

New workshop is a group effort

A large crowd brought wonderful food and drink to enjoy a fabulous evening celebrating the official opening of the Moore Workshop Space at Blue Knob Hall Gallery on Saturday 24th October.

The gleaming new arts workshop is named after the gallery's living treasure and inspiration, Robin Moore, who officially cut the ribbon to open the space, after which Lismore Mayor Jenny Dowell unveiled a commemorative plaque.

Funded by grants of \$33,000 from Arts NSW, \$7,000 from Lismore City Council and \$7,000 by Blue Knob Hall Gallery and Cafe from years of fundraising, this elegant area is the result of much effort and labour by many, many people.

The people who were especially thanked on the night were Jon Bell and Nathan Carthew, (builders) Francisco, (painted the ceiling with many coats at night)

Bernard Rooney (the beautiful sandstone retaining wall), Bill McHenry (donated much sandstone for the wall), Barry and Diane Harding, (excavated the site and brought gravel to redo the pathway) Jeni Kendall and Paul Tait (management, painting, guttering, general assistance), Luke, Robert and



Marie (travellers to Australia who helped with the wall, the concrete path and painting beyond the call of reason), and Heather Kimber who fed everyone who worked on the room for six months.

Others who worked on the building included electricians by

volunteering help included Robin Moore with everything, Jenny Martin with finances, Sue and John Done with transport, rails for handrail and concreting/mosaics, Michelle McQuay guided us through creating the mosaics on the path, and

Michelle and Heather who also gave us the beautiful tiles.

Sean Lysaght helped with the concrete, Bob Ross helped prepare 'meals on Mondays', Don and Shells from Norwood

Tony Egan, Trouts Plumbing, assistant builders Steve, Phil, Dave, Tamsen, Nils, Jake and Charlie. Terry Bressington did the gyprock and Danny Cooper was conductor of concrete. Thanks to Nimbin Building Materials for patience and good wood.

Other people who were of great assistance in

Floor Sanding donated Organoil and machinery for the wooden floor and Paul and Gerhardt coated it on. Christine Wynyard and Cherie Schadwell helped with painting and many more people helped clean up and get ready for the party. Thanks also to Bunnings who gave a good discount on hardware.

Harry Freeman, Julie Metcalfe and Chris Sullivan, the Vocal Minority choir, Leesa and Julz from the Hussy Hicks, Mark, Bernard and Julian Rooney all gave the gift of their extraordinary music at the opening.

Admire the workshop, and enjoy both the artwork and fabulous food, Thursday to Sunday 10am-4pm at the Blue Knob Hall Gallery, and in November a new artist On the Easel - Francisco.

Conversations about human life

Nimbin Film Festival
30th October - 1st November

by Stephen Wright

Sometimes technology can be a very democratic thing, and when it is, it can be something very good indeed, a tool that builds relationships instead of sundering them. For every CCTV camera, there can be a camera in the hands of an ordinary person, trying to start a conversation about human life.

The 5th Nimbin Film Festival just concluded a 3-day residence at the Town Hall, and we were treated to nearly 30 films, nine of them local, with others from Canada, Spain, Italy, Mozambique, France and Australia. They ranged in length from 5 minutes to an hour-and-a-half, and covered various forms of drama, extended allegory, comedy, and documentary. It was a pretty eclectic line-up and, for the most part, it worked. I paid \$25 for the weekend, that's roughly \$1 per film.

The Nimbin Film Festival organisers deserve a lot of credit for making this event happen, trying to make some kind of conversation possible. As the sixteen-year-old director of the Mozambique documentary said in his film Home Is Where You Find It, "When I use the camera I can see my world." And as the American writer Don DeLillo wrote, in his novel Underworld, in regard to children and video-cameras, "Kids get involved...the camera shows them that every subject is potentially charged, a million things they never see with the unaided eye...They learn to see things twice."

The films at the Nimbin Film Festival that really made something new arise for me in my thinking seemed to be the ones that remembered, or paid homage to this kind of insight, whereas the films that perhaps had forgotten this, or were maybe overly concerned with A Big Idea, had trouble getting off the ground, or at least staying in the air. That's what seeing a lot of independent films in one hit, can do for you - make you look at things twice, something that the latest Hoyts schlockbuster can never do. Narrative is a made-up thing, and prescribed formulas for narrative are really a kind of totalitarian mindset masquerading as entertainment.

Which brings me to the nine local films, which rounded off the Film Festival on the Sunday evening. Nine is a respectable number, but there's no reason why it couldn't be twenty. The local films on show covered ground from comedy to slasher to documentary. Audience turnout on the night was much greater than on the previous two nights - which was a good thing of course, but might have had more to do with community solidarity than film appreciation.

