women prefer to travel in spring when tides are guaranteed to be low enough to permit easy access to the seaweed beds and the water is calm and clear enough to see the tiny shells.

Following this residency, a necklace from each of the new makers has been purchased by the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in Hobart, which has a dedicated shell necklace gallery established through extensive consultation with Aboriginal elders and shell necklace makers.

Arts Tasmania have made a commitment to an ongoing shell residency program which develops community awareness of the continuation of this traditional and culturally significant art.

* Following European colonisation of Tasmania, the majority of surviving Aboriginal people were relocated to the Furneaux group of islands, with most settled on Cape Barren and Flinders Islands.



Funding/support: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board of the Australia Council, and Arts Tasmania (residency programs).

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Murray Time

Booranga Writers Albury



The professional life of writers and illustrators is usually private and solitary. But 16 writers and 18 visual artists were brought together by a delightful and tantalising quest—to write an illustrated progressive novel about their local Murray River region.

Novelist and poet Jane Downing lives in Albury with her partner Dirk Spennemann, and together they generate collaborative projects for Murray region writers. In 2000 they edited *ReCollecting Albury Writing*, an anthology that paid homage to local writing from 1856 to the present. In 2002 a contemporary companion to the first anthology was published, *New Albury Writing*. These projects strengthened a community of local writers that also draws support from workshop programs organised by the Writers' Centre in Wagga Wagga and local government cultural programs.

Browsing in a second-hand book shop in Berimah, Jane and Dirk were intrigued by a progressive novel, *London Consequences*, written for the 1972 'Festival of London'. They discovered that in 2001 a group of Irish writers collaborated on *Yeats is Dead*. It was then that the idea of a progressive, illustrated novel set in the Murray Region took hold.

When Jane and Dirk issued public notices calling for expressions of interest, they were struck by the huge response from local writers and visual artists. There was more interest in the project from writers and artists than the

project could accommodate. Creative people in regional communities were clearly hungry for supportive networks which also challenged and extended their skills. 'I am a great believer in collaborative work and the chance to share skills with writers and artists has been a refreshing challenge,' says Vicki Luke, visual artist. Project participants represented a cross-section of the community in background, age and gender: the youngest writer was in his 20s, the oldest in her 80s, with a similar diversity among the visual artists.

Sixteen writers from the towns of Albury-Wodonga and its surrounding areas met in June 2003 to agree upon a plan. The plot line was only to be constrained by the need to set the novel within the present and the geographic area known as the Murray region. Each writer would contribute one chapter. Even though the writers' styles ranged from science fiction to satire and murder mystery to young adult fiction, all agreed to a duty of care to the writers whose chapters preceded or followed theirs.

Jane wrote the first chapter of *Murray Time* setting the tone of the book as literary fiction. She also took on the role of literary editor for the work. As each of 16 chapters was rolled out, it was posted on the Internet. This created curiosity, intrigue and anticipation about character development and plot lines—and raised the stakes among the writers who tried, in a good natured way, to outdo each other. It also emphasised the communal nature of the undertaking.

Above: Portrait of Jane Downing, writer and literary editor of *Murray Time*. Photo: Dirk HR Spennemann
Top Right: *Bethanga Labyrinth*, artwork used in *Murray Time*. Artist: Caryn Giblin. Photo: Caryn Giblin
Bottom Right: writers' workshop 7 July 2003, Susan Beinart (writer). Photo: Fred Birkelund



Four months later, the hefty manuscript was handed to another group of local collaborators: 18 local visual artists. The writers were delighted by this additional dimension to the project. 'It's been an honour to have someone look so deeply into my text,' says writer Margaret McDonald.

'The Murray Time project has enlightened my understanding of the writing culture in the local region. It's been a lot of fun working with artists who use words to make images.'

As with the writing, illustrations varied from purely abstract to naturalistic interpretations of scenes from the novel, and tools ranged from pen and ink to acrylics, computer-generated images and photography. Some writers attended the first workshop gathering of visual artists and illustrators and took the time to discuss their chapter with their collaborative artist. 'The *Murray Time* project has enlightened my understanding of the writing culture in the local region. It's been a lot of fun working with artists who use words to make images,' says visual artist Mary-Jane Griggs.

Future artistic collaborations between writers and artists are expected to emerge. 'The progressive novel concept is

novel and progressive. Collaborating with so many writers and artists is a fantastic idea,' says Johnny beinArt, visual artist.

The project was completed within its tight one-year schedule, helped by Internet technologies to overcome geographical isolation. Jane was available throughout this time as an informal mentor for less experienced or less confident writers who may not have been previously published. Three hundred copies of the book were printed and launched at the Wodonga Arts Space. The cover was designed by Karen Donnell, photography lecturer at Charles Sturt University. 'The image for the cover is the "creative hand" of the region, a photo image of 40 hands overlaid,' says Jane.

Excerpts of the novel and samples of the visual illustrations, along with photographs of how the project progressed, have been recorded on six interconnecting panels. These will be displayed in regional libraries, art spaces, community centres and local councils to encourage other groups to undertake joint writing and visual arts projects.

Murray Time was a great way to bring together 34 regional writers and artists from Albury-Wodonga, as well as from small towns like Yackandandah, Tallangatta, Walla Walla, Table Top, Gerogery, the Mitta Valley, Barnawartha and Bethanga—and a unique artistic homage to a distinctive region of Australia.



Funding/support: Regional Arts NSW through the Country Arts Support Program (CASP), City of Wodonga, AlburyCity, Upper Murray Regional Library, Murray Arts, Charles Sturt University and Letao Press.

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Nothing Came By Road

Town of Port Hedland

Nothing Came by Road was a public arts/sculpture project designed by Port Hedland local and visual artist, Kathy Donnelly. She wanted to involve local tradespeople in a large public art commission to provide them with a new way to explore their trade skills. Under the guidance of two mentors, six trainee artists—five of them men—produced powerful sculptural works reflecting the industrial essence of Port Hedland.

Port Hedland is a port town two days drive north from Perth in Western Australia. Huge container ships are a regular sight, as are the trains, sometimes 300 rail cars long (3 kilometres) that rumble between Port Hedland and the Mount Newman mine. The town is populated mostly by

men. One third of the population are migrants and the town also hosts a refugee camp. At the local shopping centre half a dozen Aboriginal languages may be heard, spoken by people from the outlying regions of Western Australia's Pilbara.

Nothing Came by Road was intended to be a big project in this giant landscape. Kathy had the initial project idea and collaborated closely with Michelle McKenzie, the community and cultural development manager of the Town of Port Hedland. They jointly developed the concept over 18 months and sourced public as well as corporate funding. Kathy formally attached herself to Michelle as the project's trainee manager. Anne Neil and Steve Tepper—commissioned public and urban artists working in Western Australia and overseas—were invited to be the lead artists/mentors on the project.

Six expressions of interest from trainee sculptors were received and accepted. The participants were: Randal Canning, an engineering technician for BHP Billiton with trade skills in fitting, turning and welding; Zabia Chmielewski, whose interest in metalwork led her to study engineering at Pilbara College of TAFE; Garry Horton, engineering technician for BHP Billiton whose trade skills include fitting and machining; John Todd, track labourer and safety officer for BHP Mount Newman for the past 12 years; Louie Warren, manager at BHP Billiton's Aboriginal Affairs Department; and Daniele Specogna, a jeweller, stone carver and photographer. While Daniele was the only professional artist, each of the others had some

experience in the arts including photography, sculpture, painting and soundscapes.

When the six trainee artists came together at the beginning of the project, they discussed various methods of collaboration and brainstormed ideas for reflecting the essence of Port Hedland through sculptural works. Ultimately they decided to conceive, design and sculpt independently, but agreed that a core, unifying element would be the common use of materials. Massive wooden jetty pylons, which had been in storage since the dismantling of Port Hedland's original jetty, were donated to the project. The artists also decided to site their sculptures in a joint, compositional arrangement.

Anne and Steve conducted a series of three weekend workshops over five months. They showed the trainee artists how to understand and adhere to a project brief, create a site-specific model or a rationale for the design, seek the appropriate engineering advice, and navigate local government and occupational health and safety guidelines. There was also the need to create a timeline and a job plan, quote and work to a budget, and work collaboratively and cross-culturally. 'Our job as the mentoring or lead artists on this project was not to teach art skills or develop sculptural concepts, but provide a cohesive and supportive framework in which trainee artists could experience all the processes of working with their own designs through to project completion,' said Anne Neil.

Each trainee artist presented their design concept in the



Above Left: Title: *Harbouring a Jetty* Artist: Louie Warren. Photo: Daniele Specogna

Above Right: Title: *Staircase to a view*, text reads, 'We rest in the red solid land. Climb and see'

Artist: Daniele Specogna. Photo: courtesy of the artist

Facing page: Trainee artists Randal Canning and John Todd commence work on John's *Invisible Man* sculpture.

Photo: Zabia Chmielewski



form of maquettes (scale models of sculptures) to a local panel of stakeholders, including two local residents and representatives of the Town of Port Hedland, the Port Hedland Visitors Centre, the Courthouse Arts Centre, BHP Billiton's Greenscape Project, Pilbara Arts Crafts Design Aboriginal Corporation, plus Anne Neil, Michelle McKenzie and Kathy Donnelly. Once each presentation had been accepted the sculptors worked on construction independently, with technical assistance via email or phone available from Anne or Steve in Perth.

'Our job as the mentoring or lead artists on this project was not to teach art skills or develop sculptural concepts, but provide a cohesive and supportive framework in which trainee artists could experience all the processes of working with their own designs through to project completion.'

