



Peter T Nathan

ACT Natimuk

ACT Natimuk is a dynamic, artist-led organisation recognised for creating distinctive, place-based arts experiences. Based in the small rural town of Natimuk in Western Victoria, we foster a strong connection to place while delivering artistic work that resonates regionally, across the state and nationally. We support artists to make daring, new high-quality work,

support diverse local artistic practice; from dance, visual arts and projection to aerial performance, film, and experimental works. We strengthen and foster participation in Natimuk's cultural life through inclusive, sustainable, and community-driven programs. Central to our mission is an ongoing commitment to reconciliation.

actnatimuk.com.au

ISBN: 978-0-6452505-1-0



Images: Mat Dooling



Alan and Chrissie - Becoming Nala Book Launch - Goat Gallery. Image: Jacquie Tinkler



CHRISTINA SECOMBE AND ALAN MURPHY BECOMING NALA

Alan Murphy is a proud Moonahcullah, Wamba-Wamba man. His love for painting was inspired by his mentor and established artist Uncle Brian McKinnon.

He has exhibited in the Geelong and Melbourne galleries at the invitation of renowned artist, Clifford Possum. His paintings have been an important component of Naidoc Week exhibitions in 2021, 2023 and 2024 at Horsham Regional Art Gallery.

Christina Secombe is a proud Wotjobaluk woman whose life experiences inspire her writing and artistic ventures. As a young child Christina grew up struggling to read and write, but upon having children, she hoped to give them a richer education and found herself learning with them. Christina gained her Certificate 111 in Screen and Media in 2018, Certificate IV in Digital Technology in 2019, and her Graduate Diploma in Social and Community Services in 2023.

CREATIVE LAB PROCESS

Becoming Nala is the title of a new book by Christina Secombe and Alan Nala Murphy, inspired by their journey to return to Country in search of Alan's father's birthplace. Alan and Christina invited photographer Mathew Dooling to document their journey to revisit the Moonahcullah Mission and the Deniliquin Cemetery. He created a photographic series to complement the written story and the painted illustrations.

The book brings together Christina's writing with Alan's art into a children's picture book that will inspire young First Nations Peoples to maintain connection to their Culture and Country and to courageously seek out their beginnings and those of their families.

With the support of curator, Alison Eggleton and gallery owner Jacquie Tinkler, the opportunity arose to extend this project into an exhibition at the Goat Gallery. The book was launched and the exhibition opened during NOSAT (Natimuk Open Studios Art Trail) 2024.



Images : Ivan Masic, T J Garvie Photography and Simon Rose, The Great Aboriginal People.