In terms of content there was probably more verve than technique, but verve can carry you a long way sometimes, before you run out of breath or inspiration. A bunch of awards were given at the end of the night, for films across the festival. Oddly the local films walked away with all of them bar one, which was somewhat unexpected given the quality of the competition they were up against, and made it a bit like a kid's birthday party where everyone gets a prize, so no-one cried when they went home.

For what it's worth, my own awards, should I be giving any, for the local films would go to Mulgum House's The Star Watchers, which gets kudos for naïve charm, humour and unpretentiousness, and Gaia Film's interesting little documentary on community action in Western Samoa. Tim Tonkin's slasher flick gets a gong for "Best Use of Political Humour in a Slasher Genre".



Overall throughout the festival, it was the documentaries that stood out. Briefly, the Mozambique doco I mentioned earlier made by an AIDS orphan; a fantastic fly-on-the-wall doco on the indigenous Inupit people of Alaska The Last Days of Shishmaref; and an unsettling doco, The Marina Experiment about a father's weird sexualised obsession with his daughter, the director of the film. The best drama, to my mind, was a little 5 minute take on the Palestine-Israel conflict, Encyclopaedia Britannica.

Anyone who can hold a camera, can theoretically make a film. Let's hope there's a lot more local films made in the next 12 months, and enough interest to run a 6th Nimbin Film Festival.

Rainbow Dreaming in Woodstock

by Harsha Pradhu

The Rainbow Dreaming photographic exhibition has been touring the US, and after a good response at the New York EcoFest the touring party headed north.

Marijuana legalization activists and their supporters on the East coast were to meet at Camp Minglewood in the Catskills, a couple of hours north of New York, for the Harvest Festival & Freedom Rally, on 9th October. It was an opportunity too good to be missed. Our hosts from the Woodstock Museum, Shelli Lipton and Nathan Koenig, had booked us a spot at the Festival. They had also booked us into a bunkhouse, with 10 bunk beds. By now we had mushroomed to a party of ten.

Harvest Fest, the child of Hemp activist and performance poet Rob Robinson, was now in its thirteenth year. The talk at the Camp was all about the bust of a long-time hemp activist, who had been caught with a whole lot of pot that he was bringing to the festival. Regardless, the pot was plentiful.

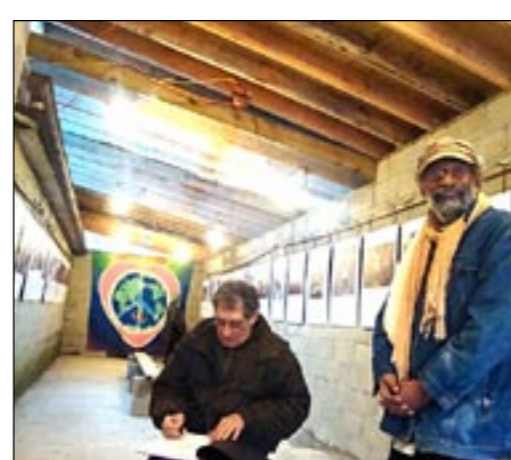
The Rainbow Dreaming exhibit was attached to a wall in the main music hall. Thus many, mostly young, punters got to see the exhibit. This was where The Wailers played on Saturday. I caught the Wailers when they played in Byron and I'm happy to report that they are still wailing away.

But what struck me most about the music at Harvest Fest was the pervasive influence of the Grateful Dead, the legendary sixties psychedelic band from San Francisco. From Cabinet, an established US indie band that played the main stage, to camp fire songs at 4 am, the Dead were everywhere, on so many t-shirts and stickers, in so many riffs and improvisatory moments, as a psychedelic glint in so many eyes.

After exhibiting Rainbow Dreaming at the Harvest Festival, it was the Woodstock Museum's turn to show. Some 40 years have gone by after the infamous Woodstock festival of 1969. And the world has changed since those heady days. But walking around Woodstock, the town that gave a name to the festival, (which happened in the neighbouring town of Bethel, some 100 kms away), you could be forgiven for believing that it's still in the thrall of those halcyon days of hippiedom. Woodstock itself is full of funky cafes and art galleries. Turn a corner and spy a Zen garden, complete with waterfall and pergola.

Our first port of call was the Woodstock Town Board meeting that night (pictured). Benny Zable, Nimbin's ambassador to Woodstock, presented letters from Nimbin and the crew made a presentation on the Rainbow Dreaming exhibit and its relevance to the whole Woodstock legacy. The meet was dominated by a spirited discussion over rezoning issues, something very familiar to us on the north coast. Would Woodstock go the way of other small towns and be besieged by rampant development, or would it stay true to its alternative legacy?