Daniele Specogna cut off the wooden pylons and carved into the wooden surface a poem that created links between the early settlement of Western Australia and his experiences of loss and cultural truncation through migration to Australia. Louie Warren's sculpture celebrated the construction of Port Hedland's original jetty and the fact that, even in its earliest days, everything reached Port

Hedland by ship. John Todd chose not to use timber in his sculpture, but relied instead upon the living wood in a stand of ghost gums on site. In front of these trees he placed two steel figures, representing the invisibility of Aboriginal people and their culture to early settlers. Zabia Chmielewski created a circle of steel around a wooden jetty pylon. Profiles of images transported for settlement—cup, saucer, doily, fork, knife, toys—were cut into the pylon. Gary Horton's sculpture used found objects such as the original iron rails from the now defunct rail link between Port Hedland and Marble Bar.

Each artist appreciated the steep learning curve of professional development this project created. Two participants have already presented proposals for new public art commissions in the local area, and another is offering mentorship and advice to Aboriginal metalwork students who are interested in transposing these skills to create sculptural products.

BHP Billiton funded a structural engineer's report on secure footings and funded the installation of huge iron ore 'socks' to stabilise the sculptures. Cranes were used to lift the six sculptures into place and secure them with concrete. The project attracted an estimated \$70,000 of in-kind and cash support from local corporations and businesses.

The project was not without its set backs. The installation of the sculptures was delayed for months due to the

demolition of a church on site that had become ridden with white ants. When the workers finally got the go ahead, they were hit with 52-degree heat one day and Cyclone Monty the next. Despite these hitches, the sculptures are now grouped along a pathway between the art centre and the tourist centre to attract visitors arriving by bus and car. A project on this scale would have been difficult to mount in a community with less resources, or less commitment to the idea.

At the end of this process, a group of skilled tradesmen have new skills in the production of public art, which is of great benefit to each individual as well as to the cultural development of the wider community.



Funding/support: Community Cultural Development Board of the Australia Council, ArtsWA, Country Arts WA, Lotteries Commission of WA, Town of Port Hedland, BHP Billiton. A number of local businesses donated materials, equipment, labour and their ingenuity, including The Port Authority, Brambles, C J Contracting, One Steel, Portside Fabrications, BOC Gas, Coates Hire, Sims Metal, Hedland Emporium, Transline Tree Trimmer, Courthouse Arts Centre and Gallery, Taylors Disposals and Ceacon.

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The event resonated with audiences and participants alike because it reflected their own sense of place and community in all its diversity. Moreover, it reflected the multiplicity of experiences and concerns that exist within our sense of place.

Elizabeth Walsh, Executive Producer, Ten Days on the Island

Journey Through Asia performed by Kita Performing Arts Company provided a special learning experience for school children across regional Victoria about Asian cultures.

The Spirit of Adventure program has revitalised the Museum of the Riverina in Wagga Wagga, NSW, by focusing on regular public events with local content and community involvement.

Unhiding, VisAbility through the Arts gave people with disabilities an opportunity for a valued and meaningful role in a community arts project in Albany, Western Australia.

Bute Utes created sculptures from utes that reflected seldom-heard stories about four towns in regional Victoria.

Wonderlands, a play focusing on the issue of Native Title, is the work of HotHouse Theatre, a national theatre company based in Albury-Wodonga.

Love Bites film project saw young people work with media professionals to produce 30 short films focusing on cultural diversity in the Greater Derwent District of Tasmania.

five

Creativity and diversity

Journey Through Asia

Kita Performing Arts Company



An Australian-based performing arts company specialising in Asian traditional culture has entertained, delighted and informed primary school students across Victoria. Journey Through Asia was Kita's first arts-in-education tour to primary schools. Each performance lasted an hour, and included seven traditional Asian dances, plus storytelling, audience participation and cultural exchange.

Kita Performing Arts Company sprang from an idea proposed by Kim Dunphy, then a lecturer in dance at Box Hill TAFE in Melbourne. She saw an opportunity for some graduating students whose skills in traditional Asian dance and music were unlikely to have immediate commercial value within mainstream Australian arts. The company began in 2002 as a troupe of three dancers from Taiwan, Korea and Indonesia, with Kim as director and Box Hill TAFE providing studio space for rehearsals. The troupe has now expanded to include five performers, with a mix of Australian citizens, permanent residents and overseas students.

During 2003, Kita's Journey Through Asia meant that children, often living in isolated, mono-cultural communities, had a unique educational opportunity. Students from 16 primary schools were captivated by Kita Company's presentations. The tour visited Harcourt Valley, Wedderburn, Wycheproof, Walpeup, Ouyen, Nangiloc-Colignan, SeaLake, Culgoa, Portland, Learmonth, Linton,

Bacchus Marsh, Napoleons, Maiden Gully, Bendigo and Echuca. And students from Underbool, Tempy, Torrita and Patchewollock travelled to their nearest town to see the show.

One Chinese dance which Kita performed dates back 1000 years. Another, the traditional Indonesian coconut dance, *Tari Temperung*, was reinterpreted by Kita. The dance tells the story of Indonesian school children playing with coconuts fallen from trees in the school yard, much like Australian children would kick a footy or soccer ball. It drew this question from one surprised child: 'Do they have schools in Indonesia?' A Korean dance, *So Go Book Chum*, was performed with small hand drums by farmers celebrating the rice harvest.

Kita's Journey Through Asia meant that children, often living in isolated, mono-cultural communities, had a unique educational opportunity.

Journey Through Asia performances always included an active, athletic *Kung Fu Shun* fan dance. In this dance, the



Top: Kita Company. Photo: Catherine Acin
Bottom: Dancers: Nixson Eduard and Rizal. Photo: Catherine Acin
Right: *Kung Fu Shun* fan dance. Photo: Sabrina Chou
Far Right: Dancer: Wei Lung Chou. Photo: Catherine Acin



silk fan emits a loud, metallic sound which guaranteed immediate interest and quiet focus from even the noisiest school group. Even the more lyrical Chinese ribbon dance—about an Emperor’s dream of fairies in the Moon Palace dancing in silk robes resembling clouds—gained interest when performers would invite a male teacher (usually the school principal) to take the role of the Emperor wearing a beautiful costume.

During the tour, Kita Company spent two weeks on the road in a four wheel drive towing a trailer specially designed to carry the company’s costumes and musical equipment. Sometimes Kita travelled to three schools in one day, wheeling costumes into a school library, gym or

community hall, where they would set up a minimal stage, collapsible backdrop and a sound system. It was a happy coincidence when some students spoke the languages also spoken by Kita performers.

For the performers of Kita Company, the tour was their first opportunity to experience country town culture as well as the unfamiliar dry red Mallee plains or Murray River landscapes.

Kita Company are currently developing a new show, *Tales of the Moon and other Oriental Adventures*, which focuses on traditional stories about the moon and its importance in the cycle of life. This will tour to schools throughout regional Victoria and suburban Melbourne.



Funding/support: Journey Through Asia performances were supported by Regional Arts Victoria’s Arts2Go Schools Program, with some very small schools also receiving funding through the Australian Childrens’ Theatre Foundation.

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Spirit of Adventure

Museum of the Riverina

In Wagga Wagga, the Museum of the Riverina has revitalised its links to the community over the past three years through a vibrant cultural program, Spirit of Adventure: Cultural Diversity at the Museum of the Riverina.

The Museum of the Riverina operates out of two Wagga Wagga sites. The Wagga Wagga Botanic Garden site focuses on the people, places and events which give Wagga Wagga its distinct character, while a second site was established five years ago in the city's Historic Council Chambers—and it's here that the Spirit of Adventure begins.

The museum's innovative program has created a meeting point for local industry, business, artists and even scientists, who have contributed to creating exciting and locally relevant museum experiences.

Manager Thomas Graham began by putting together a program of travelling exhibitions sourced from



organisations and individuals across Australia. But instead of passively displaying the exhibitions, he developed an exciting program of complementary local content and events to bring each exhibition to life. This program aims to make vibrant connections through local content, supported by targeted community groups, with the wider community of the town and surrounding district.

In 2002, for example, the Museum of the Riverina hosted a Powerhouse Museum exhibition, 'Women with Wings'. This inspired the museum to mount its own local mini-exhibition, 'Women with Altitude', about the experiences of 11 local women with aviation, including two pilots, a balloonist, paraglider, aircraft technician, and one who built her own plane. This exhibition toured to Griffith, Temora and Tumut.

The museum's innovative program has created a meeting point for local industry, business, artists and even scientists, who have contributed to creating exciting and locally relevant museum experiences. During Science Week 2002, over 40 students from Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga were rostered at the museum as tour guides to explain the scientific principles behind interactive exhibits to school groups. Two Aboriginal site officers from the National Parks and Wildlife Service ran participatory workshops for school groups about bush tucker, using theatre, music and dance. Charles Sturt University Professor, Nic Klomp, delivered workshops to older school students on issues of species sustainability, while younger school students explored these principles through outdoor drama games.

Above: Heather Ward, Public Programs Officer, Museum of the Riverina, tests the metal detector equipment as part of the 'Smuggler: Customs and Contraband' exhibition.

Top Right: Francois and Lyn Retief, members of the South West Slopes Vigenons Association, at 'Wine! An Australian Social History' exhibition

Bottom Right: Neville Smeardon, president of the local Vietnam Veterans Association, points out a detail to Kapooka army recruits (left to right) Kelly McKee, Chris Webb and Lt Dean Roberts during the 'My Vietnam' exhibition
Photography: courtesy of The Riverina Media Group



The museum also initiates and tours its own exhibitions, many of which have proved extremely successful. In 2000, the year of the Sydney Olympic Games, the museum mounted an exhibition about Olympians who grew up in rural Australia. 'They Came From the Bush: Our National Olympic Heroes' toured across four states for over two and a half years.

