

And the walls came tumbling down!

Over summer the landscape of the Mildura Arts Centre changed dramatically. Where the theatre once stood is now bare ground and only the pre-existing dressing rooms remain.

Demolition works saw the theatre reduced, firstly, to its steel skeleton, then dismantled completely, from the foyer to the auditorium, to the back of house facilities. Of particular note was the craning down of the fly tower and the unbolting of the steel structure piece by piece.

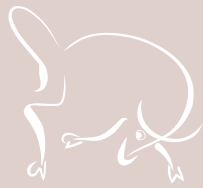
A significant aspect of the demolition has been the recycling of materials, including concrete, bricks and steel, leaving almost nothing going to waste.

Recently, the Design Team presented the proposed internal and

external finishes for the new facility to members from the Project Reference Group, Arts & Culture Board and Mildura Arts Centre staff. The presentation of the finishes was enthusiastically and positively received. With a sense of excitement around the new facility's ambience, design, colours and materials, one staff member referred to the new facility as, "plush and inviting with a touch of zing!"

The weeks ahead will see the construction phase of the new facility getting underway.

ABOVE: Demolition contractors Waters Excavations in action pulling down the old theatre building.



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NO BULL?

Would you like to receive future editions of *Mallee Bull* and other wonderful Mildura Arts Centre paraphernalia? Email or phone us to arrange your copy.



All wrapped up

As the closing date for the gallery rapidly approached, a great deal of discussion and planning took place to ensure the safe storage of MAC's valuable permanent collection during all phases of the theatre redevelopment.

The outdoor sculptures in proximity to the old theatre were the first to receive 'risk management treatment', which involved removing them to an off-site secure storage facility. With onsite storage space at a premium, other 3D works were also moved, providing a convenient opportunity to ensure condition reports on the artworks were up to date.

Meanwhile, a local engineering firm was contracted to upgrade half of the hanging racks in the gallery storage vaults. The rejigged hanging system enabled an additional thirteen racks to be installed.

For advice on the best way to protect the collection and gallery against demolition and construction dust, the services of professional conservation company Artlab Australia was sought. With the report from Artlab in hand, the MAC team put the recommendations into action. Dubbed the 'Purple Boot Brigade' for their obligatory wearing of purple safety boots, the enthusiastic team including gallery, theatre and administration staff, gathered tools and went to work under the expert guidance of MAC's Collections Registrar, Jillian Peterson.

In line with the conservators recommendations, each hanging rack was wrapped in an envelope of heavy-duty clear plastic and sealed by stapling shut and duct-taping all edges to make the envelope air-tight - no quick and easy task when the racks are floor to ceiling height, almost 3m wide, loaded with precious artworks, and there are seventy-five racks in all.

Storage shelves and 3D works were also covered and sealed in plastic or tyvek. All external doorways and windows in the galleries and storage locations were sealed with plastic and duct tape to prevent dust entering these areas. In the vault areas data loggers, along with dust and humidifier monitors, have been installed from which readings are taken twice a day.

Throughout this involved process, not even the Steinway escaped attention as it, too, has been draped and sealed in its very own protective tyvek cover.



Node news is good news

When Rio Vista reopened on Boxing Day 2010, visitors discovered something new in the drawing room: the first Rio Vista interpretive 'node'. This sleek high tech presence blends in surprisingly well with its shiny finish mirroring the Victorian wallpaper of the house.

The main display of the node is a touch-screen enabling the viewer to choose one of three stories related to the house and the Chaffey family. On one side of the unit two dance cards from a Hattie Chaffey musical soir e are displayed and on the other side a further sequence of historical images are shown on a small screen.

The node is the work of Melbourne company SHP who specialise in heritage interpretation. In future, MAC hopes that additional nodes can be commissioned to tell more of the many stories related to Rio Vista and its remarkable history.

ABOVE: The interpretive node located in the Rio Vista drawing room is a new interactive resource for visitors and locals.



