



Deborah HALPERN - Queen of the Shire

highlights from the Nillumbik Public Art Collection

As an important part of the Nillumbik Shire Art Collection, Nillumbik's Public Art Collection is a tangible acknowledgement of Nillumbik's support for artistic values, and the Shire's rich cultural heritage.

The collection includes major artworks integrated into public space, parks and public facilities. Our public artworks are designed to stimulate the community and enhance a sense of place.

The artworks featured here contribute to contemporary art practice and theory, and reinforce the unique cultural identity and history of the Shire of Nillumbik. These works create a sense of place for locals, and also encourage visitation to the Shire.

ARTS AND
CULTURE



Nillumbik



Wayne ALFRED (Alert Bay, British Columbia) - *Commonwealth Games Totem Pole* (2006)

Location: Eltham Library Foyer, Panther Place, Eltham

Carved in cedar wood, this totem pole incorporates bold cuts and colours (such as red and green) offset by strong black. A relative degree of realism is used to depict the alligator located on the bottom of the pole, a man and a 'thunderbird'/eagle located on the top.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Wayne Alfred is a member of the Namgis Tribe of the Kwakwaka'wakw people. As a master carver he has an extremely high level of carving skill and knowledge about his peoples cultural objects, customs, tribal stories and legends. The Totem Poles of the North Pacific Coast in British Columbia and Alaska are traditionally carved out of red or yellow cedar, which has a spiritual and practical purpose. The wood was known for its durability, its resistance to rotting and the inner bark was utilised in ropemaking, clothing, hats, baskets and so forth. The Kwakwaka'wakw People consider the cedar tree to be among the most sacred of all things provided by the Creator. They believed the Cedar tree to be the axis of the world and a pathway to the upper world. The wood is shaped using implements such as adzes, axes, chisels, carving knives, and chainsaws. Misinterpreted as Gods and idols to be worshipped, totems usually serve six purposes, such as a house pillar for support, a memorial or mortuary pole to commemorate (and house) the deceased, a potlatch pole (used for important traditional indigenous celebrations), a ridicule pole used to shame and a heraldic or family crest pole. Characters and symbols on these totem poles usually display family crests, history, wealth, social rank, inheritance, and privilege, as well as animalistic imagery derived from native animals and mythological creatures. Their sequence are indicative of past family events, ancestors, myths, and heraldic crests, with the bottom figure usually being the most prominent. In this work the 'thunderbird' is symbolic of power, strength and of ancestry.

SIGNIFICANCE

The Commonwealth Games Totem Pole was presented to the people of Nillumbik on behalf of the Canadian Government in recognition of Nillumbik as the hosts of the Canadian Commonwealth Games Team in 2006.



Robert BAINES – *Transaction* (1994)

Location: Nillumbik Shire Council Offices, Civic Drive, Greensborough)

A large cascading form in stainless steel. Multiple rows of concave dishes set on long steel stems, which progressively increase in size as they rise in height. The work plays elaborately with perspective, and its repeated shapes are arranged in an orderly mathematical series. It faces a wheelchair ramp lined with polished steel rails, and is integrated with the architectural features of its forecourt setting, for which it was designed. The piece is sited in a small garden area and can be viewed from within the building's foyer. In bright sunlight, its dish-shapes cast elliptical shadows across walkways and lawns.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The site specific sculpture is located at the entry to the office of Nillumbik Shire Council. It was commissioned in 1994 by the Shire of Diamond Valley for their 20 year celebration. Baines was chosen from a short list of three artists. He is an internationally renowned artist, particularly in the field of gold and silver smithing.

SIGNIFICANCE

'Transaction' takes on the visual and aesthetic vocabulary of its surroundings. It is a statement of the geometry and idiosyncrasy of its immediate site. The series of arcs are reinterpreted into longitudinal curves in the sculpture. It is a transaction between the place and the anticipated entry to the building. The title also suggests the flow of civil and administrative procedures that take place daily within the Shire's offices.