In April 2003, the museum organised the 'My Vietnam' exhibition focusing on 'images Vietnam veterans would like to remember, rather than those they would like to forget'. The exhibition showed 50 photographs from a book of the same title by a local veteran Steve Lewis. With a Royal Australian Air Force base outside Wagga Wagga and the nearby Singleton Army Barracks (where national servicemen trained prior to duty in Vietnam), plus a large and active local Vietnam Vets Association, the exhibition had special local relevance. An opening night concert featuring Denise Drysdale and Patti Newton, both of whom had toured Vietnam in the 1960s, attracted 500 Vietnam veterans and their families.

In 2001, the museum hosted two exhibitions—'Indigenous Australia: Standing Strong' and 'Indigenous Australians: Australia's First Peoples'—which drew local Aboriginal communities into the building for the first time. But one local elder at the Standing Strong exhibition prompted a rethink: 'A great exhibition, but no one from the Riverina is represented!' Museum staff responded to this by curating 'Talking About Ourselves: Our Local Aboriginal Community' with stories from nine local elders, which is now a permanent feature at the Botanic Gardens.



This outreach program significantly stretches the resources of a small emerging museum, particularly when it is managing two sites. To succeed, it has had to draw on the commitment of casual staff and the enthusiasm of volunteers. Over the course of the past three years, skills have developed dramatically to the benefit of the whole community. One early volunteer progressed to casual, then permanent part-time employment at the museum, and finally graduated to become the full-time public programmer. She is now the special projects officer at Eastern Riverina Arts Program and describes her story as a 'Cinderella experience'. Today, the museum has two full-time staff, plus casual workers. The museum's volunteer staff scheme is project driven, with people participating in those exhibitions with particular relevance to them.

Looking ahead, the museum can count on strong local support. The Science Week event attracted 2500 visits over five days. The museum mounts a new exhibition every two months, and staff are active in retaining links and contacts within the local community, constantly looking out for new ideas and audiences.

Spirit of Adventure may be a program with very limited resources, but it makes a big impact through its use of local creativity, talent and culture.

Funding/support: NSW Ministry for the Arts, Wagga Wagga City Council, Visions of Australia Touring Program, Powerhouse Museum, New England Art Museum, Australian Museum, Charles Sturt University, NSW Education Department, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Ethnic Community Council in Wagga Wagga, Wiradjuri Elders Group in Wagga Wagga, The Bureau in Adelaide, Vietnam Veterans' Association, Department of Veterans' Affairs.

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Unhiding, *VisAbility through the Arts*

Vancouver Arts Centre, Lower Great Southern Community Living Association, and Disability in the Arts, Disadvantage in the Arts Australia WA

Albany's Unhiding project was a creative and collaborative two-year process to give people with a disability living in regional Western Australia a positive community presence through arts activities such as workshops, exhibitions and performance.

Unhiding grew out of a partnership between the Vancouver Arts Centre (VAC), Lower Great Southern Community Living Association (LGSCCLA), and Disability in the Arts, Disadvantage in the Arts Australia (DADAA) WA.

In 2000, 60 people travelled to the Vancouver Arts Centre in Albany to participate in a weekend community consultation workshop, facilitated by DADAA. The workshop developed a broad vision for the cultural inclusion of people experiencing disabilities in the communities of Albany and the wider south-east region.



'The thing I really loved was that instead of us having to break barriers by asking local community groups if they could make their services accessible to people with a disability,' says Kathy Hough of LGSCCLA, 'Unhiding was a desirable, exciting, fun project that belonged to us. We could invite the community to join in and this also resulted in the promotion of the message *VisAbility through the Arts*.'

An arts project reference group was formed and began to meet monthly. Its 11 members included three community representatives of people with a disability, representatives from four local support organisations for people with a disability, and representatives from LGSCCLA, VAC and DADAA WA. This group drew up a detailed memorandum of understanding about its aims and objectives, including a decision about how to achieve and maintain an equal balance of power between the representatives of more powerful, well-resourced organisations and those with fewer resources. DADAA was represented on the project reference group, but the organisation made a strategic decision to remain a neutral body. While it did not participate in decision-making, it resourced the project in various ways, including facilitating workshops and disability awareness training for local artists and support workers.

The organisers held a series of basic workshops to enable potential project participants to decide which artforms would suit them. These introductory events were followed by a more intense series of Unhiding project workshops over three months between 2001 and 2002. Ninety people

with a range of disabilities participated in a series of weekly workshops over three months in writing, visual art, choral, dance, film and sculpture. These were facilitated by five local artists and two DADAA WA workers who are also artists.

'Unhiding was a desirable, exciting, fun project that belonged to us. We could invite the community to join in and this also resulted in the promotion of the message VisAbility through the Arts.'

'It was an immensely rewarding project for me,' says Teresa Hughes, Unhiding choir leader. 'I had such a good feeling about it. I learnt that people with a disability are individuals who are often lumped together as a group, but who are keen to be part of our community and do things that everyone else does.' Project participants noted improved self-esteem, confidence and pride, plus new skills in various artforms. 'It made me come out of my shell,' says participant Hazel Cameron.

In tandem with these workshops, DADAA WA facilitated disability awareness sessions for artswriters, members of

Above: The Unhiding Choir perform at the celebration concert

Right: Three of 50 artworks from a collage created during workshops now on permanent display at the Vancouver Arts Centre

Photography: courtesy of Vancouver Arts Centre



the reference group and support workers for people with a disability. The workshops gave the 30 participants a range of common procedures and principles to guide their practice, such as community cultural development methodologies and the Disability Service Standards (*Disability Service Act 1986*).

The final public celebration and exhibition of Unhiding was a highly charged event at which 90 people exhibited, performed and celebrated. For the first time they were socially visible and connected to the community instead of hidden and isolated. 'We learnt a lot—how to perform and present ourselves in public,' says Greg Stevens, a participant. For many families it was the first time they had seen their children included in a community celebration, or participate in a project with such successful outcomes. 'For me, Unhiding was about community, the things we can discover about ourselves by supporting one another. And the fun and enjoyment that comes from that,' adds Greg.

As a crowd of 400 people entered the main gallery space they saw an array of artworks hidden by coloured cloth. After the official speeches, the cloth was removed to display the artworks, and the choir emerged from the crowd asking: 'Are you hiding?' and telling everyone through a song they had written, 'I'm not hiding any more'. The Unhiding project was an opportunity for the Albany community to find common ground for their support of people with a disability and to consolidate their resources.

At the beginning of the project, few of the participating organisations had worked together. People are proud of a project which initiated and achieved a high level of cross-agency collaboration. For VAC, Unhiding embodies its access and equity principles. It has exposed the centre to a large number of people who may not otherwise have made use of the venue. And the whole community benefits from having an accessible arts centre.

Since the project concluded, the Unhiding choir have recorded the 'Unhiding' song, continue to meet for weekly choral practice and have been booked for local performances. In addition, a group of visual artists from the project have exhibited work in the Off the Wall gallery at an

Albany shopping centre. Prior to this project, people with disabilities had never accessed programs run by the Vancouver Arts Centre for the whole community, but they are now comfortable about integrating into the centre's generic programs. The Unhiding project has received funding for an ongoing program of cultural workshops over 12 months in 2004, which will aim to make links with surrounding regions, through a local, paid project coordinator.

The chorus to the 'Unhiding' song, written by choir member Carol Mundell, perhaps best expresses this project's aims and outcomes: 'We'll burst out, we'll sing and dance and spout lots of poetry. We'll make noise and be about. And we'll be free.'



Funding/support: Community Cultural Development Board of the Australia Council, Country Arts WA, City of Albany, DADAA WA, Lower Great Southern Community Living Association, with enthusiastic support from family, friends, carers and other health service and community agencies.

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Bute Utes

Regional Arts Victoria



Who would have guessed the hard working ute could be a thing of beauty? During the Bute Utes project, four ordinary utes were driven into sheds and panel shops in the Victorian towns of Hopetoun, Kyneton, Lakes Entrance and Rushworth. They came out transformed, worked upon by many hands into sculptures which told unique stories about their communities. After local display, the Bute Utes were taken to a prime city location—the Victorian Art Centre and City Square—and displayed as part of the outdoor program of the 'Melbourne International Festival for the Arts' 2002.

Utes have an iconic place in regional culture. They are an essential tool of life for regional people, particularly young men who wouldn't normally associate themselves and their experiences with art. The project offered a golden opportunity to encourage regional panel beaters and car mechanics to work alongside quilters, upholsters, visual artists and musicians in a collaborative arts project.

Bute Utes was conceived by Regional Arts Victoria (RAV). RAV supports community-based arts projects and encourages local artists to work within their communities. In the case of Bute Utes, Hopetoun Arts Council, Kyneton's Brandhall Gallery, the Nowa-Nowa community development group in Lakes Entrance and Rushworth's Bark'n Arts were the agencies to participate in the project.

Donna Jackson was appointed artistic director, to develop the project concept and its framework, take an artistic overview of the four projects, and facilitate communication

between each of them. Donna was first inspired by the challenge set by the RAV to engage a group of people who rarely participate in regional arts projects—young men. She was also encouraged by a Shepparton community arts project, linking cars, art and young people called 'Car Art to Wear and to Drive'*; which involved five groups of young people aged between 12 and 25. And then there was her personal love of big old cars and her previous one-woman show, 'Car Maintenance, Explosives and Love'. As Donna says, she drives a '64 Chev and comes from a family of petrolheads.

'It was loads of fun, but sometimes challenging because that year the whole community was feeling the depressing effects of drought.'

