

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 Balladong 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 Balladong 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.



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