Helen BODYCOMB & Enver CAMDAL (Turkey) – *Nest* (1997)

Location: Roundabout, Main and Luck Street, Eltham



This work resembles a large bird's nest, with three egg-like forms of fibreglass covered in a pebble render, set on sand. The nest is positioned within the paved boundary of the roundabout. The nest shape has been created out of stiff, coarse indigenous grass, periodically trimmed so the view is not obstructed. The eggs are a brown-speckled, creamy yellow colour. The three eggs are arranged in a ring, with the narrow end of each pointing to the large end of the next, in a circle that mimics the flow of traffic.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Commissioned by Nillumbik Shire Council - 1997
The selection panel in the commissioning process to this 'extraordinary acquisition' was Rhonda Noble, Director of La Trobe University Museum of Art, Jeph Neale, Eltham Roundabout Advisory Group, Chris Marks, NSC Curator of Collections, Geoff Glynn, NSC Manager of Infrastructure Development.

SIGNIFICANCE

'Nest' highlights the indigenous flora and fauna of the Shire. The stiff, coarse grass used to create the nest is indigenous to the area and the eggs are like those of the spotted quail thrush, a ground-nesting bird of the Shire. The circular flow or placement of the eggs recalls the revolution of the seasons and nesting cycles. There is a tall light pole above the eggs, shining down at night. The effect is of a giant incubator. Enrichment and nurturing of the larger environment can be associated with this sculpture.



Cliff Burt - *Classical Landscape* (1996)

Location: Alistair Knox Park, Panther Place, Eltham

Award winning sculptor, Cliff Burt, often references the geometry of architectural forms in his bold, minimalist public sculptures. In this corten steel work the repeated arches of the temples of antiquity are in dialogue with the nearby spans of the railway trestle bridge that cuts through the Eltham parkland. The formality of the architecture is offset by the organic sweeps of the top profile of the work, which playfully acknowledges the hilly topography of the region.



Aleks DANKO –
Not Just a Pretty Place
(2000)

Location: Lenister Farm,
60 Homestead Road, Eltham South

Aleks Danko's enigmatic *Not Just a Pretty Place* appears, like a giant riverstone, to have come to rest on the meadow-like flood plains of Lenister Farm, close to the Yarra River.

Danko's work pays homage to grand public sculpture, through his choice of shaped, marked and polished stone, while challenging the grandiosity of much public sculpture, through the understated modesty of its form.



Ernst FRIES (b.1934 Wurzburg, Germany - arrived 1959 Aus)
Surveyor of Suburban Environs (1991)

Location: Alistair Knox Park, Main Road, Eltham

Polished stainless steel sculpture comprising an eye reminiscent of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics, which is held up with a tapered and jagged tail-like pedestal. Concrete base.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

'Surveyor of Suburban Environs' was one of the acquisitions from the 1991 Eltham Art Awards (now known as the Nillumbik Prize - and formally the Nillumbik Art Awards). This was the first piece acquired from this award which was suitable for a public space.

SIGNIFICANCE

Nillumbik is referred to as the "Green Wedge" and the sculpture *Surveyor of Suburban Environs* suggests a watchful observer of the surrounding landscape. The sculpture's central motif represents an eye held up on a pedestal by a tail. Its form has been likened to the Eye of Horus, an ancient Egyptian symbol of protection, royal power and good health personified in the goddess Wadjet or 'green one'. This likeness would suggest that the observer or surveyor has a divine status and spiritual connection to its environment.



Edward GINGER (b.1951 Kegalle, Sri Lanka - arrived 1975 Aus) *The Breeze* (1990)

Location: Main Road, Research - opposite Eltham Little Theatre

The Breeze is an abstract work made out of welded steel and painted in enamel in bush fire red / sienna. It comprises a series of flat, cut-out shapes, interlocking at different angles, giving the impression of being hinged together rather than fixed. The work references nature and the built environment. Its geometric shapes suggest man-made structures within industry and suburban life, while rural areas can be identified by the organic flame-like shapes fanned by the wind. The circular cut-out in the eye mimics the sun, symbolising the intense heat of the Australian climate, while the colour red alludes to the history of bushfire within the urban and rural fringe.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The first sculpture awarded the Shire of Eltham 'Art in Public Places' Award/Commission. The Judges were Inge King, Jenny Zimmer and Daryl Jackson. The work deals with the juxtaposition of suburban and rural surroundings.