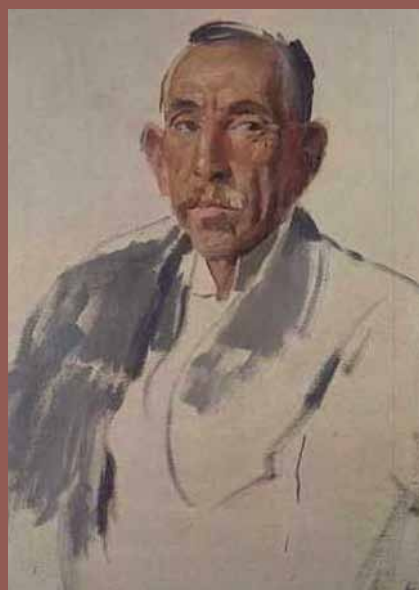
Billy's Holiday

Before the permanent collection was packed and wrapped as extra protection during the theatre redevelopment, two important paintings were picked out and put aside to be sent to the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra.

Fredrick McCubbin's atmospheric painting *Brighton Beach* (pictured above) will be included in the exhibition *Australian Impressionist Portraits* later in the year. Although the work is at first glance a landscape, the group of figures in the painting is the artist's family.

The second loan work is Augustus John's unfinished portrait of controversial Australian Prime Minister William 'Billy' Hughes (pictured below). This un-flattering portrait is thought to be one that the then PM insisted the artist stop work on because it made him "look like a monkey".

Both paintings came to Mildura as part of the founding Elliott Collection, although McCubbin's *Brighton Beach* was part of the second consignment which came from pictures retained by Hilda Elliott during her lifetime.



TOP: Frederick McCubbin, *Brighton Beach*, 1896. Mildura Arts Centre Collection. Mrs Hilda Elliott Bequest, 1970.

ABOVE: Augustus John, Sketch portrait of W.M. Hughes, n.d. Mildura Arts Centre Collection. Senator R.D. Elliott Bequest, presented to the City of Mildura by Mrs Hilda Elliott, 1956.

red flags

OH WHAT A NIGHT

The hit musical *Jersey Boys: The Story of Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons* is taking Australia by storm and one of the lead performers is former Mildura man, Glenn Quinn, who plays Tommy de Vito.

ARTS GRANTS - NO APRIL FOOLS' JOKE

Applications for the 2011-12 Arts Development Grants open April 1.

In 2010-11, ten local groups benefited from funding through Mildura Rural City Council's Arts Development Grant Scheme. This annual grant program was established by Council in 2007 to assist local groups and organisations with the costs associated with performing and visual arts projects that have a strong focus on community involvement and benefit.

To be eligible to apply for funding, groups must be not-for-profit, and be an incorporated body (or be auspiced by an incorporated body).

Up to \$1,500 is available per grant and can be put toward anything from the purchase of equipment to covering the costs of engaging a workshop instructor.

If you think your group could make use of a grant, call or email Heather Lee on 5018 8338 / heather.lee@mildura.vic.gov.au.

KAMIKAZE KOOKABURRA

There are a number of kookaburras in the Mildura area who love to sit in the beautiful trees here at MAC (the boab tree in the cottage courtyard in particular) and watch the world go by. Late last year we had one very persistent bird who took a disliking to his own reflection in the gallery windows and would dive bomb the glass with an almighty crash. This

headache inducing activity would continue for hours at a time.

Just before Christmas we thought we had lost our kamikaze kookaburra when a dead bird was found floating in the Rio Vista fountain. However, just this past week we have again heard the resounding crash of bird meeting glass echoing through the galleries. Is he back or is this just a disturbing family trait? I can hear the sound of kookaburra laughter as I write this now...

PICKED 2010 PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD RECIPIENT

Our ever popular *Picked 2010: Secondary School Artists' exhibition* attracted over 700 visitors during the three weeks at MAC's temporary gallery space at 39 Langtree Avenue, with many visitors choosing to cast a vote in The People's Choice Award.

Lucy McKechnie from Ouyen P-12 College was the lucky recipient of a \$100 gift voucher from our generous sponsor Premier Art Supplies. Lucy's artwork comprised three large pen drawings of a female silhouette titled *I AM WOMAN*.

We wish Lucy a very bright future.

BEYOND THE WHITE CUBE

whitecubemildura is a new artist run initiative in Mildura. Three small spaces located in business windows in the CBD will showcase innovative work by artists, makers and other creative people who live locally or have a strong connection to the area.

Locally based artists Filomena Coppolla and Kate Cotching are the brains behind the idea which was officially launched on 12 February with a walk to the three venues: Stefano's Gallery 25, Klemm's Newsagency and Shugg Group. To find out more about this exciting project visit: whitecubemildura.blogspot.com



What's happening around town?

