

Travelling to Adelaide along the Victorian Mallee Region Silo Art Trail

7 – 11 December 2020

7 December 2020

Today we departed Canberra for Tooleybuc. Yes, it is a long first leg at 676 kms but we wanted to get close to the start of the silo art trail in Northeastern Victoria. The drive took 8 hours forty-five minutes with two breaks along the way. The drive was easy despite the strong headwinds we encountered once we left the Hume Highway and joined the Sturt. The winds were most noticeable between Narrandera and Balranald. I did a check with the Territory's computer and the instant kms per 100 kms registered between 18 and 22 kms for the 303 km leg from Narrandera to Balranald. That equated to 440 kms available in the fuel tank. I usually get 550 kms out of a tank on this leg when not encountering strong headwinds. The van handled it well with no serious sway at all. I found filling the two water tanks, adding 164 kilograms to the weight of the van, helped to maintain the stability in the strong winds.

Anyway, we arrived safe and sound and stayed at the free camp available at the rear of the Tooleybuc Country Sporting Club. We had a relaxing evening with a glass or two of excellent Pinot Grigio wine and a nice meal from the Club bistro. After the meal, and a lengthy chat with a couple we met who were also using the free camp, we headed back to the van for an early night.

8 December 2020

We had a good night sleep last night, probably due to the long drive the day before and absolutely nothing to do with the wines we had last night with dinner.

Following breakfast, we said goodbye to the friends we met last night, and we headed off across the Tooleybuc Bridge that crosses the Murray River and into the State of Victoria. It was an eerie feeling entering the state having been barred from entering for so long. We really are excited about this leg of our journey as Victoria has a lot to offer in a relatively small area; being 6th in size by area of the six states and two territories. We enjoy travelling through Victoria as it always seems to have a green tinge to it. Unlike when crossing from Narrandera to Tooleybuc where everything is dry and quite barren at this time of year.

As we drove the 40 kilometres or so to Manangatang we were surprised by the low traffic. We were lucky to have passed four vehicles on this leg of the trip. At Manangatang we took a left and started our way down to Sea Lake. The road is rated as a "C" road, but it did get narrow in some places where we pulled off to the verge to let oncoming trucks pass. After 60 kilometres we arrived at the small town of Sea Lake. The following map is the area that we plan to cover over the next two days. Sea Lake isn't mentioned on this map, but all the other silos are.



Map of the Silo Art Trail we are proposing to cover over the next two days.

Sea Lake is a wheat-belt town which is located south of the shores of Lake Tyrrell (the largest lake in Victoria). This was the start of our Silo Art Trail for the Victoria Mallee Region. Before heading off to see the first of the art works, we had a coffee at the one of the two local coffee shops. A lovely couple manage this establishment and make great coffee, and for me, a great homemade sausage

roll. This was probably one of the best I have ever tasted. Not salty, plenty of flavour and a hint of curry. Lovely.

From the coffee shop we went to our first silo which was located a short drive through the town of Sea Lake. The artwork for this silo is a celebration of the still and silence found in outback Victoria, and the associated feelings of wholeness and freedom. The young girl, swinging from a Mallee Eucalyptus, looks over Lake Tyrrell and reflects on her Indigenous heritage. The Indigenous name 'Tyrille' means 'space opening to the sky' as the colours of dusk and dawn are reflected in the shallow saline bowl. The Boorong People were known to have more knowledge of astronomy than any other tribe, and their stories are rich in culture and connection to the lake. The artwork aims to connect and bring the viewer closer to some of the relatively ordinary and overlooked elements of the outback landscape and allows viewers to see these elements from a new perspective.



Sea Lake Silo Art



Sea Lake Silo Art with Maree in foreground



Sea Lake Silo Art with Maree in the foreground



Sea Lake Silo Art

From Sea Lake we headed across country to the town of Roseberry to view the next piece of artwork on our silo trail.



