



ABC TV Arts in Broken Hill

An ABC TV crew was in Broken Hill in July shooting a story for *Sunday Arts* which explores how the town has become a melting pot for artists. 'Broken Hill Arts Mecca' will be screened on 2 September.

Also in Broken Hill, the crew shot a profile of local artist, Virginia Kaiser, a basket weaver whose work is represented in the National Gallery of Australia and Powerhouse Museum as well as in galleries overseas. The profile went to air on 29 July.

'Broken Hill Arts Mecca' explores the creative lure of the 'Silver City' and uncovers the wealth of new talent that now outshines the town's fading mine. From the 'Brushmen of the Bush' group which established a reputation for Broken Hill as a centre for 'outback art' in the 1970s to today's melting pot of artists and galleries (there were 36 at last count), the story reveals the complex reasons for Broken Hill's status as 'The Arts End of Australia': from the inspiration provided by the landscape itself and the cost of living (cheap!) to the lifestyle, the people and the healthy art market. ■

'Broken Hill Arts Mecca' on *Sunday Arts* ABC TV 2 September 2007

Photo of crew interviewing RADO James Giddey by ABC TV producer, Andrew Holland

Gateway to Moree

Moree is one of the few sizeable New South Wales towns with no public art but with the recent commissioning of some major new works by renowned Kamilaroi artist, Lawrence Leslie, all that is about to change.

by KATRINA RUMLEY

Despite being a relatively wealthy town in the heart of the north-west's cotton country, Moree escaped the onslaught of late 20th century public art programs funded by Federal, State and Local Governments. (Perhaps this was a blessing in disguise if we critically review the aesthetic merit of various country towns' monuments such as the big prawn at Ballina or the big mosquito near Newcastle.)

But Moree's lack of public art is about to change. At the Moree Plains Gallery renowned Kamilaroi artist Lawrence Leslie is working in the garden carving giant red-gum tree trunks with designs from his cultural tradition. The completed carvings will be installed as gateway sculptures beside major access roads into Moree, to the north, south, east and west.

The Moree district is famous for its Kamilaroi carved trees. Sculpted living trees can be found on properties throughout the Shire. The Kamilaroi people, Australia's second largest indigenous language group, were carvers rather than painters (unlike the Western Desert or Ramingining people). The Moree Gallery houses significant stone

and tree carvings that commemorate a culture dating back thousands of years.

In 1918 Australian Museum Director R. Etheridge published his research on Kamilaroi and Wiradjuri carved trees, known as dendroglyphs.¹ He observed that the trees were often located near burial sites and that the designs were of creatures and kinship affiliations of the deceased. Etheridge recounted the belief that "the spirit of a dead man went up to the sky world" by means of a carved tree. "It is apparent," he said, "that dendroglyphs formed an intimate link between the Aborigine and his world of legend and myth, and the designs were symbols of the very core of his religious beliefs."²

Moree's Kamilaroi people still approach carved trees with wariness, especially because of the association with death and that they were used to mark bora or initiation grounds. Lawrence Leslie is very protective of his carvings and often reminds us that sacred trees should only be viewed by adult men. Leslie is the only initiated Kamilaroi tree carver still working.

Leslie's new designs for the gateway trees depict four traditional Kamilaroi creatures,

September

24 August

📅 Deadline for listings in the September issue of the Regional Arts NSW e-Bulletin. Check the guidelines published in each e-Bulletin before submitting, online at www.regionalartsnsw.com.au

24 – 26 August

🎷 20th **NEWCASTLE** Jazz Festival. 39 jazz and blues bands with over 130 individual vocalists and musicians. Jazz Breakfast, a Jazz Gospel and a Gala Dance. www.newcastlejazz.com.au

24 August – 2 September

🎭 *An Accidental Actress*. Australian actress Anne Phelan tells her fascinating life through stories, songs and shows, by Anne Phelan & Don Mackay. HotHouse Theatre **ALBURY** Tel 02 6021 7433 www.hothousetheatre.com.au

25 August

🎻 Solo viola recital Stephen King, violist with ACO. The Priory at **BINGIE** 4473 8881
More What's Ons in the Regional Arts NSW e-Bulletin at www.regionalartsnsw.com.au



**Left: Lawrence Leslie at work in the Moree Plains Gallery garden.
Photo: Karlheinz Schulz
Above: A collection of Kamilaroi carved trees at Collarenebrai near Moree.**

goanna, brolga, pelican and snake. These trees are intended to be viewed as sculptures rather than as sacred or ritualistic totems. Leslie's imagery and mark-making derive from his paintings and screenprint designs for which he became well known in the 1970s. His prints are represented in the collections of the National Gallery of Australia and the Art Gallery of NSW.

Leslie has sought to make contact with his people's traditional culture through considerable research into early carved trees and Kamilaroi artifacts. He developed his understanding of traditional indigenous art while exhibiting with Sydney's Aboriginal Islander Dance Theatre during the 1980s. Since then he has strived to develop the artistic identity of the Kamilaroi people. Leslie and friends have long worked on a project to return Kamilaroi carved trees to their place of origin in the north-west. They know of some fifty trees that were collected by museums where few of them have ever been displayed.

In 1996 the Moree Cultural Art Foundation with local grazier Sinclair Hill commissioned Leslie to carve a Myall tree felled from Hill's property, 'Terlings'. The tree stands inside the

Gallery entrance and is covered with incised geometric designs reminiscent of Leslie's paintings and typical of traditional Kamilaroi markings evoking river currents, land forms and heavenly images such as the moon, the sun and lightning.

The Moree carved tree gateway project was initiated by the Gallery in 2006 as another step in its charter to foster appreciation of indigenous culture. The Gordon Darling Foundation granted \$5,000 to fund preparations for the project including a workshop to which leading Kamilaroi artists were invited. With agreement from the meeting Lawrence Leslie was appointed chief carver and designer. Since December 2006 Leslie has been tirelessly carving giant logs donated by the Moree Plains Shire Council, St Xavier's Church and a local property owner. The Gallery and Arts North West have been paying the artist's fees, with some assistance from the Regional Arts NSW Country Arts Support Program.

The carved trees, when installed at major road entrances to Moree in December, will prominently recognise an ancient culture and increase pride among the Aboriginal people of the town and district. ■


1. Other names for indigenous carved trees are tapholglyphs, tacoglyphs or teleteglyphs, depending on the usage of the trees.
2. R. Etheridge Jnr., 'The Dendroglyphs or "Carved Trees" of New South Wales' published in 1918 by the Department of Mines.

Katrina Rumley is the Director of the Moree Plains Gallery Tel 02 6757 3320 Email moreeplainsgallery@bigpond.com


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August

25 – 26 August

 **Gathering of the Clans** A celebration of all things Scottish. Witness the sights and sounds across various Celtic activities- even trace your own Scottish heritage **TOUKLEY** Tel 02 4397 1711


25 – 26 August

 **Wentworth Show.** This year's theme is 'Celebrating the Spirit of the Bush' **WENTWORTH** Show Grounds Tel 03 5027 6304

25 – 26 August

 **COFFS HARBOUR** Antiques Fair A comprehensive display of antiques including jewellery, porcelain and furniture Tel 02 6651 3835

31 August – 1 September

 **Borderline Poetry Disorder** An inspired fusion of performance poetry, sketch comedy and straight out mayhem, with poetry boy-band the Bracket Creeps **WOLLONGONG** Tel 02 4226 3366