





ARTS HUB

HEATHER ZUBEK UNEARTHS THE CREATIVE SIDE
OF KALGOORLIE AND THE GOLDFIELDS REGION.

As part of her Australia-wide tour in 1914, majestic songstress Dame Nellie Melba travelled the country by train. Stops on her tour included the mining town of Kalgoorlie, which, back then, was a place of little culture. However, as Dame Nellie stepped from the train, there were 2,000 people awaiting her arrival. Those same 2,000 accompanied the Melbourne-born soprano down the wide streets to her accommodation, the Palace Hotel. That night, Dame Nellie sang to a packed audience in the Town Hall for two solid hours. In the end she had to beg to be allowed to stop.

Kalgoorlie and the arts don't traditionally seem synonymous. The image of a rough-and-tumble mining town covered in a haze of red dust is at odds with the idea of a vibrant cultural scene. However, you just need to scratch the surface. ☺

“The city of Kalgoorlie and its surrounding landscape is so inspirational for artists,” says Tina Bryce, artistic director and curator at Fossick Handmade gallery and the driving force behind the arts in Kalgoorlie-Boulder. “The city has maintained its historical buildings and we also have the iconic open pit mine right on our doorstep, which inspires a lot of creative work.”

Tina and her Fossick Handmade business partners Paula Fletcher and Carly Ennor showcase the works of local artists as well as running workshops and other arts events in the community.

Speaking with Tina the day after the gallery’s auction of works by local textile artist Trish Little, Tina says, “It was our first art auction, so we weren’t quite sure how it would be received, but we are thrilled to have sold everything, giving the entire proceeds of \$4,500 to the Royal Flying Doctor Service.”

Tina was also pleased with the turnout, especially as her event was competing with a performance of the Russian Ballet at the local Goldfields Arts Centre.

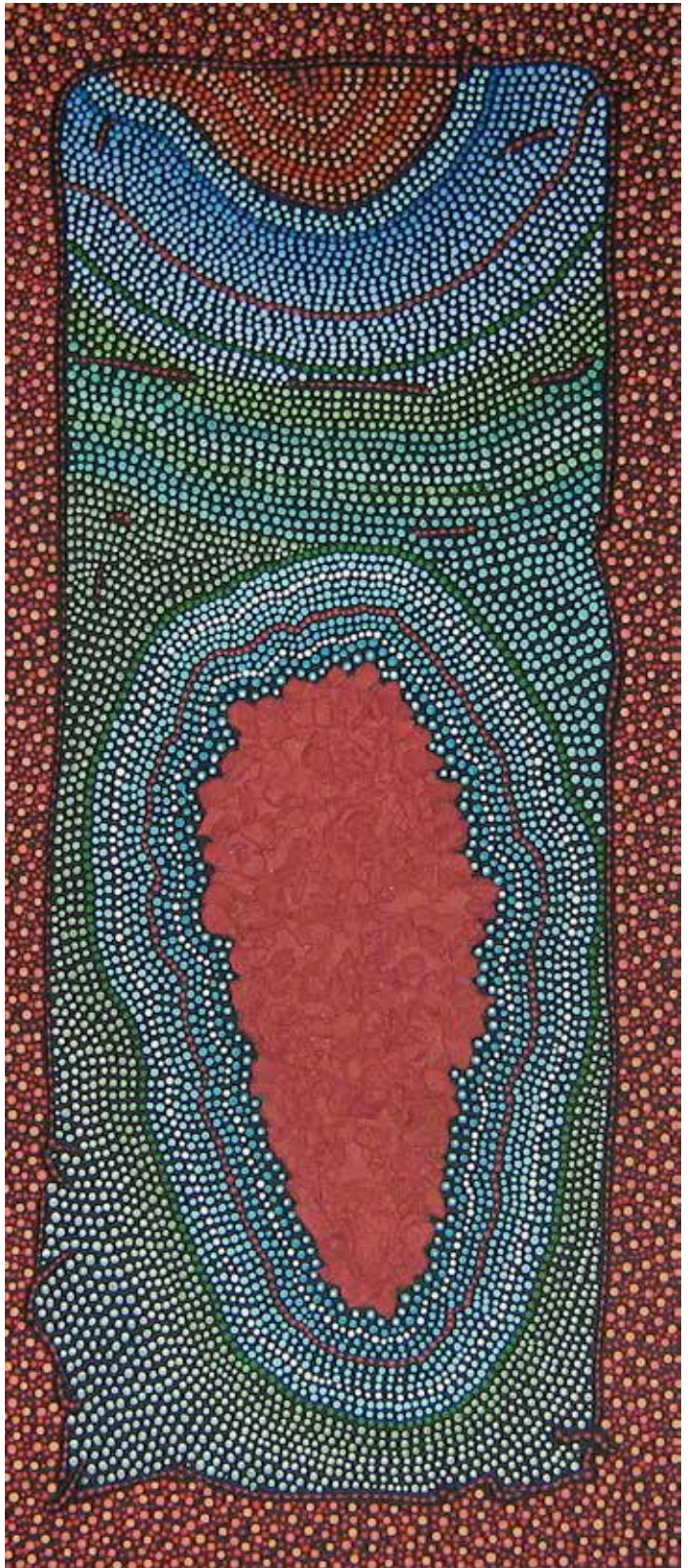
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“The arts do have a good following here,” she says. “Because the town is such a busy mining community, these events can offer some time-out, a bit of relaxation.”