Roseberry Silo Art



Roseberry Silo Art



Roseberry Silo Art

Before commencing work in Roseberry, Melbourne artist, Kaff-eine spent time in the Mallee assisting fellow artist Rone on his Lascelles silo project (we travel to see this silo tomorrow). During this time, Kaff-eine travelled to neighbouring towns, discovering the natural environment, and acquainting herself with local business owners, families, farmers, and children – all with the view to developing a concept for these GrainCorp silos which date back to 1939. Completed in late 2017, Kaff-eine's artwork depicts themes that she says embody the region's past, present, and future.

The silo on the left captures the grit, tenacity, and character of the region's young female farmers, who regularly face drought, fires and other hardships living and working in the Mallee. In her work shirt, jeans and turned-down cowboy boots, the strong young female sheep farmer symbolises the future.

The silo on the right portrays a quiet moment between dear friends. The contemporary horseman appears in Akubra hat, Bogs boots and oilskin vest – common attire for Mallee farmers. Both man and horse are relaxed and facing downward, indicating their mutual trust, love, and genuine connection.

From Roseberry we headed down to the small town of Brim, where we will be staying for two nights in a free camp area. The Brim silo artwork undertaken by artist Guido van Helten, was the first silo artwork to appear in Victoria, and soon infused the town's community with newfound energy and optimism. After gaining widespread local and international attention, Brim's silo art success shone a spotlight on the Wimmera Mallee region and inspired the establishment of the Silo Art Trail. Completed in early 2016, with limited financial resources, van Helten's mural depicts an anonymous, multi-generational quartet of female and male farmers. Rendered across these four 1939-built GrainCorp silos, van Helten's subjects bear expressions that exemplify the strength and resilience of the local farming community.



Brim Silo Art

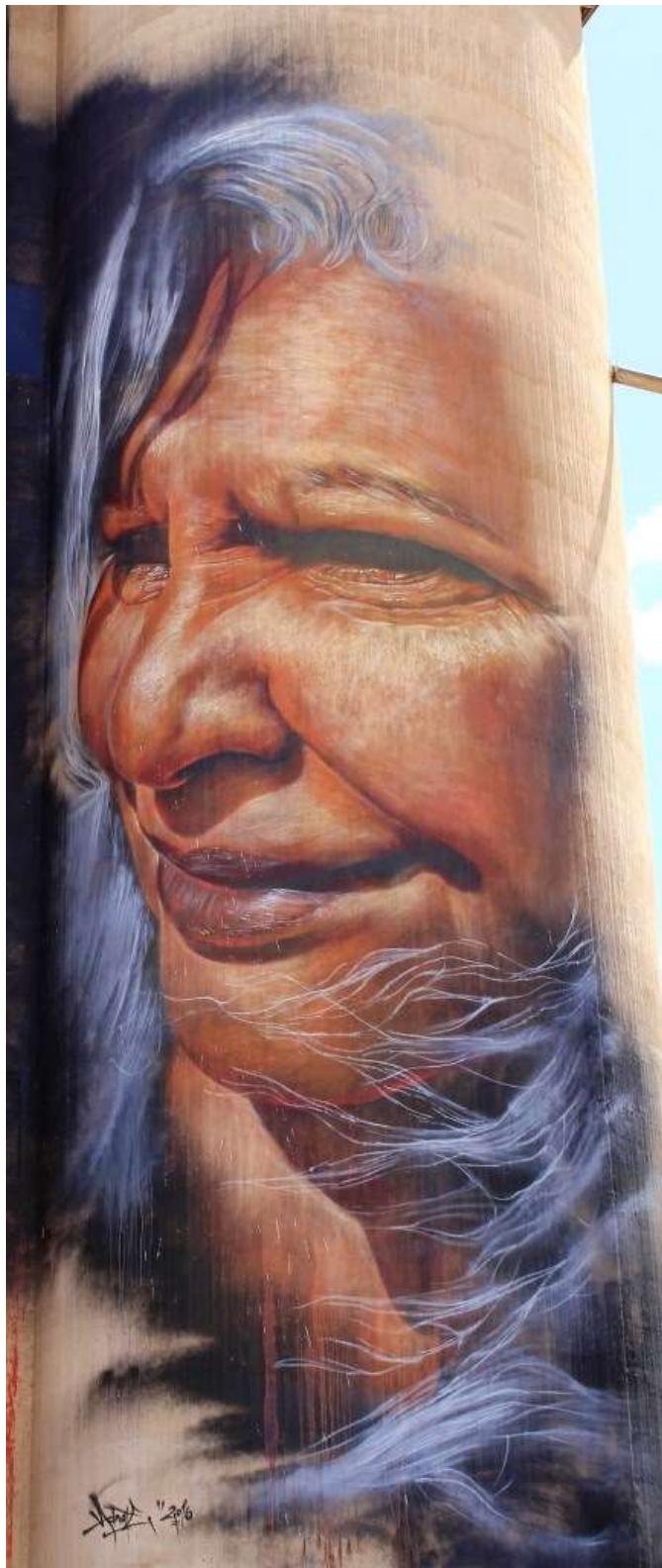
By rendering the figures as both central and peripheral, present and absent, the work explores shifting notions of community identity at a time when rural populations face both immense economic pressure and the tangible consequences of climate change. Using the documentary style of humanist street photography as studies, the translucent aerosol technique conjures a sense of ghostliness. The resulting characters are profoundly connected to their chosen place, infusing the landscape with a comforting, familiar presence.

