


FORGED FROM FIRE



THE MAKING OF THE BLACKSMITHS' TREE

A film by Andrew Garton

forgedfromfirefilm.com



An Australian and international community of blacksmiths, welders, artists and volunteers respond to the devastating Black Saturday bushfires by creating perhaps the most ambitious public artwork and memorial in Australia – The Blacksmiths' Tree – a three tonne, 9.8-meter tall stainless steel and copper gum tree.

SYNOPSIS

On Black Saturday, 7 February 2009, townships north-east of Melbourne were engulfed by firestorms. Considered our worst ever natural disaster, these fires resulted in the highest loss of life peacetime Australia has ever known. After the horror of immediate losses, people embarked on various journeys of repair and recovery. The Blacksmiths' Tree was one of them.

Designer and metal artist Amanda Gibson gathered a team of seasoned blacksmiths from around the world to create a life-size stainless steel and copper gum tree. This happened within a community traumatised by the Black Saturday Fires. The Blacksmiths' Tree would not be without its challenges, but what it became for the people involved is something no one could have imagined.

The Blacksmiths' Tree was an instinctive response to the devastating effects of loss and the inspired flourishing of life that followed. Forged from Fire charts the valleys and peaks of this heart-warming project. It documents the remarkable social history of a tragic but important moment for Australia and its people.

FORGED FROM FIRE - Trailer



forgedfromfirefilm.com



02:08



>> WATCH THE TRAILER

FORGED FROM FIRE follows the 9 year creation of the Blacksmiths' Tree, as told by its makers.



AMANDA GIBSON – Project Manager, Lead Designer



DOUG TARRANT – Lead Blacksmith



SHANE KENNY – Lead Everything!



LEE MCGILL – Welding Volunteer



ANNA MURPHY – Welding Volunteer



SHANE PUGH – Welding Volunteer



PETER DROFENIK – Steelworker, Welding Instructor



ANDREW MATHERS – Jewellery Designer



LYN MCNAURN – Welding Volunteer



ROLAND DANNENHAUR – Blacksmith, Welder

SOCIAL IMPACT > TRAUMA INFORMED SCREENINGS

The Black Saturday fires were, at the time, the worst in Australia's recorded history and profoundly affected the people of Victoria, especially those people living in small, rural communities northeast of Melbourne. Although *Forged from Fire* is a story of hope and renewal, it is underpinned by an event that caused immeasurable harm, loss and trauma for many affected by the fires. As such a package of screening guides were developed in consultation with Lilith Korndorffer, Dr Danielle Williamson, Dr Jessica Mackelprang and Dr Carolynne White from the School of Health Sciences at Swinburne University of Technology.

The **Screening Guides** are designed to provide a resource that supports the sensitive screening of *Forged from Fire* and facilitates conversations and connections between viewers. Whether screenings are hosted by schools, universities, community groups, film festivals or other organisations, this guide will assist organisers in planning their event to ensure they provide a safe space for people to view the film, share their stories, connect with others, and find support.

SCREENING GUIDE – CONTENTS

- **Planning Your Event/Screening**
 - Who will be at your event/screening?
 - Where are you planning to hold your event/screening?
 - How will your event/screening be structured?
 - Will your event/screening include a discussion or activities?
 - Are you prepared?
- **Tips, Considerations and Information**
- **Mental Health First Aid**
- **Post-traumatic Stress**
 - Post-traumatic Growth
- **Example Activities**
 - Storytelling
 - Q & A
 - Storybook or Guestbook
- **Simple Grounding Interventions**

[**>> DOWNLOAD THE SCREENING GUIDE**](#)

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In February 2009 I had returned from Europe to commence an artists' residency at Clifton Pugh's Dunmoochin in Cottles Bridge, north-east of Melbourne. The day after I arrived the entire northeast was devastated by firestorms of a magnitude never seen before. With the impact of the fires so severe it would be seven months before I moved to Dunmoochin. The Black Saturday Fires had impacted profoundly on the people with whom I would come to know as neighbours and friends.

During the residency, I met Amanda Gibson. I would hear talk of the complexities of manufacture, the massive stainless steel taper that would engage the largest forge in the country, call outs for volunteers and the women who would learn to weld and join the blacksmiths in their quest to complete their work – a multifaceted human story that would pound the Blacksmiths' Tree into shape. It was mythmaking amid regrowth and renewal, shaped from grief and devotion.

There is a real urge to relate to The Blacksmiths' Tree. Volunteers found themselves dedicated to seeing the Tree completed and those following its progress on social media found a means to elevate their hopes beyond grief, beyond suffering, beyond the personal losses so many had, and continue, to endure.

As with most tragedies, Black Saturday taught us that we are at our best when we're together. However, when the proverbial dust settles,

we need not return to our former isolated selves. Everyone experiences unique ways of being together. Some prefer to listen, others lead. But together we can create something that no one person could. I sought to capture the unique diversity, the many contributing components that led, of equal devotion, to that which became the Blacksmiths' Tree.

The making of the film represents a kind of philosophy of inclusion; from the videos shot by a community videographer that arrived in a shoebox to the maverick filmmaker who sent me a selection of time-lapse footage, to the community outreach volunteers that seeded screenings at Black Saturday memorial events across Victoria.