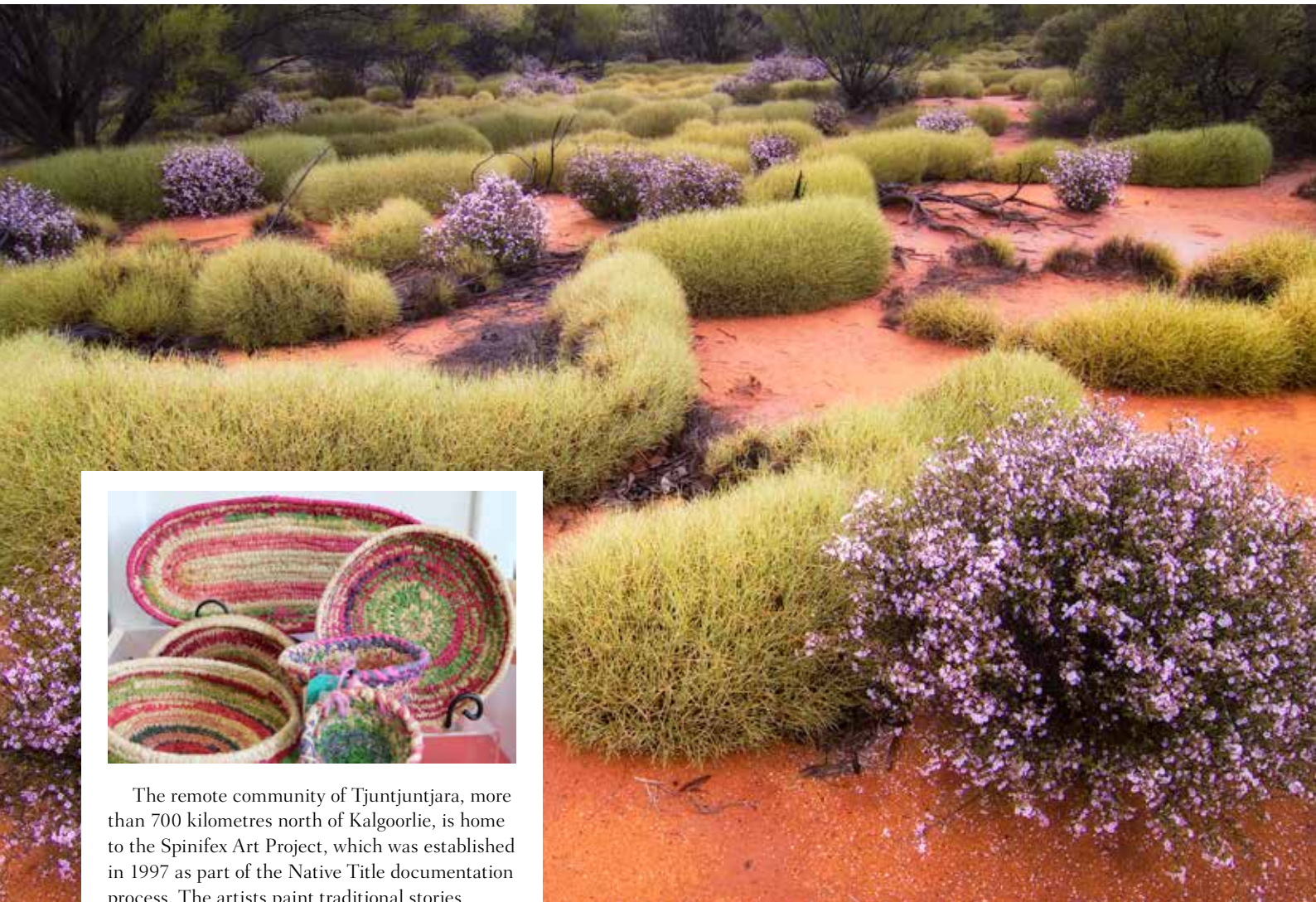
Local award-winning artist Debbie Carmody believes the Kalgoorlie arts scene needs to be developed even more. “Art needs to be understood in terms of the social benefits it can bring to the community.”