The Rainbow Dreaming opening at the Woodstock Museum on Sat 17th October was a modest yet sweet affair: local musos were in attendance and members of the Woodstock drum circle banged their bongos. The highlight of the evening was meeting Elliot Landy (pictured), the



famous Woodstock photographer. Elliott was all praise for the exhibit, gave away signed copies of his book to all the crew and offered to help us find a publisher for a book on the exhibition.

Also during the Rainbow Dreaming opening, the sculptor in residence at the Woodstock Museum, Tiago Guimaraes, a Brazilian artist, was busy carving out a statue of a man with a guitar, the quintessential hippie hitchhiker, his hand raised, his fingers flashing the peace sign. The last act of the day was raising the sculpture of the Big Hippie (pictured) and placing him on his pedestal: a symbol of Woodstock's hippie past and a pointer to its uncertain future as a cultural pilgrimage centre.

On our last evening in Woodstock, we participated in the Woodstock Earth drum circle. Some 30 drummers were gathered in the backyard at Day A's house. As the sound of the drums rose over the autumn dusk, we were again reminded of how lucky we were with our vibrant culture of communal drumming and dancing in the rainbow region.

An Interview with Leigh Arnold

by Stephen Wright

When did you start thinking of yourself as an artist?

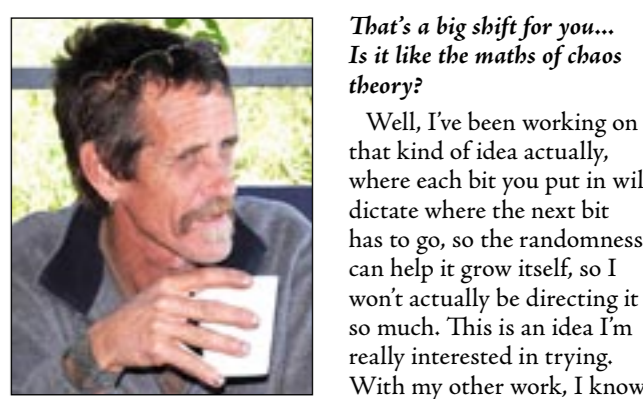
The first time was when a friend of mine, Fred White, who is now a pretty well-known sculptor, called me an artist. That was the first time I thought about it! But probably about ten years ago I started to make my mind up that I really wanted to do something, for several reasons. I was dyslexic and I didn't even know I was at that point. I couldn't write but I used to have no trouble getting jobs, but by the 90's jobs were drying up, so I started then.

What do you think an artist is?

I reckon an artist's job is to interpret, to interpret the world as they see it. But it's also a journey, constantly pushing yourself...it's a way of growing, you know. I don't want to be stuck in a café just talking the same garbage over and over every day of the week. In some of my paintings which warp, or might look as though they are, I'm trying to show the space-time curve, or the things that people don't see, or show the mathematics of these things. The mathematics is one of the main structural elements of my work....but that's my Asperger's. Right from being a kid I could always pick where, for instance, my grandmother's carpet pattern joined up and repeated itself, and that sort of stuff. It didn't matter what sort of pattern it was. And I can do the same with numbers.

It's as though you've taken the diagnostic label 'Asperger's' and said "Hey, this is a different way of thinking about the world, and this is what it looks like."

Yeah. I'm compulsive. When I start a picture that's it, I'm in that picture, and I can be in that picture for seven hours. That's it. I just go there, and the mathematics of the work has to be really precise. A fraction, a mil out, will upset me, where a lot of people probably wouldn't notice. But I'll still fix it.



That's a big shift for you... Is it like the maths of chaos theory?

Well, I've been working on that kind of idea actually, where each bit you put in will dictate where the next bit has to go, so the randomness can help it grow itself, so I won't actually be directing it so much. This is an idea I'm really interested in trying. With my other work, I know exactly what it's going to look like, I've worked it all out. It's no surprise! But it's easy 'cos I keep the measurements of hundreds of paintings in my head, so I can just pull one out. Sometimes I'm just changing points. But you can change the dimensions too, you can distort them. You've got an infinite amount of possibilities you can play with. For example, you can use grids, triangular grids, or hexagonal grids. But you've always got an infinite amount of possibilities.

Well five years ago I didn't even paint. But these days I'm starting to do abstracts, every so often. I really enjoy them because it's a totally different way of working. I think an abstract is more about the journey than the picture. When I do an abstract I don't even start with a concept, or even a colour choice. I just pick a colour and see what happens. I like it because it's more free.

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