SIGNIFICANCE

This sculpture is a typical example of the artist's oeuvre of the period. This sculpture is site specific and refers to the nature of the environment. The colour - bushfire red / sienna - alludes to the history of fire in the urban/rural fringe and the title, as well as the sculpture's shapes, forms and material refer to the natural and local elements. Judges report noted: "The most vital and expressive work for the site...with a great sense of dynamic movement and vibrant colour. Its' abstract forms will enliven the surroundings and the urban and natural environment. This work is the most appropriate for the site and expressive of the dynamics of an evolving community in which artistic discourse and debate has always thrived." The work has acquired the status of a major landmark from the National Trust.



Deborah HALPERN - *Queen of the Shire* (2015)

Location: Cnr Kangaroo Ground-Warrandyte Rd & Research-Warrandyte Rd, North Warrandyte

Materials: coloured glass tiles, fibreglass, steel, aluminium. A sweeping stylised (female) form covered in bright and colourful tiles held aloft by two steel poles.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Deborah Halpern was raised in Nth Warrandyte. Her connection to the area and the significant contribution that she and her family (founding members of Potters Cottage) have made to the artistic heritage and culture of the Shire is acknowledged with the commission of this piece.

SIGNIFICANCE

Deborah Halpern is a highly recognised and respected local artist with an acclaimed national reputation in the arts community. This work is a gateway piece, welcoming residents and visitors into the Shire from the southern end of the boundary. 'Queen of the Shire' reflects the creative spirit that flows endlessly in the Shire, inspired by the landscape. This work forms part of a series of sculptures that Halpern has created along the banks of the Yarra in Melbourne ('Angel' - Birrarung Marr and 'Ophelia' - Southgate). This sculpture is an excellent example of Halpern's oeuvre and 'tile construction' technique for which she is renowned.

Deborah Halpern (b.1957 Melb.) - *The Spirit of Nillumbik (Rainbow Serpent)*, (2001)

Location: Eltham Town Square - Main St, Eltham



Square floor mosaic. Black and white chequered border. Multicoloured coiled snake intercepted with six multi-coloured peaks. Made up of small mosaic tiles and hand painted.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

In October 2000, Council invited artists from the region to submit designs for a sculpture / public art work for the Eltham Town Square. The commission was paid for by supermarket giant Safeway (Woolies) as part of its supermarket permit, which required them to contribute to beautification work in the Town Square.

SIGNIFICANCE

The second of three parts, *The Spirit of Nillumbik* celebrates the artistic spirit of Eltham and surrounding communities. Each area is identified through the flora and fauna represented in the panels. The work honours the many creative artists and architects, past and present, who have built homes and shaped lives and livelihoods with their unique creative spirit. Halpern describes her work as a public expression of their individual and collective visions. Halpern acknowledges these contributions to our hand-made history and the influence they have on the character and identity of Eltham and Nillumbik.

[see also other *Spirit of Nillumbik* artworks by Malcolm Laurance & Deborah Halpern, below]



Paul Kalemba and Aviva Reed - *The Symbiogenesis Project: Laughing Waters* (2011)

Location: Eltham Town Square, Luck Street, Eltham

“Symbiogenesis: (v) The merging of two separate organisms to form a single new organism.

The symbiogenesis project combines art and science through a collaborative exploration of symbiotic relationships. An aesthetic focus invites an emotive and philosophical connection with the complex interactions of the subjects of the work. The State forest surrounding the Laughing Waters Artist Residence supports several critically endangered species that are crucial biological indicators for the region. These species and their interactions form the subject for this collaborative, cross-disciplinary project.