Born in Norseman, Debbie is an Anangu (Maralinga), Spinifex (Great Victoria Desert) and Noongar (South West) woman. “My artwork is strongly influenced by the Western Desert style of painting,” she says. “It’s interpretive but looser in style and it pushes the boundaries of what is recognised as traditional dot paintings and construction.”

Debbie’s paintings are a reflection of her homelands, her family and the stories they tell about Land and their experiences with Land. “My artwork shows the rich diversity of First Nation culture – a strong, living culture that respects all life forms that are part of the woven circle of life.” ☺



Opening image and above: Works by artist Debbie Carmody reflect stories of Land.



The remote community of Tjuntjuntjara, more than 700 kilometres north of Kalgoorlie, is home to the Spinifex Art Project, which was established in 1997 as part of the Native Title documentation process. The artists paint traditional stories with acrylic paint on linen, often using a vibrant palette of colours. The Spinifex works are now widely recognised in the art world and continue to be housed within major art and museum collections in Australia and overseas.

“The women of the community are now involved in basket weaving projects,” says Tina Bryce from Fossick Handmade, where their work is displayed. “The baskets feature really bold colours, as well as the natural spinifex and raffia. The work done by the Spinifex Art Project usually ends up in Sydney or other major city centres, so it’s great to have it here in Kalgoorlie where people can appreciate it.”

Kim Gent, artist and proprietor of the Chunky Timber Company, believes the arts scene struggles within Kalgoorlie. “It’s difficult because the place is so mining-oriented and the lifestyle is very transient,” says Kim as he prepares to open his art gallery to the public for the first time. “More of my stuff leaves town than stays here.

“Art is not just painting. To me, art is in natural wood. I let the timber become the work of art.”

The Chunky Timber Company specialises in timber beads; wine-barrel furniture and custom-made craft pieces. All the timbers used by the artist have been found on the forest floor or recycled from discarded timbers in the area.

“You could almost say I’m 100 per cent carbon neutral,” Kim says. “With the beads being created from left-over timber and the sawdust being used by a local butcher, everything is recycled.”

Photographer Lynn Webb has always had a passion for the bush around Norseman and Kalgoorlie. However, it wasn’t until he became a proud father, taking photos of his kids, that the bush became more than just a playground.

“There’s always something new to find in the landscape, but I can’t put my finger on it, really. Maybe it comes down to the colours, which are just so vibrant. And it’s just so peaceful.”

To capture the majesty of the area, Lynn takes to the skies to get the perfect shot. “When you’re up in the hang-glider you see just how vast the place is,” he says. ☺

Above, inset and next page: One of Lynn Webb’s spectacular outback images; baskets woven as part of the Spinifex Art Project are on display at Fossick Handmade gallery; photo of Kalgoorlie by Lynn Webb.

Lynn includes photographs of the mining process in his work, somehow transforming the hard labour of the miner into a work of art. "It boils down to colour. The colours you see in the open pit are the colours you find in nature."

Currently, many of the artists in the area are working towards the Regional Arts Australia National Conference being held in Kalgoorlie–Boulder in spring 2014.

"It's a great coup for the city," says Tina Bryce. "We're looking at focusing on the arts and mining communities, a discussion that began during last year's conference in South Australia.

"When mining companies inject funds into the arts, it's the community that benefits. The community then has something that keeps them engaged and content to live in the area. The arts help to keep the place vibrant." 

Round-up

GET THERE

Skywest services Kalgoorlie with multiple daily flights from Perth and from Melbourne once a week. 1300 66 00 88, www.skywest.com.au

STAY

Rydges Kalgoorlie Resort and Spa
21 Davidson Street, Kalgoorlie
08 9080 0800, www.rydges.com

Best Western Hospitality Inn
560 Hannan Street, Kalgoorlie
08 9021 2888, www.kalgoorlie.wa.hospitalityinns.com.au

EAT & DRINK

Balcony Bar and Restaurant, Palace Hotel
137 Hannan Street, Kalgoorlie
08 9021 2788, www.palacehotel.com.au

The York Hotel
259 Hannan Street, Kalgoorlie
08 9021 2337, www.yorkhotel.com.au

EXPLORE

Fossick Handmade gallery
93 Egan Street, Kalgoorlie
08 9022 3472, www.fossickhandmade.com.au

Lake Ballard
See Antony Gormley's 51 abstract black steel figures scattered over 10 square kilometres of this salt lake located 55 kilometres from Menzies.

MORE INFO

www.kalgoorlietourism.com
www.goldfieldstourism.com.au
www.regionalarts.com.au

