

Art works at Myall Park Botanic Garden

Apart from the Gallery's permanent collection of Dorothy Gordon's botanical paintings, the Garden is home to a number of exciting art works:

1994 Leadlight panel – beside the front door of the Myall Park Gallery



Local artists and craftsmen responded enthusiastically to Nita C. Lester's suggestion to incorporate a leadlight panel into the Gallery design. In 1993 during discussions with the Gallery architect, Brian Donovan, it was decided that the theme should be the three hybrid grevilleas: Robyn, Sandra and Merinda Gordon. Interested artists met to discuss the possible designs. At this meeting, Jane Bridle, Diane Hill, Nita C. Lester, Pat Mitchell, Carol McCormack and Joan Schwennesen contributed to a design. The final design was inspired by the context – Gordon grevilleas, lake and frog, and the blue-faced honeyeater. Look closely, the honeyeaters are cleverly woven into the overall design.

Grants were applied for and received from the Queensland Arts Council and the Regional Arts Development Fund. The grants provided funding for the employment of the stained glass craftsman and tutor, Dermot Clifford of Toowoomba who ran workshops for all those who took part in the panel construction. Ken Green, Diane Hill, Sue Hughes, Nita C. Lester, Carol McCormack and Barry Mitchell took part in these workshops. The Sandra Gordon panel was finished by Dermot during the workshop sessions, and the two other panels were cut and partly constructed. The Merinda Gordon panel was taken home and completed by Barry Mitchell, and the Robyn Gordon panel was completed by Nita C. Lester. Ken Green assisted with the final soldering of the panels. The panels were installed in February 1995 by Ron Brown, Ken Green and Barry Mitchell.

The panel has continued to surprise and stimulate the imaginations of all visitors and volunteer workers alike.

1999 Thongaphone – between the Gallery and the carpark.



To celebrate Mr Gordon's 100th birthday in 1999, it was suggested we hold a Festival with music as the theme. We chanced upon the names of Steve McLeish and Stephen Langton; contacted them and yes they were free at that time and they would build us a thongaphone. "What was a thongaphone?" we asked.

Festival funding was sought and received, so wheels were set in motion. The '2 Steves' as we called them, came out in their truck from Maleny for a week, laden with an array of the strangest of instruments.

Over a weekend workshop we made a variety of instruments including a hybrid 'xylophone' fashioned from the cylindrical

pipe used earlier on in Garden history for protection of aluminium plant name tags. A wind chime was created from tynes suspended on increasing lengths of wire from a plough disc, reflecting the part played by farming in development of the district.

The 2 Steves had Lorraine Barnes, Carol McCormack, Pat Mitchell and Dorinda Schwennesen cutting PVC pipe and moulding it into shape over heat. A metal collar was attached at one end of the PVC and they then lashed the curved lengths together. Gradually this weird 'instrument' grew, suspended from the rafters of the saw mill and at last we could see what it was.

We likened it to an organ with curved pipes and, instead of having a keyboard with notes, paddles made from solid foam rubber were used to thump the open metal ends to create the sound. Thongs were used originally instead of paddles; hence the name 'thongaphone'.

During the week the 2 Steves attended local schools and created poly dripper hose instruments with the children. There was music and fun wherever they went. Late afternoons and evenings found the musicians slaving over the 'apparition', adjusting, changing the angle of bend, and fine tuning with a digital tuning device until eventually the strange looking machine was put in position the evening before the big Festival Day.

There was a grand unveiling of the instrument with the 2 Steves performing the Thongaphone Thongata duet. How wonderful it was to hear them produce such music... Their bubbling enthusiasm was contagious. What fun everyone had in their Sound Playground with such a variety of instruments made from...well.....made from whatever! Stephen Langton had the presence and conducting skills to have young and old alike following his commands; now loud, now soft, now silent.....and yes it happened just like that!

The thongaphone remains in the Garden, a musical sculpture testament to the Festival and the magnificent skills of the 2 Steves.

Enjoy belting out a tune!

1999-2003 Cyberflora Project – on the front wall of the Gallery



Four years in the making, the project known as Cyberflora was initiated by the Glenmorgan Art Group as a way of involving former members and invited artists in the creation of a mural for the outside wall of the art gallery at Myall Park Botanic Garden. Artists living as far apart as Germany and Brisbane

used an email network to join current Glenmorgan artists in contributing to the design of the four metre high mural.