(text adapted from <http://www.pjkalemba.com/>)



Susie KUMAR & Naomi KUMAR – *Benchmark* (1998)

Location: Conventry Oval, Elizabeth Street, Diamond Creek

Stainless steel, timber (Victorian Ash) and red enamel paint. Sixty meter long red bench that gently curves in response to Conventry Oval. Bolted on top of evenly spaced stainless steel hurdles, four rows of timber runners are joined to provide unbroken continuous lengths. The bench stands on a framed bed of crushed rock (Lilydale topping).

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

1996 Nillumbik Art in Public Places Award (installed late 1997). A biennial program that ceased in 2007. The program commissioned artists to make and install public art in various sites around the Shire. Award judges that year were Tony Trembath and artist Peter D. Cole. Susie Kumar has a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture degree from RMIT and Naomi Kumar has a Bachelor of Fine Art in photography degree from VCA.

SIGNIFICANCE

The Kumar sisters designed the sixty meter gently curving bench in response to the topography of the site, Conventry Oval. The sculpture is designed to describe the boundary between the formal oval and the natural creek bank and a considered relationship to the bike track and the river. It forms a link between the activities and aesthetics of its environment. The work is a comical interpretation of the utilitarian public bench. From a distance the bright red runners (the colour of the local football team's stripe) appear to float about the surrounding green. One end of the work is straight and finished. The other remains 'unfinished' hence allowing for the concept of unlimited extension. The 'legs' (steel hurdles) are arranged with a sense of movement and rhythm in sympathy with the activities happening around the work and with the stands of trees in the background. 'Benchmark' also serves as a functional purpose; providing a choice of places to sit to watch action on the oval.

Lasting Memories Mosaic Group - *Lasting Memories Mosaic Seat* (2012)

Location: St Andrews Hall, 1 Proctor Street, St Andrews



A large concrete seat in the style of an organic chaise lounge covered in mosaic (broken tiles, glass, crockery and ceramics of all shapes and colour). The pieces have been placed to form pictures, words and patterns that tell and recount stories and memories of reflection, hope and love of a group of people who experienced the Black Saturday bushfires.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The 'Black Saturday' bushfires were a series of bushfires that ignited across the Australian state of Victoria on and around Saturday, 7 February 2009. It was Australia's worst ever natural disaster. The fires occurred during extreme bushfire-weather conditions and resulted in Australia's highest ever loss of life from a bushfire: 173 people died and 414 were injured as a result of the fires. For most women being part of the Lasting Memories Mosaic Group was a way of reconnecting to the area, friends and neighbours. As the months went by, the idea of creating a gift to the community together was born. The women wanted to artistically express their memories of what they had experienced. Creating a mosaic seat in the heart of St Andrews allowed the group to be 'in control' of building something from the ground up - a symbol of hope, recovery and renewal. All of their experiences and memories have been included into the seat design, which makes it so special. This mosaic seat is proudly positioned outside the St Andrews Hall, which is also the site for the St Andrews market held every Saturday throughout the year.

SIGNIFICANCE

The Lasting Memories Mosaic group began this piece just after the Black Saturday fires in 2009. After the horrific fires ravaged through St Andrews and the surrounding areas, a group of bushfire affected ladies bravely came back to St Andrews to begin their healing in an artistic way. Each woman created something beautiful and meaningful, using remnants of crockery, glass, tiles and bricks salvaged from their own properties. This artwork identifies who they are and tells their personal 'life journey' and family heritage and memories of what they had experienced before, during and beyond Black Saturday. It is also an expression of their love for the St Andrews area and the nature and people within it.



Malcolm Laurance, *Spirit of Nillumbik (Chocolate Lillies)* (2001)

Location: Eltham Town Square, Eltham
(left)

Malcolm Laurance & Deborah Halpern,
Spirit of Nillumbik (2001)

Location: Eltham Town Square, Eltham
(below)



In October 2000, Council invited three artists from the region (Deborah Halpern, Matcham Skipper, Tony Trembath) to submit designs for a sculpture / public art work for the Eltham Town Square. The commission was funded by supermarket giant Safeway as part of its supermarket permit, which required them to contribute to beautification work in the Town Square.

