

Tjirbruki Narna arra *The Tjirbruki Gateway*, Warriparinga

Opening ceremony, 30th October, 1997

Address by Gavin Malone, collaborating artist

My bloodline is Irish, or Celtic, through and through; Malone, Doherty, Donachy, O'Brien, Murphy, O'Brien, Costello. Like the Kurna, the tongue and culture of my forebears in their homeland was also suppressed by a colonising power. Gaelic is not now a common language but it is being slowly resurrected. Having lost their own land and parts of their culture in Ireland, what part did my forebears then play in the dispossession of the Kurna?

John Malone, my great, great grandfather arrived in the colony of South Australia in the 1850s, less than twenty years after the Kurna people were dispossessed from their lands; the people and their culture decimated. I can only speculate on what the relationship between my forebears and the Kurna people may have been. I do however know about my own relationship with Adelaide, with this place; this is my home country, this is where I grew up. I have a strong attachment to this land in many ways. The Tjirbruki Dreaming is part of this land and in that sense it is also now part of my story. I feel it is now part of my heritage, not in the way that it belongs to the Kurna and other Nungas but as it is part of the culture of this place, this land, it is now part of me.

My boyhood was spent growing up in nearby Warradale, when the Sturt River was still a river and not a concrete drain, when some of the vineyards and orchards of Marion were still productive. But there was no presence of Aboriginality in that childhood; it was an Irish Australian Catholic structure of the 1950s and 60s. Parts of the history of this land were not known to me; they had been disregarded or suppressed. The vineyards and orchards of Marion have now all but disappeared and the opportunity to conserve more of that history as a living entity in Laffer's Triangle has been lost by the shortsightedness and lack of understanding in sections of our government and our community as to what constitutes quality of life.

Fortunately an Aboriginal presence has returned to this land, to Warriparinga, to take its rightful place. Both cultures, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, have lost part of their heritage in this site and both stand to lose more. Warriparinga is only a small sliver of land along the river; the vacant land you see around you may soon be built on, more land that was once Kurna will be lost in the name of economic development. More land will also be lost to the Marion and wider community. But we can still strive to preserve and protect aspects of our shared history and shared humanity for our common future.

Tjirbruki Narna arra *The Tjirbruki Gateway*, has been part of a personal conciliation process with the Aboriginal people of our country, with the Kurna people, with this land and with aspects of my own existence as a man, as a member of the Goonya or light skinned community. It provided the challenge and privilege of interpreting a multi-layered Creation Story and mediating on a complex cultural issue vital to the future of our land. That is what good public art can be about. I am proud of my involvement in this project, I am proud of my fellow artists, Sherry Rankine and Margaret Worth, and I am proud of what we have been able to achieve; not only the physical outcome which is tangible and before our eyes, but also the social outcomes, and the other intangibles that go with art.

This artwork has been a cultural process as much as a physical project. We have worked with many people, who have had a spirit of generosity to the ideal of the project, a lot of goodwill towards the process of conciliation and the re-emergence of the Tjirbruki Dreaming.

I would like to thank everyone who has assisted the project; there have been many who have helped in all kinds of ways. I thank the Kurna people, in particular Georgina Williams and Lewis O'Brien for sharing their knowledge. I thank Billy Trott and Mundy Williams for their contributions onsite. I thank sponsors and others for their material support and believe it is appropriate to acknowledge the people concerned, as people and not just institutions.

Trevor Ferguson, Native Forests Ranger, D.P.I. – Forests, who provided the Stringybark trunks
Christie Gordon, Damilon, a logging company for retrieving and loading the tree trunks at the Second Valley Forest
Jim Delaine, Services Engineer and Peter Grindley, Site Supervisor, Brukunqa, S.A. Water, for providing the stone

Steve Linou, State Manager, Rocla and Kevin Scholtz, Manager, Maslins Quarry for the coloured sands
Steve Freeman, Engineering Manager, Smorgon A.R.C. for steel reinforcing and advice
Len Walker who provided scaffolding in the last few days when we needed it
Robert Malone, for growing the River Redgum *Karra* from seed provided by the Friends of Warriparinga

And the many others have assisted and contributed to the success of the project in their own personal way:

Trevor Peach, Treever Transport, who transported the trunks from the Second Valley Forest
Richard Bennet for chainsaw work at the forest
Phil Harris, Days Plant Hire, who helped us retrieve the trees that were felled for the Southern Expressway at Darlington
The Cleghornes, Earth Boring Company, for drilling the holes for the tree trunks
Peter Young and Darrell the rigger, Peter Young Cranes, for the intricate and delicate work of placing the trunks
Dennis Miller and Chris Wyatt, Demill Engineering, who fabricated the wings and shackles
Rod Yates, Laser Works, for laser cutting
Peter Moore, Silver Star Crash Repairs, for painting the wings
Mark Slattery, Donato Steel Fabrications, for fabricating the stainless steel shields
Tony Whitehill, Tree Advisory Officer, Botanic Gardens

And the many staff of the Marion Council:

Don Chapman, Cultural Planner, who gave continual support and encouragement
Terry Bruun, Manager, Culture and Leisure for his assistance
Dick Reade for engineering advice
George Debono for his work on the bob cat
Don Coulls for his work on the water truck
Greg Eapps and his team for collecting the stone
Jeff Hardy, Dean Howard and their grounds maintenance teams
Rod McBeth and the nursery staff

And especially all the children who left their footprints in the concrete of the flow pattern.

It is people in both the personal and institutional sense that made this artwork, and it is people who through their personal decisions, individually and collectively, that make changes in the nature of our common culture to develop a more inclusive society. Sure, everything has not always been easy. There have been frustrations and irritations between us as artists and dealing with the complexities of a cross cultural project which took a long time to complete. But we have worked through them. It took time and personal commitment, just as the process of conciliation will also take time and personal, individual commitment.

There is a lot of misinformation and uninformed prejudice still in our community. Our political processes and our media still contribute to this for both ideological and financial reasons. This has to be countered and this artwork is part of that. The spirit of this artwork wants to speak to you. For some it may be a whisper, for others it will be a scream. You may have to listen hard, look hard, feel hard and really deep to let it speak at all its levels. But it is here to speak and tell a story of the creation of our land and of the dreaming. It provides a place of learning, coming together and conciliation for us all.

Thank You

Tjirbruki Narna arra *The Tjirbruki Gateway* was officially opened 30th October 1997 by the Governor-General, Sir William Deane and Dr. Lowitja O'Donoghue in the presence of Kaurna representatives Vincent Copley, Doris Graham and Garth Agius. Ceremony and dance was presented by Georgina Williams, Nangki Burka (Senior Woman), Kaurna, and members of the Paitya Dance Group; Karl Telfer, Stevie Goldsmith, Andrew Lindsay and Nikki Ashby.