From here we drove into Warracknabeal as it was time feed coffee to my travelling companion. You all know how Maree loves her coffee stops. We drove around the streets of the town trying to find a coffee shop but there were none to be found. It was amazing to find not one coffee shop available. We did see that you could probably get one at the local service station in town, but we could do better than that by going back to the van and using Maree's coffee machine. So, we decided we would do that but as we were in Warracknabeal and going to Brim meant travelling back north, we decided to head south and visit the Sheep Hills silos.

Well, the artwork on these four silos is amazing, as you can see from the images below. The artist who completed this artwork is Adnate. Throughout his career, Melbourne-based artist, Adnate has used his work to tell the stories of Indigenous people and their native lands, particularly the stories of Aboriginal Australians. In 2016, Adnate developed a friendship with the Barengi Gadjin Land Council in north-west Victoria and found his inspiration for this mural. Adnate's depiction of Wergaia Elder, Uncle Ron Marks, and Wotjobaluk Elder, Aunty Regina Hood, alongside two young children, Savannah Marks, and Curtly McDonald, celebrates the richness of the area's Indigenous culture. The night sky represents elements of local dreaming, and the overall image signifies the important exchange of wisdom, knowledge, and customs from Elders to the next generation. Adnate spent four weeks with the community in late 2016 to conceive and complete the mural. He says that he sought to shine a spotlight on the area's young Indigenous people and highlight the strong ancestral connection that they share with their Elders.



Sheep Hill Silo Artwork – Wergaia Elder, Uncle Ron Marks, and Wotjobaluk Elder, Aunty Regina Hood, alongside two young children, Savannah Marks, and Curtly McDonald



Sheep Hill Sil Artwork – Wotjobaluk Elder, Aunty Regina Hood



Sheep Hill Silo Artwork – Wergaia Elder, Uncle Ron Marks



Sheep Hill Silo Artwork – Wergaia Elder, Uncle Ron Marks, and Wotjobaluk Elder, Aunty Regina Hood, alongside two young children, Savannah Marks, and Curtly McDonald

9 December 2020

We decided we would spend the day travelling around the northern region of the Victorian Mallee District Silo Art Trail. We left Brim, our base for two nights, around 09:30 and headed off to our first silo located in the very small town of Patchewollock, some 87 kms from Brim. From here we headed east and then south down to the town of Lascelles. After viewing the silo in this small town, we travelled down to Woomelang where we saw a different approach to the silo trail; an idea inspired by Joe Collins, the 21-year-old vice-president of Woomelang and District Development Association. There are eight small portable silos that depict the images of endangered species in the local area. The artwork is excellent.

Enjoy the information about the following silos we visited.

PATCHEWOLLOCK

To prepare for this Patchewollock mural, Brisbane artist, Fintan Magee booked a room at the local pub to immerse himself in the community and get to know its people. When he met local sheep and grain farmer, Nick “Noodle” Hulland, Magee knew he had found his muse.