[see also Deborah Halpern's *Spirit of Nillumbik* (mosaic), above]

Tom SANDERS - *Wall of the Moon (Homage to Miro)* (1968)

Location: Eltham Town Square, Arthur Street, Eltham



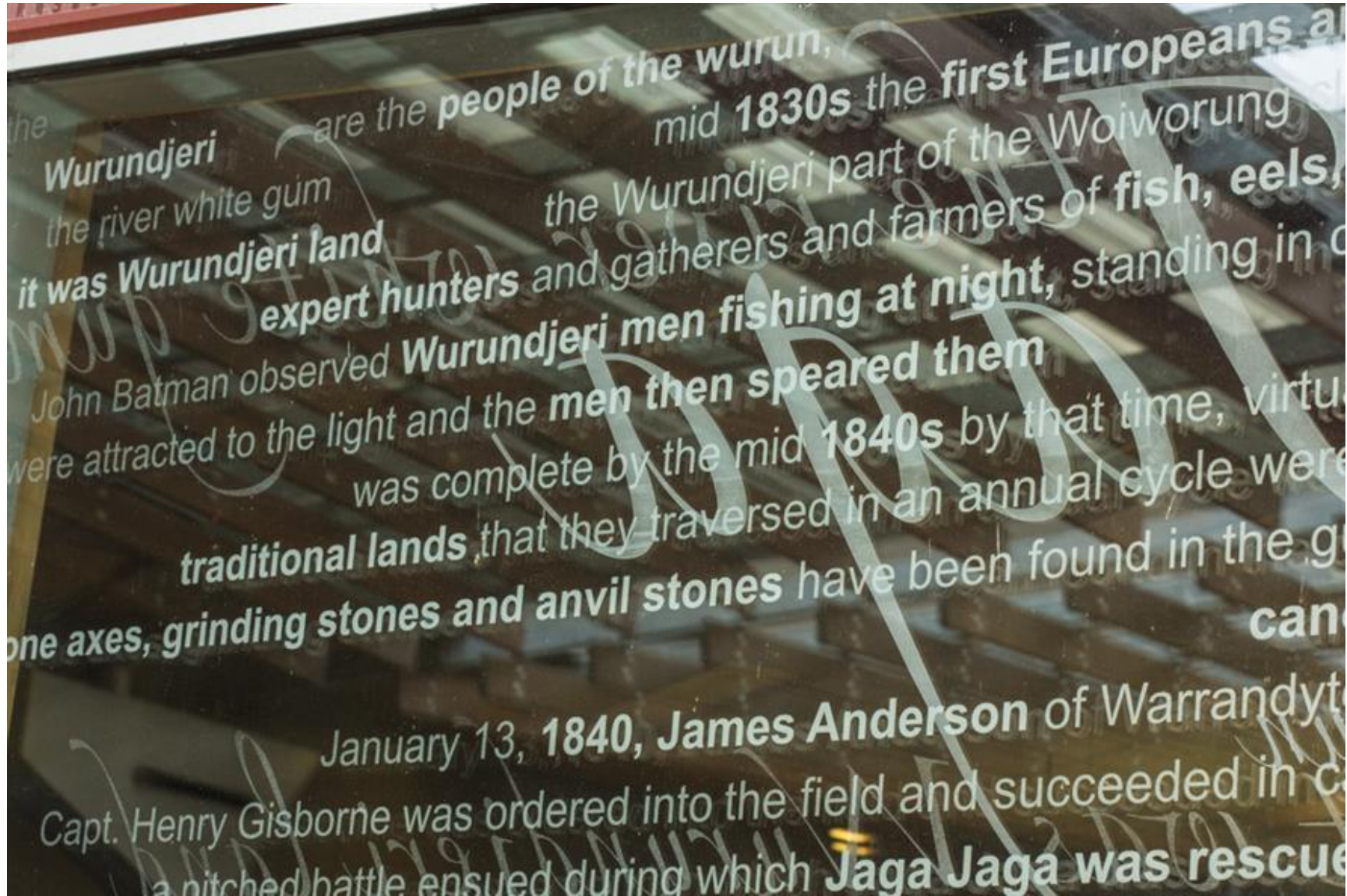
Ceramic mural (earthenware tiles) consisting of a playful/organic abstract design similar in style to the Spanish artist Joan Miro. Shades of blue, yellow and black glazes are layered onto matte black and shiny bronze tiles.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Sanders was a well-known local potter who worked for a time with David Boyd at the Martin Boyd Pottery, before returning to Melbourne where he had some association with Arthur Boyd, at the pottery in Murrumbeena. Sanders set up a studio in Eltham in the early 1950s and made the first of a series of architectural ceramic murals with painter and print maker Lawrence Daws in 1956. In 1957 he left for Europe and while there was inspired by the Spanish artist Joan Miro's unconventional painting style and large scale murals, in particular *Wall of the Moon* (1957). After returning from his travels in Europe to Australia in 1964, he began to work solely on creating ceramic murals, some of which were commissioned for Southland Shopping Centre in Cheltenham, Melbourne, 1968 (now demolished), the National Mutual Centre, Melbourne, 1964-5 (now demolished), Dee Why Library, Sydney 1966, Woden Valley High School, ACT, 1967, Tullamarine Airport Melbourne, 1969-70 (now demolished), Perth Concert Hall, 1971 and The University of Melbourne, 1975 (with John Olsen).