DYLAN SINGH

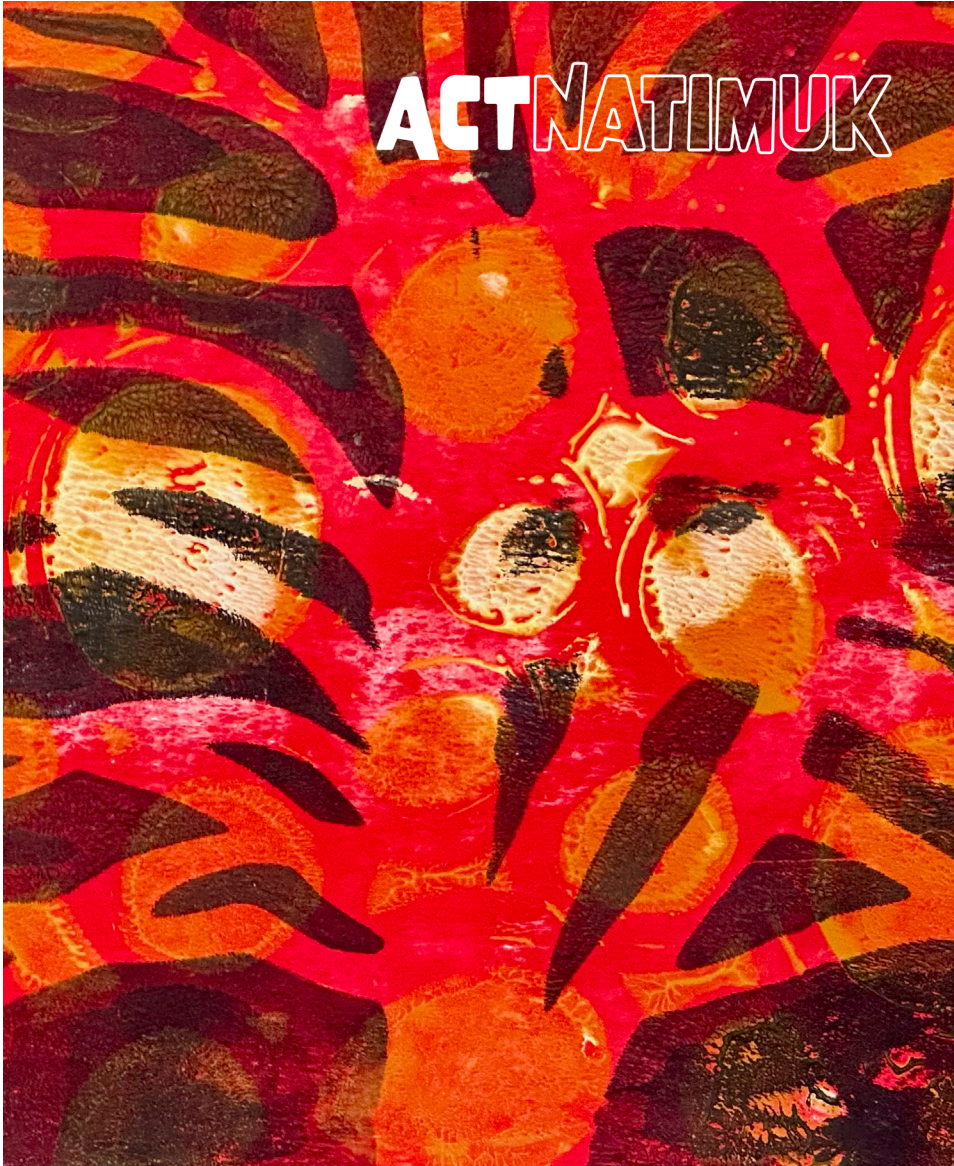
THE DREAMING PROJECT

Dylan Singh is a Melbourne-based circus performer, tight wire artist, and First Nations storyteller whose work bridges physical mastery with cultural ceremony. As founder of *The Dreaming Project*, Dylan leads multidisciplinary collaborations, including with the Little Projector Company, that fuse movement, music, and visual art to honor Country and community. With roots in contemporary circus and a deep respect for ancestral protocols, his practice transforms performance into living story—inviting audiences into immersive experiences shaped by land, lineage, and collective imagination.

CREATIVE LAB PROCESS

Over the past year, our collective has been deeply engaged with First Nations communities across the wider Horsham area, fostering creative exchange and cultural revival through ceremony, storytelling, and site-responsive art. In dialogue with Barengi

Gadjin Land Council and Pink Lake Creative, we've explored ways to honor Country through immersive installations, promenade rituals, and visual storytelling that reflect local histories and mythic motifs. Our work with the wider Wotjobaluk mob has centered on respectful collaboration, amplifying voices and practices rooted in land and lineage. We've co-developed ceremonial arcs and performance frameworks that bridge traditional knowledge with contemporary expression. The process has further deepened our commitment to cultural continuity—mapping ancestral narratives into kinetic experiences that invite reflection and connection. Together, we're building a living archive of story, movement, and innovation, guided by community, grounded in protocol, and driven by a shared vision for creative sovereignty. Centering the wisdom of local Indigenous elders, the long-term aim is to develop a contemporary ceremonial event that fuses circus, aerial acrobatics, projection art, music, dance, and visual arts.



Tarni Eldridge, gelli printing

ACT Natimuk respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the Land upon which we are located, the people of the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk.

Creative Lab Program 2023-2025

The Creative Lab program provides seeding funding for artists to explore an idea and/or extend their creative practice in the small vibrant township of Natimuk.

The Creative Lab program was created with the following aims:

- To encourage artists to connect with Natimuk and work as part of Natimuk's small but vibrant arts community
- To create/seed work for Nati Frinj Biennale
- To help with the sustainability of maintaining a regional arts practice
- To encourage artistic exploration
- To encourage diversity of artistic expression.

Following the first iteration of Creative Lab 2021-23, one of the recipients of that program, Louise Cooper, initiated and undertook a second Creative Lab in 2023, New Futures for Autistic Creatives, with funding through NDIS.

Also in 2023, in concord with our Reconciliation Action Plan, ACT Natimuk offered a First Nations Creative Lab. This was awarded to Chrissie Secombe and Alan Murphy for the Becoming Nala project.

In 2024 ACT Natimuk invited artists to apply for 3 x \$3000 Creative Lab grants, one of which again was a First Nations specific opportunity.

Wanting to allow for maximum artistic freedom with minimal restrictions, one of the few conditions of the funding is that the artists provide a 'work in progress' show and tell at the Nati Frinj Biennale plus material for this publication to try to capture and share the often-ephemeral artistic process.

From explorations of medium to skill development, the range of work undertaken through the Creative Labs is impressive, and encouragingly achieving its stated aims, including that some of the work has been further developed, and is being presented/piloted at this year's Nati Frinj Biennale 2025.

Following the success of the Creative Lab, ACT Natimuk plans to continue this program, resources permitting, including offering a First Nations specific Creative Lab as well as other targeted opportunities for artists from under-represented cohorts to ensure maximum accessibility and diversity of expression.