Four local project coordinators were appointed to support community involvement with four local artists. A central advantage of this framework was that it released the artists from administrative tasks like project schedules, budgets, fund-raising, timetables and publicity. They were free to devote maximum time and energy to working creatively with their communities.

Through workshops and consultations each community chose a central story. The artists then assisted their

Top: The Kyneton Copper Bute Ute Artist: Anton Hasell. Photo: Bindi Cole
Bottom: The Sky-Raising Magpies Artists: Catherine Larkins, Poogie Hayes, Rheb Brodie, Josephine Jakobi, Elaine Terrick, Dianne Cameron, Daniel Jenkins. Photo: Catherine Larkins
Right: Two heads are better than one, work in progress. Photo: Bindi Cole



community to tell this story in sculptural form through the project's common vehicle of expression, the ute. Donna Jackson says: 'We had \$2000 to \$5000 to spend on each ute, so we selected them carefully to make sure they were fairly road-worthy and had good brakes. After all, we were going to be making sculptures which could run people over, so occupational health and safety considerations were important.'

In Rushworth, artist Angie Russie and the community produced a ute sculpture *Two heads are better than one*, which subverted their community's reputation for being inbred, with a comic and positive statement about the reality of successful partnerships in Rushworth.

In Kyneton, artist Anton Hasell and the community turned the back of their ute into a scale version of their town, the people and the fertile landscape, including the flowing waters of the Capaspe river and clouds which produced rain.

Deb Burdet, whose family settled in Hopetoun in 1911, worked with a small community of Hopetoun farming families to make *Utopia*, a sleek, white and stainless steel sculpture. *Utopia* celebrated farming as the community's major activity, depicting the ute as a chariot, with a stainless steel cut-out male farmer holding the reins. The back of the ute depicted the backbone of this community—its women—with 70 cut-out stainless steel female shapes, standing with arms aloft looking, from some angles, like stalks of wheat in a field. The community's volunteer labour base was depicted by photographic GT stripes down each side of the ute. 'It was

loads of fun, but sometimes challenging because that year the whole community was feeling the depressing effects of drought,' recalls Deb. During the project, Deb mentored a local emerging artist in his final year of high school, Jeremy James. This supported his successful enrolment the following year in a Melbourne arts course.

An Indigenous creation story, *Sky-Raising Magpies*[†] provided an opportunity for artist Catherine Larkins and the Lakes Entrance community to collaborate cross-culturally. Over three months their 1957 midnight blue Holden ute was transformed into a glorious magpie. Locals, including Guy Newman, pop-riveted intricately feathered metal wings onto side panels. A beak was attached to the bonnet and a tail to the tail gate. Respected Indigenous



basketweaver Elaine Terrick and non-Indigenous sculptor Josephine Jakobi turned the back of this ute into a huge woven magpie's nest cradling blue glass eggs blown by Trisha Allen. Visual artist Poogie Hayes etched traditional designs of the local Gunai Kumai people into the car's metal wings by cutting into the black and white paint. Young Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants took part in hip-hop and rap dance workshops run by Marika Diaz. The process of the whole project was recorded by Daniel Jenkins on DVD, edited, and played in a loop from a screen installed in the ute's dashboard. Bucket seats upholstered in plush red velvet were embroidered with the story of *Sky Raising Magpies*. Life-size metal magpies were made by jeweller Marcus Foley, to stand on the parcel shelf behind the back.

'The project had an amazing sense of collective community spirit and exchange through just sitting and talking while we worked together on the back veranda of an old house in town,' recalls Catherine Larkins.

Summing up the benefits of Bute Utes, Bin Dixon-Ward, manager for Creative Communities, RAV says: 'This model of working can build a new level of understanding in communities about the benefits of being involved in arts projects which stretch the boundaries of art-making to include forms which are not traditional and processes which are not traditional either.'

* Car Art to Wear and to Drive, Shepparton, Victoria February and March 2002. Project artists: Angie Russi, Jan Donaldson, Glenda Cornell, Carol Webb, Helen Broo. Funded by Vic Health and the Shepparton Arts Festival with in-kind support from local businesses.

† *Sky-Raising Magpies* was adapted by this project with kind permission from New Holland Publishers, from the book of the same name, and with approval from the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages.

Funding/support: Regional Arts Victoria through the Regional Arts Fund, an Australian Government initiative, VicHealth, Melbourne International Festival for the Arts and local arts groups who attracted local sponsorship and in-kind resources totalling \$80,000. The project was also supported in each region by hundreds of volunteer hours from local artists, local industry and the community.

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Wonderlands

HotHouse Theatre

HotHouse Theatre in Albury-Wodonga is one of the leading regional theatre companies in Australia, and yet, like all regional theatre companies, is grappling with the challenges of distance, a smaller market and nearly double the costs of its city counterparts. Yet with its production of *Wonderlands*, this small to medium size company has demonstrated that a regional voice can have a very big impact on the national stage.

After a successful premiere season in Wodonga in 2003, *Wonderlands* toured to Wagga Wagga then played a four-week season to enthusiastic audiences in Sydney. HotHouse plans to mount an extensive national tour of *Wonderlands* in 2005 with a view to touring overseas in 2006.

'An inspired commission and a wonderful production.'

In 1999, on the cusp of the new millennium, HotHouse Theatre invited three playwrights to send expressions of interest for a play about 'significant moments of the 20th century'. Sydney-based writer Katherine Thomson was selected to pursue her concept of a play dramatising the issues surrounding contemporary Indigenous property rights, or Native Title. The development of this idea into a



professional theatrical production was a three-year process during which HotHouse Theatre worked with the playwright and other nationally-recognised artists.

Wonderlands unfolds when a white Australian grazier takes the initiative to walk into a Native Title Office. She's there to negotiate with traditional owners about 'shared access' to pastoral land her family 'owns' in law. While Katherine's play is a work of fiction, she spent two weeks in Queensland in 2000 researching a contemporary event as well as reading 19th century writings of white settlers and 'observers of the violent frontier wars'. This research inspired her play which was primarily written for, as well as about, regional audiences. She felt it was 'a privilege' to be able to extend herself by writing about situations outside her immediate sphere of experience.

To bring the production to life, HotHouse brought in specialised talent. Director Marion Potts, designer Ralph Myers and sound designer Max Lyandvert came from Sydney; and associate director Wesley Enoch and stage manager Angela Pamic from Melbourne. Lighting designer Rob Scott and production manager Bernadette Haldane live in Albury-Wodonga. The cast of six actors hailed from four Australian states and New Zealand. All these artists came to live and work in Wodonga at various stages during the three years spanning creative development, production and performance.

Despite the work of city-based professional theatre workers, HotHouse regards its output as strongly

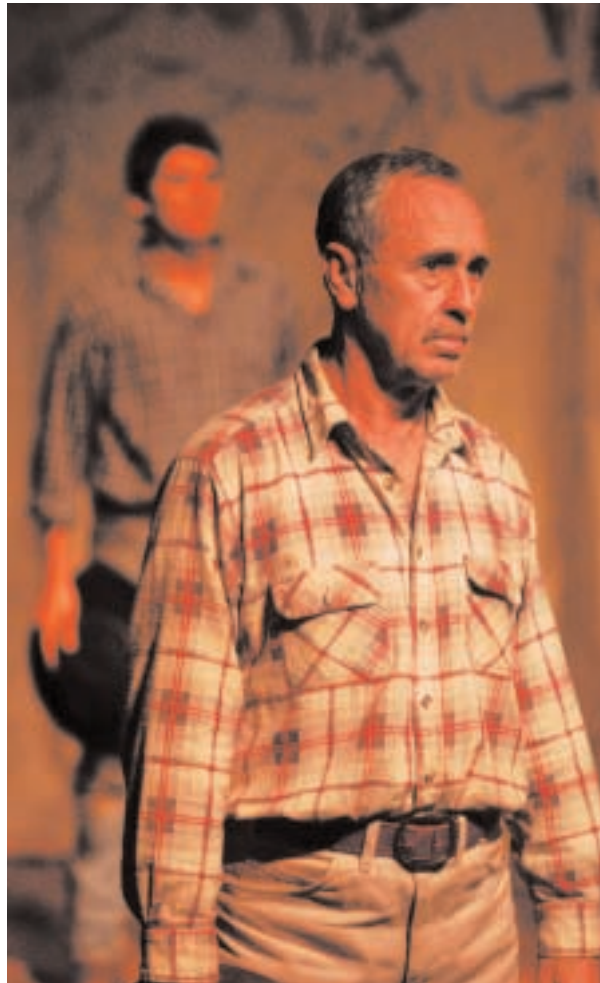
Above: (Jim) Isaac Drandich
Middle Right: (Lon) Roger Oakley in foreground, (Tom) Scott Johnson
Far Right: (Alice) Gwyneth Price, (Jim) Isaac Drandich
Photography: Jules Boag



influenced by the company's geographic, social and cultural setting in Albury-Wodonga.

And certainly, the experience of working and living in regional Australia nourished the creativity of these imported professionals. Associate director of *Wonderlands*, Wesley Enoch, describes his working life in Wodonga as 'having opened new channels of creativity'. Wesley also enjoyed working for and with regional audiences, who, he feels 'were able to be emotionally demonstrative through their connection to issues in the play which reflected their lives on a practical level, even though the play didn't prescribe what they should be doing or how they should be doing it'.