SIGNIFICANCE

This mural is one of only three remaining in the public realm by Tom Sanders (the others are at the Perth Concert Hall (1971) and at the University of Melbourne (1975)).



Julia SILVESTER - *Memory, Remnant, Recollection, Trace* (2008)

Location: 40 Brougham Street, Eltham

Julia Silvester's glass features on the façade of the Eltham Leisure Centre evoke a sense of the landscape as it once might have been. The windows depict sandblasted silhouettes of a Riparian Woodland floodplain interspersed with minute images of the Eltham Copper Butterfly, the Charming Spider Orchid, and handwritten stories and letters by pioneers and locals from the area. The planting of Kangaroo Grass outside the north façade is also seen as an extension of the landscape from the past into the present.



Marcus SKIPPER (b.1950 Melb, Aus) - *Alan Marshall* (1995)

Location: Grounds of Eltham Library, Panther Place, Eltham

A realistic depiction (almost life size) of Alan Marshall cast in bronze with green patination. Dressed in a jumper and slacks, Marshall is shown perched on a crutch, holding a book to his heart, gesturing to his audience to come and listen to his words.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Alan Marshall was an author of more than fifteen books, and lived much of his life in Eltham. He became a central figure in the area's arts community of writers, artists, sculptors, film makers, actors and musicians. He is shown stroking a book to his heart, perched on a crutch, which references his disability (contracted polio when he was young), and his status as one of Australia's most successful and loved authors. His most famous book, 'I Can Jump Puddles' is based on his life story and the obstacles he faced as a child in trying to overcome his disability. Marcus Skipper submitted the idea for the work to the first 'Art in Public Places' Awards in 1990. The selectors at the time recommended that the work would be more suitably placed near the Eltham Library. It was commissioned and installed for the new Eltham Library, which was designed by Greg Burgess in 1994. It was partially funded by the then Shire of Eltham's Art Development Fund (Eltham Arts Council) and the rest donated by the artist Marcus Skipper.

SIGNIFICANCE

This work has significance for its reference to two well known names associated with Eltham and its history. The sculpture is a realistic statue of the famous Australian author Alan Marshall who wrote "I Can Jump Puddles". He lived and worked in the Shire. The artist Marcus Skipper represents a highly recognised family of artists associated with Monsalvat. The sculpture 'Alan Marshall' has been classified as of regional significance by the National Trust of Australia.



Cathy SMITH

Sensory Integration Invention A (1999)

Location: Fergusons Paddock, 12 Arthurs Creek Road, Hurstbridge

Smith's work has strong references to humans' sensory and practical relationship with the land through the built environment. Wind entering the structure's tubing operates like a flute, generating sounds such as bird calls that resonate into the surrounding wetland areas.