Why Hulland? According to Magee, the rugged, lanky local exemplified the no-nonsense, hardworking spirit of the region. However, perhaps more importantly, Noodle had just the right height and leanness to neatly fit onto the narrow, 35-metre-high canvas of the twin 1939-built GrainCorp silos.

Completed in late 2016, the artist’s depiction of the famously reserved Hulland portrays an image of the archetypal Aussie farmer – faded blue “flanny” (flannelette shirt) and all. Hulland’s solemn expression, sun-bleached hair and squinting gaze speak to the harshness of the environment and the challenges of life in the Wimmera Mallee in Victoria.



The Patchewollock Silo Artwork

LASCELLES

To capture the true essence of Lascelles, the Melbourne-based artist Rone knew that he had to learn about the town from those who were deeply connected to it. Here, he depicts local farming couple Geoff and Merrilyn Horman, part of a family that has lived and farmed in the area for four generations.

Rone says that he wanted the mural to portray his subjects as wise and knowing, nurturing the town's future with their vast farming experience and longstanding connection to the area. In mid-2017, Rone worked for two weeks to transform the two 1939-built GrainCorp silos. He went to great lengths to paint in the silo's existing raw concrete tones to produce a work that would integrate sensitively into its environment. Utilising this muted monochrome palette, he added water to his paint as a blending tool to produce a ghostly, transparent effect – a signature of his distinctive painting style.



Lascelles Silo Artwork



Lascelles Silo Artwork – Close up



Lascelles Silo Artwork – The artwork on the other silo.

WOOMELANG

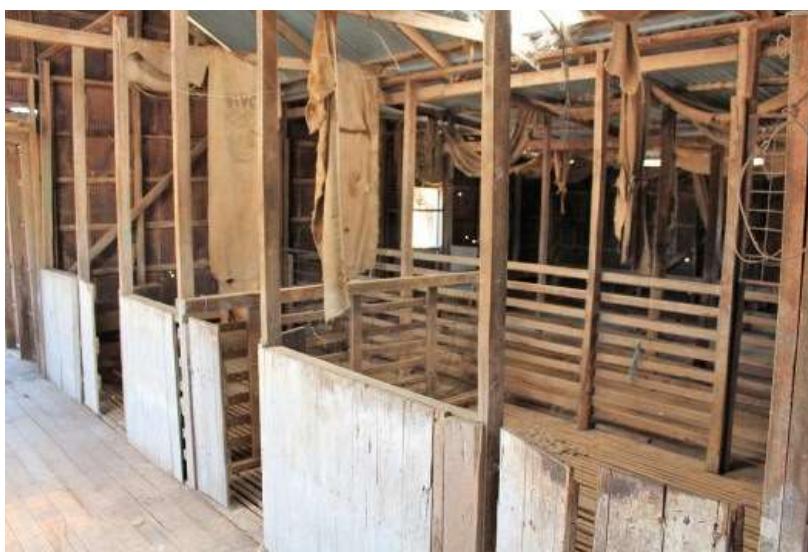
Located on the Sunraysia Highway, Woomelang was originally known as “Cronomby” after the natural waterhole that first attracted the early settlers to this area. When the railway line arrived, the Government constructed earthen dams or “Tanks” as they became known, which are still there today but have been cleaned out and linked together to create a popular picnic area and fishing spot. A good example of local ingenuity can be seen on the southern approach to the town where a shearing shed, constructed using compressed egg cans that were destined to become kerosene tins, stands as a monument to the war time shortage of building materials. Today, the town services a productive farming area, provides a range of excellent community and sporting facilities and is the base for several agricultural support businesses.



Historic Shearing Shed with outside walls made from compressed egg cans



Historic Shearing Shed – Inside view of this shearing shed made from compressed egg cans.



Historic Shearing Shed – Inside view of this shearing shed made from compressed egg cans.

