



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.

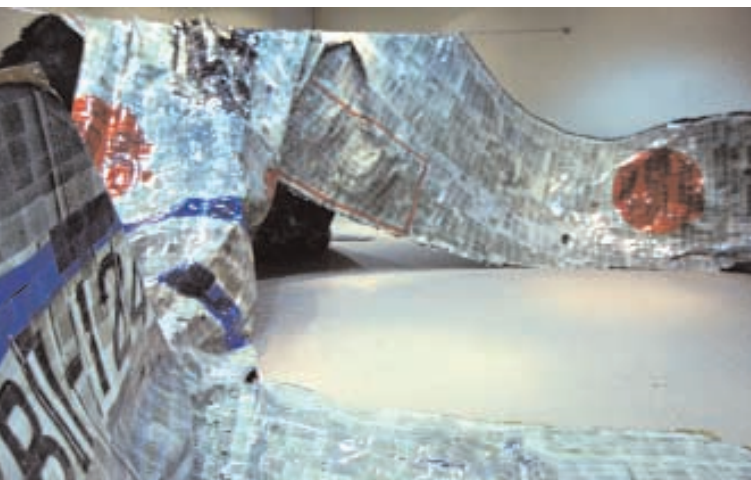
In 2000 Katsushige arrived in Cowra looking for the grave site of Toyoshima Hajime, who became the first Japanese

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

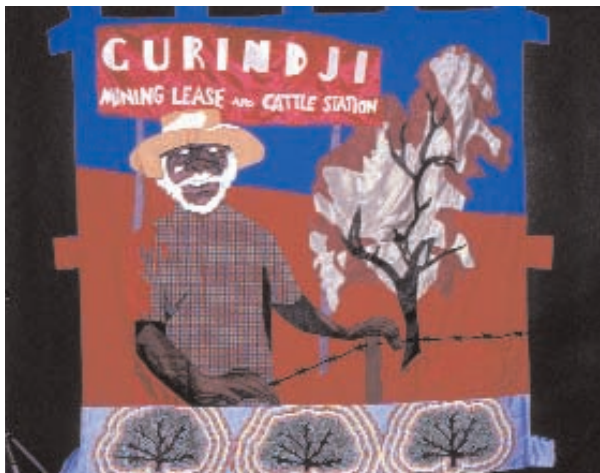
'From the Darkness into the Light' Gurindji Freedom Banners

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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