For HotHouse Theatre the production of *Wonderlands* was ambitious and sometimes very challenging. The cost of rehearsing in regional Australia and the lack of any funding support to offset the unique costs of producing work in the regions makes it very difficult for regional companies to produce works of this quality and size. The sensitivities of the material and a commitment to telling the real story made the development process relatively slow. HotHouse Theatre embraces the responsibility of tackling hard issues but it was an enormous financial commitment and something of a risk to make a quality, new mainstream piece of theatre around such controversial material. Nevertheless, HotHouse Theatre was resolute in its commitment to presenting a regional voice to metropolitan Australia. And for a regional theatre company to develop its own play and put in on in Sydney is a huge success.



As well as producing professional theatre, HotHouse Theatre maintains strong links to community, including schools. In addition to its annual subscription season, HotHouse tours productions to small communities in the regions where people are very lucky to see one piece of live, professional theatre a year—the production team is experienced at transforming a community hall or a tin shed into a 120-seat studio theatre. These programs are significant because they connect HotHouse intimately to its community. Without this strong support base it would not be in a position to sustain these risky artistic ventures.

The success of *Wonderlands* is both a vindication of that ambitious local vision, and a reward for what one Melbourne critic called 'an inspired commission and a wonderful production'.



Funding/support: *Wonderlands* was supported by the Myer Foundation with touring funding from NSW Ministry for the Arts. HotHouse Theatre's major funding partners are the Australia Council (Theatre Board), Arts Victoria, the NSW Ministry for the Arts, VicHealth, the City of Wodonga and AlburyCity.

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Love Bites

Glenorchy City Council, Department of Education and Derwent Valley Regional Arts

The Love Bites short-film project consisted of 30 short videos, adding up to 110 minutes of vision using digital video cassette, produced to television broadcast standard. It was produced by around 200 young people aged 10 to 30 under the guidance of a small group of professional film makers, composers and artists. The films celebrate the youth and cultural diversity of the Derwent region and the great characters, legends and special places that characterise this region of Southern Tasmania. The project was a way to use popular multimedia tools to motivate young people in an area which has Tasmania's highest level of unemployment, and school leavers are, on average, only 15 years old.

Love Bites was a joint endeavour between Glenorchy City Council, the Department of Education and Derwent Valley Regional Arts. It was guided by a steering committee including representatives from Derwent Valley Regional Arts, Migrant Resource Centre, Cosmos Disability Service and a youth representative, Kellie Hills. This diverse and well-connected group ensured that Love Bites retained its strong and explicit commitment to diversity, inclusiveness, empowerment and social justice. Committee members linked the project back to different communities including young people with disabilities, migrant groups and Aboriginal community groups. The committee also raised the funding and steered the process to a successful conclusion. Tony Woodward of the Department of Education and Jennie Gorringer of Glenorchy City Council provided the driving energy behind the project.

The filmmakers, composers and artists selected to work with the young people were chosen because of their sensitivity to, and understanding of, youth culture in regional Tasmania. In fact, most of the young professional team—Sheona McKenna, Marcus Kahn, Roland Gabatel, Angie Zacharek, and musicians Geoff Allan and Jodie Haines—grew up and undertook their professional training in Tasmania. This ensured they could serve as credible role models for the participants.

This diverse and well-connected group ensured that Love Bites retained its strong and explicit commitment to diversity, inclusiveness, empowerment and social justice.

These professionals took their skills out to young people through practical workshops in schools and community settings. Participants learned about narrative, documentary and animated scripting, story-boarding, budgeting, the use of cameras, sound and editing equipment, location-scouting, set design, and the production of rap, country, rock and funk music into video sound tracks. The experts then supported the project teams in schools or community groups as they set about

making their films on the themes of love, family, home, friends, rural/urban, work, life and death.

Aboriginal musician Jodie Haines worked with young Indigenous project participants to produce video music clips. Well-known Aboriginal elder, Aunty Ida West, brought her son Darryl, a famous footballer, to speak to school students about his experience of professional football and racism in sport. His frank discussion with students was captured as a documentary video by the team from grades four to five at Springfield Gardens School. Tamika Burgess-Green wrote and performed on video her song, 'Stolen Generation', which she subsequently performed at Tasmania's Rock for Diversity concert. Young Aboriginal poet Josell Brewer wrote the poetic voice-over to the opening images of the Love Bites video, showing the Derwent River's journey from Lake St Claire Highlands to the ocean. Following this project, Josell went on to work as a trainee writer with Terrapin Puppet Theatre and has now begun a university degree.

COSMOS Disability and Recreation Service engaged one of its workers to help two project participants with intellectual disabilities make a short video, *Beautiful 2000*, during which they performed in front of large-scale photographic images they took themselves and projected onto a wall. Fifteen young men from the Hmong community (indigenous people from the Laos and Vietnamese mountain borders) helped conceive, write and produce *Try Hard Gang*, a rap music video in Hmong

Top Right: The Try Hard Gang

Bottom Right: Tamika Burgess-Green and Jodie Haines, Love Bites Launch 2001

Photography: Sam Rose Warne, Frontpage Photography



dialect with English subtitles. Seventeen year-old Kellie Hills wrote, filmed and edited a short documentary, *The Dogs*, about a family's involvement with greyhound racing.

Each and every video, from *The Fine Art of Ferreting* to the *Tough Man* animation video by Dallas Eaves, provides an insight into young lives and experiences in the context of the wider community.

This project has also resulted in subsequent projects including four short videos produced with young people from Sudan, Ghana and Sierra Leone. Other indicators of success are the young African people who drop into the Moonah Arts Centre to say hello, and the new friendships that have blossomed between local Aboriginal and migrant youth. Love Bites videos were also screened during the Ten Days on the Island festival and on ABC TV.

Love Bites committee members are convinced that such solid outcomes would not have been possible without the dedication of the project's professional film makers, composers and artists; strong relationships nurtured over a six-year period between local artists, migrant, Aboriginal and educational groups; and learning from a previous music skills-based project, *Moving On, Video Project* (1998) about young people in Glenorchy.

A small amount of seed funding for Love Bites came from Glenorchy City Council and the Department of Education. Jennie and Tony had previously collaborated on the



Moving On project. They proceeded to form a partnership with Derwent Valley Arts, and applied to Screen Tasmania and Arts Tasmania for further funding. A total budget of \$41,000 was raised to produce the 30 short videos, with an extra \$3000 from Screen Tasmania for the launch screening.

SBS made an additional \$20,000 available to enable director Sheona McKenna to work with a post-production team and edit five films from the original 30 Love Bites videos. The resulting half-hour program, *Short stories from the Valley of Love and Beyond*, was part of the SBS *Australia By Numbers* series on SBS. Tasmanian Premier Jim Bacon officiated at the premiere screening of the Love Bites videos in the Glenorchy Village Cinema to an audience of 370 people. He noted that Love Bites had blazed a trail for young filmmakers in the emerging Tasmanian film industry.

Footnote: Permission to write about Aunty Ida West, who passed away in September 2003, was granted by her daughter, Lennah Newson.

Funding/support: Screen Tasmania, Arts Tasmania, Glenorchy City Council, Department of Education, Derwent Valley Council, SBS Independent for Australia by Numbers Series with support from Bonza Migrant Youth Group, COSMOS Disability Service, Palawa Aboriginal Cultural Service, Claremont College, Derwent Valley Regional Arts and Tasmanian Regional Arts.

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Within the frameworks of official agendas, and beyond the economic thrusts of tourism and events-driven development, what Sculptures on the Cliffs achieved is a demonstration of the subversive, transformative potential of art.

Lucia Pichler, Director, Port Pirie Regional Art Gallery

Let's go to the Outback and Kaltja! reached the residents of the Katherine region in the Northern Territory, who have few opportunities to participate in arts skills development.

HWY1 encouraged people to explore small townships in Tasmania in search of contemporary site-specific installations.

Yarnin' Up, an Indigenous contemporary Australian comedy by Kooemba Jdarra, showed how hungry regional audiences are for contemporary Indigenous drama.

FAST (24 Hour Actions) organised by the Geelong Arts Alliance challenged the notion of the 'professional' artist and traditional gallery by allowing artists to make new works that were engaging and provocative in public spaces in Geelong, Victoria.

Heart of the Arts program is giving people from diverse community groups access to arts activities through a totally inclusive program in Mount Isa, Queensland.

Sculpture on the Cliffs 2002 invited artists to join an exhibition along the cliffs of a remote township, Elliston, on the Great Australian Bight, South Australia.

SIX

Art out there

Let's go to the Outback and Kaltja!

Arts Katherine and ATSI Arts Katherine



Let's go to the Outback gave 18 remote communities in the Katherine Region a unique opportunity to participate in, and be exposed to, contemporary arts skills. Five adventurous and generous individuals—Jayne Nankivell, Arts Katherine coordinator; Julia Morris, arts officer with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) Arts Katherine; and artists Tom E Lewis, Lockie McDonald and Richie Glasgow—created a flexible travelling arts show that covered 10,000 kilometres over five weeks.

Planning for this project began in 2001, with letters sent to all community councils, schools, women's centres and even cattle stations in the area asking for registrations of interest in this project and feedback about which artforms they might be interested in exploring. As replies came back organisers recognised these communities were so starved for engagement with the arts they were happy to do almost anything. It was then they decided upon the strategy of providing a range of artforms and activities so children and adults could have a taste and begin to identify personal preferences. They also decided to use the trip to gather information and understanding to help Arts Katherine design effective long-term arts projects for these outback communities.

The project artists for Let's go were selected for their ability to make quick connections with each community, offer skills development to varying age ranges, and cater to different levels of interest and experience in the arts. Artists needed to be able to cope with pressure, since the tour

schedule allowed only two days in each location, including travel, so time to think and plan was a luxury.

The Let's go to the Outback caravan consisted of a four wheel drive pulling a camper trailer crammed with massive amounts of art materials and equipment. The Let's go to the Outback team could offer everything from samba-style music to fabric sewing, drama performance to fabric dyeing, and clowning to magic tricks.