Verity Higgins
Creative Services



Poster image: Louise Cooper. Workshop images: Arapiles Multimedia (Pat Ford & Lisa Jackson).

NEW FUTURES FOR AUTISTIC CREATIVES ARTISTS: LOUISE COOPER WITH SUE PAVLOVICH

Louise Cooper
Louise 'Rockabilly' Cooper, is a proud Autistic independent author, community artist, the founder of Australia's first neurodiversity arts festival, Neurokin, and editor of Neurokin Magazine. Louise's practice centres around Autistic and Neurodivergent access, leadership, community and cultural development. She holds a Diploma of Arts from Deakin University and a Graduate Certificate in Autism Studies from Griffith University. She pairs these with almost 40 years lived experience and 20 years as a parent of two AuDHD sons.

Louise is particularly interested in digging to the roots of Autistic and Neurodivergent culture in Australia because every community is stronger when we know our history.

Sue Pavlovich
Sue Pavlovich has a vibrant practice in relational aesthetics investigating objects, people and movement through a project, Sensorium, spanning 2013 and ongoing.

She melds a passion for art, education, social equity, reconciliation, and policy as a tool for change. Sue had previously established and led an art course in professional art practice for people with multiple disabilities and sensory sensitivity at Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE. Sue holds a Master of Visual Arts, Monash University.

CREATIVE LAB PROCESS

Louise Cooper and Sue Pavlovich engaged in multidirectional mentoring exploring the changing contexts of Autism artistically, socio-culturally and personally over the past 36-40 years. This provided a context of where Louise's work is situated in the Autism landscape, why older initiatives were run in the ways that they were and how they may be able to be reworked to be more in line with today's ideologies. Louise gave a presentation in Natimuk on her journey of community arts practice, platforming untold stories and unheard voices, leading towards new futures for Autistic creative recovery, cultural and community development. A zine making activity was offered to explore and demonstrate authentic Autistic ways of cutting out the small talk and skipping straight to passionately held interests.



Images: Tarni Eldridge

TARNI ELDRIDGE

Tarni Eldridge is a Western Victoria-based artist working in gelli plate printing, collage, and mixed media. Inspired by the region's native birds, mountains, and flora, her art explores the relationship between nature, identity, and place. With a background in Visual Arts and Creative Arts Therapy, Tarni's practice is intuitive and layered, blending experimentation with storytelling. Each work reflects the textures and rhythms of the land, honouring its fragility and resilience while inviting viewers to reflect on connection and belonging.

CREATIVE LAB PROCESS

Through my Creative LAB process, I explored the connections between native plants, birdlife, and place. An exploration of what it means to be, create and nourish locality. The way in which we intertwined with our surroundings.



Using gelli plate printing, I worked with leaves, grasses, and other local flora, allowing them to leave delicate imprints on paper. These impressions became the foundation for collage, where I layered and reshaped the prints to form native birds.

This process reflected the fragility and resilience of the environment, the way we carry traces of where we come from. I was drawn to the unpredictability of printing, where each pull revealed prints I could not fully control, reminding me of the balance between guiding the outcome and leaving space for emergence.

By piecing together these fragments, I created images that birth from the natural world. My practice became a landing place, like a bird on a branch.

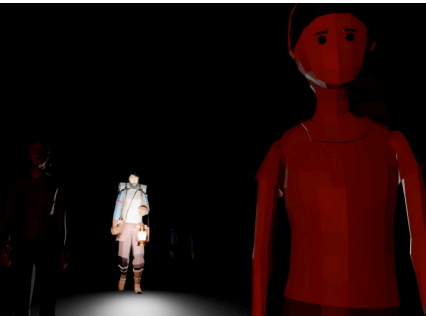
A landing place, for the moment.



Images: Peter T Nathan

PETER T NATHAN *THE CALL OF ARAPILES/DJURITE*

Peter works across film and theatre, using both the real and the unreal as ways to move closer to authentic truth. He does not treat them as opposites, but as different tools that, when combined, open new ways of seeing and feeling. His foray into video installation expands this approach, giving him another entry point into the same ideas. Across these forms, his work continues to explore how memory, story, and imagination shape our understanding of the world.



CREATIVE LAB PROCESS

Through the Creative Lab process I began with *Whispers of Natimuk*, which explored how voices from the past continue to resonate within the community and shape the identity of the town today. After some exploration and early video recordings with long-time residents, it became clear that this direction was becoming deeply personal.

As an outsider, I felt this was not my story to tell. What I did learn, however, was that "the mount," as it is locally referred to, was central to everyone's lives, even if only ever in the background.

This discovery redirected the work toward my own way of filmmaking - drawing on both the real and the unreal to uncover something closer to truth. From this shift emerged *The Call of Arapiles/Djurite* - a video installation reimagining the 1864 Jane Duff story through a mythopoetic lens, where history, memory, and imagination are brought together in a poetic form.