Woomelang's Historical Shearing Shed



Built in the 1950's by Jim Corbett; a local builder/freight-man, Woomelang's historical shearing shed is clad in flattened South Australian Egg Board egg tins that were destined to become kerosene tins. During the hard times after World War II when there was a shortage of building materials, these egg tins provided a robust and cost effective solution to the construction of the shearing shed. The use of these egg tins is what makes the shed so unique. Since its construction, the shearing shed has been used by district farmers who would bring their mobs of sheep into town and use the shed and yards for shearing. Many a bucks' party was held in this shed - if only the walls could talk! Now rusted and worn, the shearing shed is a much loved and photographed building. The restoration of the shearing shed is ongoing and it is thanks to the dedication and passion of the late Les Knights and his band of enthusiastic helpers that you are able to enjoy the shearing shed and surrounds today.

Historic Shearing Shed in Woomelang – Information about this shearing shed.

In June 2020, the town of Woomelang invited seven artists to transform small transportable silos into a tourist attraction for the town. Featured on the silos are the likes of spotted tail quolls and other endangered species of the area. A young leader's strategy to put his hometown on the tourist map is coming to fruition as the small southern Mallee town of Woomelang joins Victoria's silo art trail. Enjoy the images we have taken of this town's contribution to the Victorian Mallee District Silo Art Trail.



Woomelang Portable Silo Artwork



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Woomelang Portable Silo Artwork

10 December 2020

Today we headed off towards Adelaide via Dimboola and Coonalpyn. Dimboola because I wanted to have a look at this town; reminded by the 1979 movie “Dimboola” with Bruce Spence who I really remember from the 1971 hilarious Australian comedy film “Stork” directed by Tim Burstall, and then on to Coonalpyn where we will visit the last of the silo artworks planned for this trip.

On arrival in Dimboola, we were impressed on the way the town has developed since the highway bypass back in May 1989. It is a pleasant little town with several bakeries (which as you all know Maree just loves to stop at for her coffee), and, for us campers, a dump point and potable water refresh point. Great for topping up our van of depleted water tanks while staying in Brim for two nights.

Anyway, we had our coffee and Maree had the rhubarb and apple cake (I was so sure she was going to go for the berry cheesecake I saw in the window) and I had a lovely halloumi bruschetta. I have that bruschetta recipe in mind for an upcoming entrée.

From Dimboola we made our way to Coonalpyn stopping at Bordertown as someone, and I wonder who, needed another coffee. From Bordertown it was a relatively short drive (110kms) to Coonalpyn.

We are staying at the local Coonalpyn Caravan Park (also known as the Coonalpyn Soldiers Memorial Caravan Park). Very basic for its \$22 per night for a powered site considering the Brim Park was excellent for its \$10 per night. But it is just a stop off point for us to take some photos of the Coonalpyn silo artwork.

The artwork is excellent, but it is difficult to really get good photographs as the silos are very close to the highway and there is multiple signage that is difficult to remove from the images without losing the full perspective of the artwork. Hopefully you will get to appreciate the artwork from the images we were able to take. I have also included an image of the information board that gives some background to the children used in the artwork.

Oh yes, I almost forgot to mention the image of the “Tin Man”. This is a statue built out of the empty spray cans the artist used to complete the mural on the silos.



Mural on the silos at Coonalpyn



Mural on the silos at Coonalpyn



Mural on the silos at Coonalpyn.



Information board about the mural on the silos at Coonalpyn.



..... and of course, the “Tin Man”

11 December 2020

Today was a short drive to Adelaide from Coonalpyn (170 kms). We arrived at the Big4 West Beach caravan park around 11:45. The park is very large and has the usual amenities Big4 parks have plus a bonus of a cafe that serves food for lunch and dinner.

My sister's boyfriend has just arrived at the park with his caravan in tow. He is putting the van here for a week so my father can join us. This will allow us to have more quality time without the daily drive back and forth between West Beach and Moana, 36 kms and about a 40-minute drive each way.

Tonight, we decided to try out the cafe for dinner and to our surprise the food was excellent and surprisingly cheap for a cafe attached to a caravan park. But then again, we are used to Canberra prices for dining out, even at the clubs, so the prices here in Adelaide could be high, but I don't really think so.

Just saw an amazing sunset but we couldn't get down to the beach in time to get the best photo, but Maree managed to get a very good image from our van site.



A Glorious Sunset from our Campsite at the West Beach Caravan Park.