Let's go to the Outback would roll into a community, find a location (usually a school) and make its presence felt by getting down the drums and creating a circus atmosphere. Tom might engage young children by telling stories they could develop into a drama game or by making percussive shakers with them. Lockie might teach juggling or attract attention by lying on a bed of nails. Jayne might demonstrate painting or dyeing flags, or help to make a saratoga (fish) from tissue paper and cane. Teachers and teacher assistants would help, and adults and children would spontaneously engage with any or all of the activities on offer, usually in an outdoor setting.

Perhaps, if there was time, there might be a procession or performance at the end of the day with the whole community gathered on the school lawn. The arts team would then set up camp for the night in the school grounds. At one location, an announcement had to be made over the PA system at 8.30 pm requesting children 'Go home from school now please!' The school principal at



Top: Lajamanu women who participated in the project learning skills and techniques used for dyeing with naphthol dyes

Bottom: Samba Parade, Bulman

Right: Packing up

Photography: courtesy of Arts Katherine



Mataranka, Alf Murray, expressed his approval at the end of the day: 'I'd lie on a bed of nails to have you back!'

Most of the places visited by Let's go to the Outback were Aboriginal communities, but the team also visited Montejinni Station near Top Springs. There they worked with a small group of School of the Air students.

The last four days of the Let's go to the Outback project were spent in Katherine preparing for a community finale, *Dream Feast*, at an outdoor venue. This performance showcased work made by participants during the project. It was attended by town people, students from a large School of the Air camp, as well as participants from some of the isolated communities the team had visited and whose travel expenses could be subsidised.

During the 25-day tour the Let's go to the Outback team worked with over 1200 youth and adults in 18 communities across the 350,000 square kilometre Katherine region, incorporating 26 Aboriginal language groups.

In the same year, another project coordinated by ATSI Arts Katherine involved performer Tom E Lewis and video artist Cath McKay working with youth and adults from five Aboriginal communities in the Katherine Region. The Kaltja! (Creole spelling for 'culture') project resulted in some interesting short video films. In Jilkminggan, the artists worked alongside older women and a linguist to make *Scary Movie*, the story of a local Debuldebul (evil



spirit) who pays a visit to girls late one night when they are out camping. In Lajamanu, a group of boys used clay model animation to create *Penguin Story* and *Crocodile Story*. In Kalkaringi/Daguragu, three boys worked on an historic re-enactment about the Gurindji Wave Hill Walk-Off, and in Bulman, a community-devised film told the story of Bolong, the *Rainbow Serpent*. Each of these five films were screened in Katherine and toured the region as 'shorts' shown before a choice of three major Australian feature films (*One Night the Moon*, *Beneath Clouds* and *Rabbit Proof Fence*).

The Let's go to the Outback and Kaltja! projects have resulted in four communities applying for and receiving funding for more projects involving music, performance and multimedia. In addition, Arts Katherine and ATSI Arts Katherine developed a major project for 2003, *Slow Tucker*, Long Yarn, which addresses issues of community health and provides for artists to spend more time in each community.

During the 25-day tour the Let's go to the Outback team worked with over 1200 youth and adults in 18 communities across the 350,000 square kilometre Katherine region, incorporating 26 Aboriginal language groups.

Funding/support: Australia Council (Community Cultural Development Board), the Northern Territory Arts Sponsorship Program through the Regional Arts Fund, an Australian Government initiative, NT Government through the Chief Minister's Department (special grant for Year of the Outback) and Toll West freight.

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HWY1

Ten Days on the Island

Taking the shortest distance between two points may get you to your destination quickly, but it's rarely much fun. The HWY1 project enticed speeding motorists to stop and explore five small Tasmanian towns. Nearly 6500 people accepted the invitation and were rewarded with the exciting discovery of five art installations.

HWY1 began when the organisers of Tasmania's international arts festival, Ten Days on the Island (2003), decided to decentralise arts events and draw audiences into regional communities. Curator and educator Jane Deeth commissioned five artists to design a series of large, site-specific installations that were accessible as well as challenging.

The artists were given the challenge to work entirely from found objects, with no project budget for art materials.

Jane formed an alliance with the Heritage Highway Region Tourism Association, which is responsible for the development and promotion of towns along the Midlands Highway that connects Launceston and Hobart. Each of the participating towns—Cleveland, Campbell Town, Ross, Oatlands and Kempton—is tiny, ranging from 50 to 750 residents.

The artists were given the challenge to work entirely from found objects, with no project budget for art materials. This approach stimulated them to consider materials readily



available in the communities and to develop close working connections with residents, relying on their generosity in sharing materials as well as their expertise in historic, archaeological, social and agricultural matters. Local generosity even extended to satisfying the artists' requests for a weird and wonderful array of materials, including two tonnes of salt, tanned horse pelts, soil, manure and road signs.

In Cleveland, Bron Fionnachd-Féin's installation in the privately owned Cleveland House Stables, *one season just like her*, drew upon the history of Cleveland Stables, an historic staging post for horse-drawn carriages travelling between Hobart and Launceston. Bron's work used vast amounts of horse hair, manes, pelts and simulated horse urine to refer to the extracts taken from pregnant mares which are used to make the hormone replacement therapy taken by an estimated 9 million women worldwide.

In Campbell Town, Greg Kwok Keung Leong's *A Chinese Australian Market Garden* commemorated the site of a 1890s market garden established by Chinese migrants. Greg designed a garden that was dug, fenced, planted, fertilised, watered and maintained by community organisations and volunteers. Large circular beds of vegetables, marigolds and nasturtiums were planted to blossom into the shape of three Chinese characters which together spelt 'Australian'.

In Ross, Ali Aedy's *The Past Remains* was installed at the Female Factory, where many hundreds of women were incarcerated between 1848 and 1854. The installation explored the presence of women's history and memory using ephemeral materials such as plaster, earth and paper.

Top: Title: *Signs*, various locations including the Council Chambers, Kempton. Artist: Neil Haddon Medium: road signs, house paint. Photo: Jane Deeth

Bottom: Title: *Many Hands Make Light n.WorkLight n., that which makes things visible, or affords illumination At Old Supreme Courthouse, Oatlands.* Artist: Denise Ava Robinson Medium: native grasses, flax, recycled wool. Photo: Jane Deeth

Top Right: Title: *The Past Remains*,The Female Factory, Church Street, Ross. Artist: Ali Aedy Medium: plaster. Photo: courtesy of the artist

Bottom Right: *A Chinese Australian Market Garden*, corner of Esplanade Street and Bridge Street, Campbell Town. Artist: Greg Kwok Keung Leong Medium: soil, vegetables and flowers. Photo: courtesy of the artist



In Oatlands, artist Denise Ava Robinson's installation in the old Supreme Courthouse marked the impact of 200 years of white settlement. Hundreds of local volunteers worked with the artist to make huge spiral forms referencing the tradition of Tasmania's Indigenous people using both native grasses and introduced products like flax and wool.

Neil Haddon, contemporary artist and teacher at the Tasmanian School of Art, University of Tasmania brought his abstract, geometric paintings to the tiny farming community of Kempton. Neil borrowed four huge green and white highway signs from Eye Spy Signs and transformed them into abstract artworks erected on the Midlands Highway either side of Kempton. Inside the town, he planted smaller paintings on sign posts on the council lawns. 'I really wanted to engage the community on this project,' said Neil, 'so I asked for donations of paint, in any colour, left over from household paint jobs on roofs, fences, doors'. In this way, Neil made a real connection between his abstract geometric language and the architectural colours of Kempton.

The project was not without its challenges, particularly for the artists who may have worked with unfamiliar objects. None of the artists had made work on such a large scale before, and the work needed to be robust enough to withstand at least the 10 festival days. It was also very important to work sensitively with the communities so that people were receptive, engaged with the process and pleased with the outcome. The success of HWY1 was assured when it became the lead item on the state news marking the opening of Ten Days on the Island.



HWY1 involved new audiences who may have had no previous experience at reading contemporary art installations, but enjoyed the experience of a detour. Rather than a comprehensive exhibition catalogue explaining each work, minimal signage at each site offered brief, yet key information, just enough to stimulate audience interest and unlock the exhibition. The collaboration encouraged high-quality artistic and broad-based community objectives to be reached. The project was a great example of small towns connecting with new energy and creativity, and showed how art can contribute to drawing people to explore regional communities.

Funding/support: Arts Tasmania, Northern Midlands and Southern Midlands Councils, Comalco Aluminium, Roberts Limited, Allans Nurseries, Eye Spy Signs and individual patrons, with in-kind support from the Heritage Highway Region Tourism Association and community experts and volunteers from each town.

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Yarnin' Up

Kooemba Jdarra



Yarnin' Up by Anthony Newcastle and Mike Dickinson is a contemporary comedy about black/white relations in Australia. It is the latest production by Kooemba Jdarra, an Indigenous theatre company whose primary focus is the delivery of new theatrical works to Indigenous audiences in urban and remote communities, as well as to interested non-Indigenous audiences.

During a recent regional tour, *Yarnin' Up* was seen by nearly 1500 people in 12 regional communities in Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory, plus nearly 1300 people in Brisbane, with sell-out seasons in Cairns, Rockhampton, Mackay, Townsville and Brisbane. *Yarnin' Up* also toured to South Korea for a week-long season during the 'Keochang Festival', a major cultural event organised by the Australian Embassy in Seoul.

'It's the sense of ownership by communities of product which is most important. It needs to be their stories.'