Like the Blacksmiths' Tree itself Forged from Fire wasn't directed from the outside, it emerged from within; from the process of the combined making of the Tree, the film and all with whom the entire production could not have been realised.

If we are to learn anything from the challenges that face us all is that we need storytellers and scientists, engineers and bakers, teachers and designers to create the transitional industries and policies we will need to adjust to a different way of living on planet Earth.

ANDREW GARTON

FEEDBACK

“What a beautiful project and wonderful uplifting film focusing on the good that can come from adversity.”

KRISTEN

“AMAZing!!! I cried, each of the 3 times I watched it back to back. Your amazing work is yet another heartfelt creative genius that makes 'The Tree' so so special! And I am thrilled, delighted, humbled, embarrassed, excited, proud and touched that two of my photos are included such a powerful experience beyond words!”

LEANNE DAVEY

“A touching look at an Australian tragedy.”

SWITCH Mag

“What a marvellous, mammoth project! So meaningful and truly emotional! We are proud our son contributed to the tree by forging a leaf with our family name engraved on it. Viewing the movie tonight showed how every single small contribution created a symbol of life that has emerged from such a tragedy. Absolutely fabulous effort. Well done!”

WEBSTER FAMILY

“I have no words for how I feel about the film. I just can say it is wonderful in the true sense of the word. The vibe in the room after was special, we all felt like we witnessed something really special together so we all felt connected...what an amazing thing you have done along with everyone else involved. Thank you, thank you, thank you.”

LOUISE HEATHCOTE

“Seeing that tree all together was very affecting for me...like a community put back together after unthinkable devastation.”

JEANNETTE DAVISON - DIRECTOR, MONTSALVAT

“What a delight it was to get to see your film. It was so brimming with art, and hope, and persistence, and good will. I was entranced by the visuals, your eye is amazing. I was absolutely hypnotized by the end, the upright tree and the stars. I loved the main character and her extraordinary combination of focus and love. We all need that concoction of art and emotion now more than ever.”

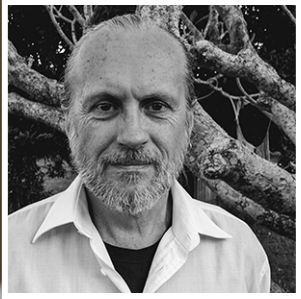
PATRICIA AUFDERHEIDE - CENTER FOR MEDIA & SOCIAL IMPACT
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY, WASHINGTON, DC

“What a wonderfully informative and touching documentary on the journey of The Blacksmith's Tree. I hope the international blacksmiths have an opportunity to see the film to realise the impact their contribution has had on the community. Let's hope The Tree develops a mystical myth in decades to come as Pugh predicts. Certainly you captured it's magical growth!”

ESTHER YENSON CHU

“Andrew, From the bottom of my heart, my utmost gratitude for telling the narrative of the Blacksmith's Tree in such a sensitive way. It touched my soul, that so many people can come together for common purpose. Your insight is nothing less than magical.”

ALANNA



ANDREW GARTON – Writer/Director

Andrew Garton is an independent filmmaker, musician and producer with a background in community access media dating back to the mid-1970s. His work spans the genres of non-fiction film-making, sound design for screen and stage, radio documentary drama. His first feature documentary, *Ocean in a Drop* (2017) describes the impact broadband internet has had on India's rural and tribal communities. It was launched in India with the support of DFAT and the Australian Consulate and screened on Indian national television. It resulted in *Right to Know*, a commissioned book and podcast series. His second feature, *Forged from Fire – the making of the Blacksmiths' Tree* (2019), was nominated best documentary at the Melbourne Documentary Film Festival. Andrew lectures in media ecology, documentary and multiplatform production at Swinburne University.



MICHAEL WILKINS – DOP / Colourist

Mike is an independent video producer and director of photography with an extensive post-production background. Mike's post-production background includes working on feature films and documentaries and as a post-production supervisor and online editor.



RACHEL LOWE – Associate Producer

Rachel has been living and working a community development life for over 20 years, and has been part of The Blacksmiths' Tree since the beginning. Strong social change and deep collective experiences are the motivations for her work in disability advocacy, philanthropy, project management, facilitation and the arts. Rachel was Montsalvat art centre's first Community Development Worker, and documentary maker of *Wet Feet Walking: The People's History of Greensborough Swimming Pool*.



JENNIIE ALDRED – Associate Producer

Jenni Aldred is studying a Bachelor of Film and Television (Honours) at Swinburne University. She is pursuing a career in sound design for film, but also has an interest in graphic design and motion graphics. Recently she and a friend together created a short documentary film, *It's Something About the Chook*, reflecting on the "chook knitting project" that helped women and children to heal after the Black Saturday bushfires in Strathewen. It is her goal to be involved in the production of large fantasy-epic films, but she also loves working on smaller, close-knit productions concerning local issues and achievements.



KATE ADAM- Musical Director

Kate is a multi-instrumentalist, performer and composer. She performs with her duo *Invention In Time* and jazz/percussion outfit *The Shala Ensemble*. Kate studied percussion at The Victorian College of The Arts and Jazz/contemporary flute at The Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE.

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