Tony TREMBATH

The Fences Act 1968 (1994)

Location: Edendale Farm, Eltham

Trembath's 25-metre long installation of wood and metal, comprises groups of recycled tree trunks fitted with metal caps. The rustic fence runs between the groups of tree trunks with native planting in clumps along it. The fence-line incorporates a functional engineered double gate and post and rail fencing.

There may be many interpretations of the work and the intention is to stimulate interest and imagination rather than alienate. Interpretation is based on the personal experience that a visitor brings. The artist recommended that no explanation of the design logic be positioned with the work.

Eltham Council commissioned this work in 1989 aided by a grant from the Ministry of the Arts. Edendale Farm is a demonstration farm modelling sustainable environmental practices, providing support to the local residents of Nillumbik. Established in 1986, the land was purchased in 1970. It was previously an English gentleman's residence and was used for grazing. It consists of 5.6 hectares, with the Diamond Creek meandering through the property.

The *Victorian Fences Act 1968* of the title governs deals with disputes between neighbours regarding boundaries and fences. This work took into consideration ideas and suggestions from residents and committees, who required the use of recycled materials and that the work celebrate man's relationship with nature, animals and the earth, as well as relate to the fence-line on the far side of the carpark. Trembath also absorbed significant aspects of local history, making references to Eltham's agricultural past, the clearing of the land, the destruction of trees, the ruthless pruning of trees by suburban Councils and incorporated such Australian features as the post and rail fence.

While at Edendale farm you can also find a number of smaller public artworks installed throughout the site. (www.edendale.vic.gov.au/Image-Galleries/Our-artwork)



Michael Wilson - Cicada

Location: Cnr Main Rd & Brougham St,
Eltham

Standing outside the long time workshop of local jeweller, Michael Wilson, this work, gifted to the Nillumbik Collection in 1997, depicts one of the artist's recurring symbols; a creature known for its piercing summer song, common to the area.

Made of steel and powdercoated in aluminium with a concrete base. Decorative elements such as the ring encasing the cicada and the cicada's wings are gilded with 24ct gold leaf. The steel rod is burgundy in colour with the cicada painted a dark olive green to represent the 'Green Grocer' variety common in Eltham. The colours used in this sculpture match the surrounding Elm and Ash trees in the landscape.

Michael Wilson learnt the craft of Goldsmithing after seeing well-known sculptor and silversmith Matcham Skipper working in his studio at Montsalvat in and around 1970. This work is a gift to the Eltham Community in recognition of his twenty five years of developing his goldsmith skills and operating his business within the Shire. Wilson officially opened his commercial premises in 1985.

The Blacksmiths' Tree, Strathewen

Location: 160 Chadds Creek Road, Strathewen

While there are a number of significant public memorials in Nillumbik, *The Blacksmith's Tree* is unique as a memorial artwork of unusual scale and elegance. It commemorates the communities that suffered through the Black Saturday fires across Nillumbik and beyond.

As a memorial artwork, the tree and surrounding sculptural and landscaping elements are managed by Nillumbik Shire Council as part of the Civic Collection. Made of forged metal, the tree was created as a lasting memorial to those who lost their lives to fire on February 7th, 2009, and the firefighters and communities who came to others' defence. The tree itself represents regeneration and renewal.

The tree was initially unveiled to the public at a ceremony in Whittlesea in 2013 before being installed at its permanent Strathewen location.

The Australian Blacksmiths Association (Victoria) contributed much of the work, including the attachment to the tree of over 3500 individually crafted forged leaves created by blacksmiths from across the globe. They worked alongside arts worker Amanda Grant (Gibson) to create a memorial of unusual power and beauty.

The adjacent *Strathewen Bushfire Memorial* is a beautiful and poignant reminder of the losses suffered by the Strathewen community in the 2007 fires. You will want to allow the time, when visiting these memorials, for contemplation and reflection on the stories these memorials tell.





Deborah HALPERN - Queen of the Shire

For more information about the Nillumbik Public Art Collection visit nillumbik.vic.gov.au/Living-in/Arts-and-Cultural-Development/Public-art

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