The Mildura Wentworth Arts Festival will be on again from 25 February to 13 March 2011. The festival program offers a whole host of interesting things to see and do. Visit www.artsmildura.com.au for more information.

The Art Vault will showcase the work of well known local and studio artist, Anjelie Beyer from 23 February to 14 March 2011. The exhibition titled *Old Tricks*, includes a collection of recent paintings featuring broken and damaged toys, many of which have been re-housed to our local secondhand stores never to be loved again.

Stefano's Gallery 25 will exhibit the work of prolific local artist Robert Watson from 24 Mar – 20 April 2011, with his latest collection of paintings titled *Land Scope*.

Artback Gallery Café at Wentworth are gearing up for a busy time in March. Steve Hederics will instruct a bamboo workshop on 5 March; an exhibition to mark Artback's 2nd anniversary titled *Because We Can Can* opens on 6 March; and, a second workshop, *How do you make that?* run by Anne Hederics, will be held on 13 March. For more information call (03) 5027 2298.

The 'Snuffies' come to town

This February, LEAP will commence the delivery of a long term puppet project across the community – *The Mildura Peoples' Puppet Project*. This exciting and challenging program is based on the Snuff Puppets community workshops model, and we are delighted to welcome the 'Snuffies' to our community to teach us their wondrous skills and techniques.

The initial workshop will be with Koorie youth from SuniTafe with the puppets featuring in the Mildura Mardi Gras and River Party. Following this, LEAP and local artists will deliver a series of additional workshops with various groups from our community including the Mildura Christie Centre and The Sunraysia Spectrum Autism Support Group. So keep your eyes open for the most amazing puppets you could imagine roaming the streets of towns across the region in the coming year.

ABOUT THE SNUFF PUPPETS

The Snuff Puppets are a puppet company based in Melbourne, Australia who combine the elements of puppetry, live music, visual and physical theatre to create a unique and idiosyncratic performance language; engineering puppet/audience collisions to leave both parties breathless.

The company creates theatrical experiences that are visceral and accessible. All that is taboo in society is tackled, with a vulgar, irreverent, gratuitously violent and comic sensibility, calling upon the laws of cartoon humour to take the place of gravity and conjure up the spirits of the dead to keep the living in line.

This project was made possible with funding from the Australian Government's regional arts program, VicHealth, Mildura Arts Centre and Mildura Rural City Council.



ABOVE: Participants in the Snuff Puppets workshop

All aBoard

A recent reallocation of Councillor's responsibilities saw Cr Judi Harris retained as Arts & Culture Portfolio Councillor. Since being elected in 2008, Judi has been a strong and valued advocate for the arts and arts groups in our municipality.

Cr Vernon Knight has been appointed as secondary Arts & Culture Portfolio Councillor, taking over from Cr Fiona Hilton-Wood who has served in the role for the past two years. Thanks go to Cr Hilton-Wood for her contributions to Mildura Arts Centre and the Arts & Culture Board during that time.

The Arts & Culture Board is now in its sixth year and has been focussed on a number of activities, including the redevelopment of the theatre. Taking the lead roles for 2011 are Vicki Moore as Chair, and Win Scott as Deputy Chair. The Board and MAC staff gratefully acknowledge the enthusiasm and valuable work completed over the past year by outgoing Chair, Kevin Kelly. Kevin's commitment to the Board will, thankfully, continue in his role as a serving Board member.

Do you enjoy writing about the arts? We are always on the lookout for writers to contribute to our new blog.

If you're interested please call or email Luci Marcuzzo 5018 8330 or lucim@mildura.vic.gov.au

LEAPing around town

It's been an action packed few months at LEAP HQ and the year is shaping up to be a creative expose of this community. Here's a brief roundup of what's been happening and coming events.

NOV 2010	OZCO Funding Forum
NOV 2010 – SEPT 2011	Digital Story Telling - Ouyen
NOV 2010	LEAP Cluster Meeting - Walpeup
NOV 2010 – JAN 2011	Local Artist Meetings & Consultations
DEC 2010	Development of the LEAP Project Space
JAN – FEB 2011	Mardi Gras Float Workshops - East Side Community
FEB 2011	Snuff Puppets Workshop - Koorie Youth
FEB 2011	Snuff Puppets @ the Mildura Mardi Gras and Concert
FEB 2011 – JUNE 2012	The Mildura Peoples' Puppet Workshops
MAR – MAY 2011	HERstories
23 APRIL 2011	Koorie Night Market

And much, much more....