In 1993 Kooemba Jdarra grew from Contact Youth Theatre, a community theatre company in Brisbane whose members included Wesley Enoch, Deb Mailman, Lafe Charlton and Roxanne McDonald. Their vision was a theatre company run by Indigenous artists, presenting

Indigenous theatrical content to Australian audiences, with input from, and control by, Indigenous communities. Kooemba Jdarra is now based at the Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Art, a purpose-built arts facility in Fortitude Valley, Brisbane. It has an Indigenous board and majority Indigenous staff.

Yarnin' Up was commissioned by Kooemba in March 2001 and presented as a work in development at the 'Adelaide Fringe Festival' in February 2002. It was reworked for a Brisbane season that same year. Active lobbying from communities wanting *Yarnin' Up* to tour encouraged Kooemba to apply for funding from Playing Australia, the Australian Government's performing arts touring fund. This support gave Kooemba the opportunity to tour in 2003 to regional and Indigenous communities and to prove what they had suspected; that there is a large, unserved regional Indigenous audience hungry for this kind of show.

The play has three characters: a white man, who coordinates a reconciliation council, and two Aboriginal characters. The play tracks the growth in understanding of Indigenous issues by the white character who simultaneously deepens his understanding about the privileged position of white Australians. The play's ending demonstrates this character's cynicism as he uses his new understanding of whiteness and Aboriginality for his own ends. 'Even having discovered his own racism, this character is still in a privileged position and can use it within the Aboriginal community for his own benefit,' says

Left: Anthony Newcastle as Malcolm in *Yarnin' Up*
Right: Daniel Murphy as Ken in *Yarnin' Up*
Photography: Justin Nicholas, Atmosphere



Mike Dickinson. 'The ending challenges the simple solution that black people are oppressed and white people are at fault. It's more complex, more uncomfortable and, ultimately, more humorous than that.'

Kooemba has recognised the need to develop an Indigenous touring circuit which plays to audiences in smaller community-run theatrical venues, rather than in larger theatres inside civic centres. Box office takings are split between Kooemba and these community venues. Artistic director Nadine McDonald is looking forward to building on the success of *Yarnin' Up* and consolidating longer-term relationships with Aboriginal communities, including some in the Top End who, before this tour, had never seen contemporary Indigenous comedy. She knows it will take time, possibly years, to strengthen these relationships and build opportunities for ownership by communities of theatrical product. She feels this will be achieved by researching community needs, as well as making opportunities for communities to participate in project development workshops or play readings.

As Nadine says, *Yarnin' Up* was a great, first opportunity to visit communities and we found there are many things, such as ceremony, which can affect audience numbers. Also, there is as much diversity amongst our mob as there is in the white community, so we need to be sensitive to social issues without civilising theatre because that makes it irrelevant. Indigenous audiences can laugh, can

acknowledge truth and honesty because it's a way of embracing our culture, of keeping our culture alive.'

Accepting that touring bodies would not commit to touring works for Indigenous audiences without demonstrated demand for this product, Kooemba has begun to collect qualitative and quantitative research on audience numbers and reactions. This research is useful for marketing as well as for advocacy. 'We finally have irrefutable evidence that this audience is willing, in large numbers, to pay to see our product.'

Kooemba has demonstrated a commitment to developing product through their New Works Program, a three-year development process for emerging Indigenous texts: creative development, new work development, public play readings and finally public performances.

Kooemba has learnt the importance of developing personal contacts within communities, especially more remote Indigenous communities, as well as the importance of tailoring marketing and content to these communities. 'It's the sense of ownership by communities of product which is most important. It needs to be their stories,' says Vera Ding, Kooemba Jdarra general manager.



Funding/support: Kooemba Jdarra is a non-profit organisation which receives core funding through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), the Australia Council's Theatre Board, Arts Queensland and corporate sponsorship from ENERGEX. Kooemba receives ongoing support from the Indigenous community.

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FAST (24 Hour Actions)

Geelong Arts Alliance

FAST was a cross-artform project culminating in 14 vibrant, temporary 'actions' on the streets of Geelong, Victoria. Each action began and ended within a 24-hour period. The actions included installation, photography, video projection, sculpture, performance, music, film, street theatre, workshops, street markets and children's events. FAST not only incorporated many artforms, it challenged the notions of the professional artist and the traditional art gallery. With actions designed to leave no trace of any artistic product, the artistic perpetrators and community participants set out to demonstrate that art, like life, can be vital, immediate, unpredictable and transient.

This project was initiated by the Geelong Arts Alliance (GAA)—a local arts council established in 1998 with a commitment to community cultural development in the Geelong region, collaborative actions by local artists and communities, and the development and production of new contemporary art and ideas. The project had a supervising committee and one paid, part-time project coordinator. While project artists were all local members of the GAA, the community groups they worked with, such as the Work for the Dole Scheme, refugee groups, Courthouse Youth Arts Centre and Smart Movies, had little or no experience of making art. During the project, the usual boundaries between professional and non-professional artists—and even divisions between artists and audiences—were deliberately blurred or disappeared altogether.



'There are few art courses in Geelong and a lack of contemporary exhibition spaces. The prevailing culture in the city is rather conservative. FAST set out to break this mould,' says Angela O'Donnell, project coordinator.

The FAST project started in a suitably surprising way with a series of lead-up activities, designed to inspire participants. Participating artists and groups were invited to 'bring an artwork to a picnic'. This was followed by a presentation about the activism of 1960s art movements such as Fluxus. Then the POSE action involved the artists carrying a chair around the city and taking photographs of themselves sitting in public spaces. Each Polaroid was left on the site. This project set out to be radical, to challenge traditional ways of making, viewing and participating in art. These preliminary events established the conceptual basis for the enterprise, and the cheeky tone of the actions.

ALIENATION was an installation of otherworldly beings on chainmesh screens above the exit to a large, civic car park. 'The net was cast...and a bumper crop of aliens was caught. It was quite nerve-wracking to set up the work on the car park site. I had to climb around like a little spider on a web to install my works. I had to wear a safety harness and every thought and move had to be carefully considered,' recalls Dragan Kostelnik, GAA artist.

THE CORNER action was a film of a busy Geelong intersection, exploring the city, its people and their cars. An edited version of the film using time-lapse techniques was

Top: Title: *24 Hour Polaroids* Artist: participants of Work Pix, a Work for the Dole program. Photo: Sue Hartigan
Bottom: Title: *Snap* Artist: Equinox, Head Spin and Courthouse Youth Arts Centre. Photo: Sharon Jones
Top Right: Title: *AlienATION* Artist: Dragan Kostelnik. Photo: Sharon Jones
Bottom Right: Title: *Labyrinth* Artist: Demir Aliu. Photo: Nick Dokos



projected at night onto the windows and doors of one of Geelong's historic buildings. 'This brought the busy day back into the quiet night,' say Mardi Janetzki and Scott Walker, GAA artists.

'The net was cast...and a bumper crop of aliens was caught. It was quite nerve-wracking to set up the work on the car park site.'

In another FAST action, six young participants on a Work for the Dole program took 12 polaroids each of a 24-hour period in their lives. 'Since they were unemployed there wasn't much happening in their lives. It was interesting for them to consider that photos can be taken for more than special occasions, that photos could be taken of "nothing" and be a visual diary of life. Most of them had never taken a photo before,' says GAA artist Sue Hartigan. Strips of these photos were hung in an empty shop front window outside a bus stop, attracting plenty of interest from people waiting for a bus.

Using public spaces in a conservative regional city was a challenge. Some of the actions simply bypassed planning permission and were conducted 'spontaneously'. In such cases these artists were concerned that seeking formal



permission from the city council would result in the requirement for art actions to be altered or watered down. On the whole, efforts were made to liaise effectively with each of the different council departments. 'Geelong Arts Alliance has public liability insurance and good risk assessment processes. We also filled in council's risk management forms for each activity,' recall Susan Hartigan and Angela O'Donnell, GAA artists.

A lot of time and effort was dedicated to documenting the project. Each action was photographed and videos were made, and all documents, including emails, were retained. Finally, a catalogue was compiled and a copy provided to each artist. The catalogues have been used extensively to promote the overall concept and the individual artists.

One difficulty lay in getting media attention for ephemeral art actions. But a local real estate agent gave assistance, the local music press was supportive and public feedback was always positive.

With no public art program in Geelong, FAST was an important initial step in allowing artists to engage with city spaces and locations with the support of a coordinator and a team of volunteers. Funding for a follow-up project has been obtained and FAST has inspired a concept for the 2004 'Next Wave Festival'.

Funding/support: VicHealth and the City of Greater Geelong. The local adult education institute (GATE) provided free office space and access to telephones. Goods and materials for some of the actions were subsidised or donated and free shop spaces were provided by a local real estate agent.

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Heart of the Arts

Outback Arts



Heart of the Arts sounds like a simple idea. Once a week up to 40 people gather at the Outback Arts Shed in Mount Isa, Queensland for practical coaching in various visual artforms.

The participants are diverse. They include members of the local migrant support group who have English as a second language; young people undertaking alternative education at the Healing for Harmony school; students from Spinifex Junior College; aged residents from the Laura Johnson home; people with intellectual and physical disabilities from the Endeavour Foundation; young mothers and people on pensions. Tutors include Kate Lodewyk (painting and drawing), Gloria Riches (patchwork quilting), Marjorie Lord (jewellery) and Nance Bartlett (mosaics and folk art). These tutors coach and guide the participants to produce their own artworks, and the Arts Shed is open every day so that participants can work on their pieces.