'It is a significant work of art for the region, and it has shown how isolated cultural communities can be part of a global environment,' said one of the artists involved. 'It is art on a grand scale, and will certainly be another attraction to bring people to the area' (Sally Cripps - Freelance Journalist)

Tree trunks and the sun's rays are the "bones" upon which botanical artists, a photographer, graphic designer and visual artists have unleashed their creativity. Pollen, weather, and birds which are attracted to the region, are some of the design elements meshed together to generate a stunning image.

The invited artists who took part in the project included Victoria Cooper, Sally L'Estrange, Gillian Scott, Adrienne Williams and the late Janis Somerville, all of whom have had an involvement with the Garden in some way. Artists living in the Glenmorgan district were represented in the mural as well, with local art group members contributing to one whole design area, using the bark patterns of the Leopardwood tree to give them a giant jigsaw layout. They were also responsible for gridding the design template onto the gallery wall and transferring the images from the digital form to paint on the walls.

Funding for the project came from Arts Queensland and the Australia Council and was used to buy computer hardware and software, the setting up of a website, artist payments, and paint and scaffolding equipment. Chroma Australia also donated \$150 worth of paint. Major partners in the project were Flying Arts Inc, which provided administrative assistance, and INDELTA, the technology department at the University of Southern Queensland in Toowoomba, which played a key role in assisting with the technological aspects.

2003 Imprints, Journeys and Connections – edge of the escarpment opposite the Gallery



Site specific artwork by Pamela Croft and Stephen Newton, with generous collaboration from artist, Cheryl Moodai Robinson.

Created in July, 2003 as an artist-in-residence programme, through Flying Arts Inc. and made possible with generous assistance from the Regional Arts Fund, a Commonwealth Government initiative supporting the arts in regional and remote Australia

The artists have used wood and stone-carving, ochre application and the natural environment.

Journeys and Connections

"The tree is an ancestral being and a symbol of life in many cultures"

This site uses wood from the park, the angophora which the site looks out onto. The pieces have been carved with the symbols of journey and meeting place. Like large message sticks, the six elements draw attention to the second site above the waterfall. Visitors are invited into a contemplative site.

Imprints

This site is inspired by the flat rock shelf which becomes a waterfall after rain, leaving small waterholes afterwards. The artists have used the aboriginal symbols of waterhole and connections to reflect on the sustenance of the area. This site embodies a place where people come to hunt, gather and meet. The site also contains the meeting place symbol, and all the markings have been treated with ochres from the area - the grinding pits are still visible.

We have explored a bothways dialogue in this work, which includes aboriginal and western relationships to land, a sense of place and connections to each other. Like the natural environment these artworks will change slowly over time.

2004 Myall Balance – at the entrance to the Gallery, beside the leadlight panel



Sculptural ceramic work by Victoria Arthur

The garden inspired in me a feeling of excitement in response to its astonishing array of colours, textures and forms. An even stronger feeling was an impression of 'balance', of contrasts harmonised within the garden and the surrounding bush; and particularly, of balance between decay and growth, and between natural element and human endeavour.

In designing and making this piece, I had in mind the nature of the place, the history of the place and the spirit of the place. I was influenced by the balance of exuberance and elegance in the artworks displayed here, also inspired by this place. My aim has been to reflect this sense of balance.

Specifically:

In my mind, the bursting growth of the gumnut is balanced by the decaying wood, the piled rock is intended as a sort of modest monument to the voluntary human effort, the plaque-like feature stands for the Gordon family.

All elements are grounded in the earth-rich colours of the termite mounds.

More specifically still:

Medium: clay

Clay body: mixture terracotta / grogged raku / fireclay

Earthenware fired variously 1080° or 1100°

Surface: Dry, slip and gloss glazes. (Dry surfaces double-coated with waterproofing seal)

2008 Wedge-tailed Eagle – in the Gallery Gardens



Brisbane sculptor Ben Somerville was artist in residence at Myall Park Botanic Garden in September 2008. During the week he spent with us, he conducted three workshops and created a magnificent Wedge-tailed Eagle from corrugated iron, his preferred material. The life-sized bird now perches on the edge of a large hollow log in the Gallery Gardens, keeping an eagle eye on proceedings.

Ben spent his early years in our district, and his late mother Janis Somerville was a member of the Glenmorgan Art Group and helped with the Cyberflora mural from Germany where she lived at the time.

Ben works full-time on his sculptures and sells work all over Australia. In 2005 he won a Memento Award with his tiny "Rusty Jobs" kangaroos and koalas flat packed in their own attractive envelopes for easy carrying or posting. They are on sale at the Myall Park Gallery Shop or by mail order.

