



## History

The idea for the Yarra Glen Art Show was conceived by a group of friends, who were also all local artists, over a morning coffee at Cheese Freaks (now the Yarra Glen Cafe and Store) back in 2001. The Steels Creek friends – Christine and Chris Mullen, Margaret and John Houston, and Jane and Malcolm Calder – recognised the need for an event to celebrate the artistic talent of the local and wider Yarra Valley communities, which could also become an additional attraction for tourists to visit Yarra Glen. To get their initiative off the ground, each couple put \$100 into a kitty and decided on the name: "The Yarra Glen Grand Easter Art Show".

The show was launched in 2002 and held in a marquee on the front lawn of Cheese Freaks (thanks to the generosity of the then proprietor, Ian Balmain). Before the show opened, artists Noel Nicolson and Veronica Holland created a mural on the southern wall of the outside courtyard, where it remained until early 2016. Due to the need to keep the art works secure, Kay McRae and Malcolm Calder camped out overnight in the marquee.

What the first art show lacked in formal organisation it made up for in local support. Hoogies of Yarra Glen provided farm gates (at no cost) on which the artworks were hung, while Richard Tomlins of Greensborough Steel Fabrications manufactured and donated the supporting legs. (Both gates and legs have provided, most generously, for every art show since). From the proceeds of the first art show \$3,000 was raised to donate to Afghan women and children.

Over the next few years, as the team took turns in taking the lead role in organising the art show, the number of entries grew from the initial 60 to over 200 and the work-load increased. After two years the show outgrew the marquee at Cheese Freaks and was moved to The Barn at Yering Station, an enclosed space with good security. Here, under the leadership of Christine and Chris Mullen and with a great working relationship with Yering Station, the show expanded in both the number of entries and in the quality of the art work .

When in 2006 the art show's Easter weekend date clashed with the Yering Farmers Market the show was moved to the newly opened Balgownie

Estate. This provided the opportunity to build another great working relationship with a major local winery and the show was held there through to 2009. In that year, after Christine and Chris Mullen moved to Melbourne, the show was organised by Yve Hart, a textile artist living in Yarra Glen.

In 2010 Morgan Calder of ACME Design and Printing assumed the role of art show organiser, with the assistance of a committee that included Malcolm Calder as Chair, Robyn Henchel, Heather Smith, Ivan Filsell, and Keith Montell.

At this time, with the art show attracting more than 500 entries, the committee moved for it to become incorporated. Also in this year the Balgownie exhibition space was not available so a new venue at Alowyn Gardens, with a large marquee, was secured. Owned by John and Prue Van De Linde, Alowyn Gardens was an ideal location for the show where it was also held in 2011.

The Yarra Glen Art Show was changed to a biennial event in 2013, when its location was moved to the newly renovated Yarra Glen Memorial Hall, again with Morgan Calder as the coordinator. The Memorial Hall proved to be a very suitable site for the exhibition with good space and lighting for the more than 500 entries. Accordingly, it was used in 2015, with coordination of the show under the leadership of Debra Traill with an expanded Committee including Malcolm Calder, Robyn Henchel, Heather Smith, Ivan Filsell, Karen Fothergill, Liz Lucas, Paul Kelly, and Sharon Rowell.

Now we have a new committee for 2019 led by Artist Bronwyn Ward with Sharon Rowell, Paul Kelly, Peter Williams, Elizabeth Haigh, Robyn Henchel, and Jessica Harris.