Yet this simple idea has had a remarkable impact, or rather, series of impacts. Heart of the Arts has brought people together, helping alleviate loneliness and isolation. For the members of the Migrant Support Group, for example, its leader claims Heart of the Arts has assisted in 'settlement needs, through increasing knowledge of finding their place in Australian society...and facilitated cross-cultural awareness by sharing aspects of their culture through arts and communication'. Heart of the Arts has also helped a young student who was on suspension from school. When she was accepted back into the regular school system, her

support worker noted that her 'participation in Heart of the Arts played a major part in changing her attitudes towards learning'.

It was not just the participants who gained much from the experience. Most of the visiting tutors had never worked with people from such diverse backgrounds. 'I found working with the creative team and everyone who attended the workshops to be one of the most satisfying and rewarding experiences of my working life. In all the years I have been teaching sewing, I have never seen a group of people with such pride in what they were able to create,' says Gloria Riches.

While the primary concern of Heart of the Arts is inclusion and support, the project has also produced some impressive artistic outcomes. A young intellectually-disabled artist won first prize for his pottery exhibit in the Open Category of the Mount Isa Show.

At an exhibition of participant's work, project participant Joan Marshall noted that 'dreams do come true'. The Mayor of Mount Isa said: 'Many people, some with challenges, have challenged us all to stop and see things differently. Well done. It's working.' A second exhibition is scheduled.

Making Heart of the Arts work over time has required both dedication and a capacity to improvise. Transporting people to the workshops is an issue: the Salvation Army's



Top: Henna painting workshop led by Indian women

Bottom: Pottery workshop

Top Right: On display at the Melbourne Cup luncheon. Hats were made by the ladies during a workshop at the shed

Bottom Right: OBA Mardi Gras Float

Photography: Julie Hill



Serenity House Women's Shelter bus is one solution, as well as a car pool system operated by Outback Arts volunteers. Mothers are encouraged to bring their children and everyone helps to watch them. The Salvation Army provides toys, while a student teacher comes in to help on holidays. Honest and open communication ensures the whole group helps to solve any problems that arise.

'Many people, some with challenges, have challenged us all to stop and see things differently. Well done. It's working.'

The driving force behind Heart of the Arts is Outback Arts. This four-year-old arts organisation recognises that art, culture and community are inseparable and works to bring all three together. The coordinators of Heart of the Arts are Julie Hill, who makes a 240 kilometre round trip from her home at Lake Julius to oversee the project, and Sally Wyld. Sally came to Outback Arts as a participant and is now initiating and managing her own projects. Heart of the Arts grew from a previous community arts project initiated and conceived between Outback Arts administrator Annette Gordon, and Sue Shields, the manager of the local Salvation Army Serenity House Women's Shelter Project. In

recognition of its valuable and innovative work, Outback Arts received a key organisations program grant from the Australia Council in 2003 and Mount Isa City Council also approved \$10,000 funding.

As a result of their work with Heart of the Arts participants, Julie Hill and Sally Wyld have been accepted into the Youth Arts Queensland Mentorship program. Their jointly-devised project involves 22-year-old Sally teaching and coordinating workshops in four-week blocks with elderly people, school students at a local primary school, and intellectually or physically disabled people. This project will culminate in a joint, community exhibition.



Funding/support: Outback Arts is funded by the Australia Council's Community Cultural Development Board (Key Organisations). Creative programs, including Heart of the Arts, are funded by the Community Cultural Development Board of the Australia Council, Arts Queensland, Queensland Gaming Commission, Mount Isa City Council. Donations of materials are received from local businesses and transport is provided by the Salvation Army Serenity House Women's Shelter Project.

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Sculpture on the Cliffs

Community of Elliston

Elliston is a tiny and remote township of 400 people sitting at one corner of the Great Australian Bight in South Australia. Yet this small town played host to a big idea—‘Sculpture on the Cliffs’—an exhibition of 21 sculptures stretched along the dramatic limestone cliffs above the ocean. The project became a means for the town to explore the value of cultural development projects, to consider local history, and to attract visitors to the region.

Sculpture on the Cliffs was part of a community event, Meeting of the Winds, Elliston’s contribution to the state’s bicentennial event, Encounter 2002. The central theme of Encounter 2002 was the meeting of three cultures, English, French and Aboriginal, and the impact of exploration on Aboriginal culture. Specifically, it commemorated the charting of South Australia’s coastline in 1802 by Englishman Matthew Flinders and Frenchman Nicholas Baudin, whose ships explored the Southern Ocean within months of each other.

Elliston’s Meeting of the Winds project was administered by the Elliston Progress Association in conjunction with Elliston District Council, working with Siv Grava and John Turpie as artistic guides. Many other local groups and institutions offered financial and in-kind support.

For the Elliston community the bicentennial aroused some sensitive issues. It challenged people to reflect upon an incident that occurred during early settlement, in which local Aborigines were sent to their deaths over local cliffs.

Following a public meeting and consultation with Archie Barton, a local Aboriginal elder and National Reconciliation Councillor, members of the organising committee resolved not to focus specifically on this terrible historical moment.

‘The boat is suspended in the house to give the illusion of floating...the floating boat that found this coast and brought new people to their home... Apart from Indigenous people, this country is full of “boat people”.’

Instead, the committee embraced an idea by a local artist for a temporary exhibition along the cliffs, designed to encourage expression by a number of local and regional artists on issues of their choice. It was resolved that background information about the history of local black/white relations would be provided to all participating artists. Information about the exhibition site’s geography and climate (including wind directions), general historical data, and an overview of Encounter 2002 celebrations would also be available.

Initially the committee invited participation in Sculpture on the Cliffs from artists who had worked or lived in the area, or had experience living in arid, remote landscapes. Meeting of the Winds was a particularly appropriate theme because Elliston is a notoriously windy place between February and April, the months of the exhibition. As planning progressed, however, artists without specific affinities or links to the area were included, especially artists whose work explored notions of wind and elements. The artists were encouraged to spend time in the community, to create site-specific installations, and to develop an understanding of the nature of the community and landscape. The project was also seen as an opportunity to create a meeting place for regional artists who often work in isolation.

Eighteen artists, the majority from Eyre Peninsula, with a few others from regional South Australia and one each from Melbourne and Sydney, travelled to Elliston to plan, share ideas, and create works. Exhibiting artists in Sculpture on the Cliffs were John Turpie, Cameron Robbins, Jacqueline Coates, Hayden Jarret, Siv Grava, Dave Beaty, Julie Allchurch, Byron Burgoyne, Cornelius Alferink, Garth Hughes, Gretchen Small, Doug McLean, Roxanne Prime, Bethlyn Franklin, Cindy and Bruce Durant, Helen Cox and Kelly Milton. Two sculptures were made and exhibited by the community of Elliston.

Artists were welcomed into the community as a creative influence, so during the week before the opening of

Top Right: Title: *Everyone is a boat person* Media: Jetty timber, plywood boat and rope Artist: John Turpie
Bottom Right: Title: *Surf Breaks* Media: old surfboards and steel tubing Artist: John Turpie
Photography: John Turpie



Sculpture on the Cliffs they shared skills and ideas with each other as well as the wider community through planned workshops. For example, Melbourne artist, Cameron Robbins, stimulated the imagination of local school children by demonstrating making music with a 'Vortex' and mixing recorded sounds from organ pipes (placed inside ocean blowholes) with the sounds of ocean swells. Local Aboriginal musicians Michael Colbung and Robert Champion astonished kindergarten children who heard Pitjantjatjara lyrics and music for the first time, along with Aboriginal children's songs in English. Members of local arts and crafts groups participated in an Indigenous weaving workshop conducted by Rhonda Agius.

Meeting of the Winds was also a weekend of family fun, including spontaneous and planned events such as day-time activities for the children—a sand castle competition, treasure hunt, kite flying—and a Saturday night family party along the foreshore with local musicians and food stands. At dusk, signal flares were let off in a carnival atmosphere.

The 21 sculptures were positioned along 3.5 kilometres of Clifftop Drive, a 7 kilometre round trip, north-west of Elliston. Some of the artworks used found objects from the coastal environment and some worked with the drama and beauty of the natural environment. Techniques included textile work, carving, modelling and construction. John Turpie built a large construction of jetty timbers, the structure which connects land to sea, called *Everyone Is A Boat Person*. A wooden boat was suspended between two



open A-frame structures. 'The boat is suspended in the house to give the illusion of floating; the floating home, the floating boat that is not fixed, the floating boat that is used to cross over, the floating boat that found this coast and brought new people to their home... Apart from Indigenous people, this country is full of "boat people".'

Wind Drawing Machine and *Wind and Ocean Sounds*, two installations by Cameron Robbins, were 'based on interaction with natural forces and the elements, devising many ways of producing a kind of collaboration between artist and nature'. *Winds*, a collaborative sculpture made by 11 members of the Elliston community, was an installation of mounds based on the cycles of life, juxtaposing shapes made from manufactured materials with naturally occurring forms. 'The installation creates tensions, echoes and links between disparate elements of the work, mimicking the tensions, echoes and links created between different elements in our lives. The only force moving freely between these elements? Winds.'

John Turpie's *Everyone is a Boat Person* was transposed from the cliffs into the small Newland Gallery at Country Arts SA for an exhibition, which included works by five other artists who had participated in Sculpture on the Cliffs.

This arts project successfully involved the whole community and in March 2004, the Elliston community unveiled its second Sculpture on the Cliffs exhibition.

Funding/support: Encounter 2002, Country Arts SA through the Regional Arts Fund, an Australian Government initiative, Elliston Area School, Elliston District Council, Elliston Presenters' Group, Elliston Community Arts and Craft; with in-kind support from Elliston Community Information Centre, members of the local photography club, Lucia Pichler (director Port Pirie Regional Gallery), Works Department Elliston District Council, local business houses, community and volunteer groups and the owners of local residences who donated accommodation to visiting artists.

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