A flying visit to Canberra

I had set myself a packed schedule for my one free day in Canberra. I'd left Mildura at 6.30am, but my connecting flight to Canberra was delayed by half an hour, which was a blessing as I had left my watch at the security check when I landed so had to rush back to Gate 26 after my first leisurely stroll around to Gate 2.

I have been on a couple of work trips and always seem to encounter some interesting taxi drivers/cars. The taxi from the airport to my Canberra hotel had a boot that wouldn't open and the driver couldn't get the electric windows to work, so I had a refreshing drive to the hotel. During my next taxi trip the seal on my door was damaged so it sounded like the door wasn't closed, plus the mud flap (I was hoping that's what it was anyway) kept rubbing all the way from the hotel to the War Memorial. Yes, I can pick them.

The Australian War Memorial was a gob-smacking experience: from the interior dome of the Hall of Memory by Napier Waller, to the portrait by G.W. Lambert of E.W. Bean, Australia's official war correspondent during the First World War, and finishing in the temporary exhibition space to preview the exhibition *Perspectives* by Jon Cattapan and eX de Medici. There was so much to take in in such a short visit.

Next stop was the National Gallery of Australia where I had the fantastic opportunity to see 'Ballet Russes: The Art of Costume'. There were around 150 costumes and accessories in the exhibition including items by Henri Matisse, Giorgio de Chirico, Natalia Goncharova, Pablo Picasso, Andre Derain and Leon Bakst. My favourite piece was 'costume for a slave girl', 1918 from the ballet 'Cleopatra'. I also got to have a quick look at the 'Ned Kelly Series' by Sydney Nolan. I also found a few minutes to have a browse of the NGA gift shop where I could have purchased a number of books, but finally settled on a classic that one day I intend to read to my grandchildren: "Wind in the Willows". It brought back very fond memories of my childhood, when I didn't have a care in the world.

From the NGA I took a short stroll across the walk bridge to the National Portrait Gallery, which was absolutely brilliant. I get a great deal of enjoyment viewing portraits and wondering what must be going through the models' mind based on the varying facial expressions and poses; there were so many wonderful portraits that I made a second tour through the galleries.

Since I was in our national capital, I thought it would be a good idea to see where our national leaders hang out. I headed off for a stroll up the hill past Old Parliament House through the parliamentary gardens, then onto the new parliament house. I could not believe my eyes: the main staircase was completely made of marble and The Great Hall tapestry is based on a painting by Australian artist Arthur Boyd. The tapestry features a eucalypt forest in the Shoalhaven area of New South Wales. Measuring 20 x 9 m, it is one of the largest tapestries in the world. A team of 13 weavers from the Victorian Tapestry Workshop took two and a half years to complete the work. From there I headed straight to the roof as it was nearly closing time. Here I saw another amazing sight to behold: the huge Australian flag measuring an incredible 12.8m by 6.4m, raised up on a mast of 81m high and weighing over 200 tonne, making it one of the

largest stainless steel structures in the world.

I have never ventured to Canberra before and the only other time I have had any involvement with the place is when my children and I participated in the national project named *Peoplescape*. In November 2001, 5000 human figures were placed on the lawns of Parliament House to form one of the largest community art installations ever staged in Australia.

My busy activity filled day had come to an end and I grabbed a taxi back to the hotel. During the journey I started chatting to the driver as to why I was in Canberra and to my surprise he informed me that his wife had been the first registrar for the National Gallery of Australia. When she commenced in the role at the NGA there was herself, the director and two handy men - a little different to current staffing numbers.

The next two days were spent at the Burgmann College Chapel located on the grounds of the Australian National University. The seminar was hosted by Veronica Bullock and Vicki Humphrey of Significance International. At the completion of the two days I was better able to understand risk management strategies and the benefits for collections, how to assess the many risks to the collection and risk probabilities, and how to design and develop a risk register.

The college was only a 20 minute walk from the hotel so I walked there and back on the two days through the University grounds. On the walk I had the privilege of seeing and photographing a number of sculptures, the standout being Inge King's *Black Sun II*, 1976 - the twin of our own *Black Sun*, 1975, located on Deakin Avenue, Mildura, between Eleventh and Twelfth Streets.



Image: *Black Sun II*, 1976, painted mild steel. Commissioned 1975, Australian National University Art Collection.

Jillian Peterson, Collections Registrar