

Forbes Arts & Culture Working Group

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PRESS RELEASE

For immediate distribution
Photo of Moorhouse attached.

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AWARD WINNING AUTHOR FRANK MOORHOUSE TO OPEN BOOKBINDING EXHIBITION IN FORBES, 12 AUGUST 2006

One of Australia's most acclaimed contemporary authors, Frank Moorhouse, will open *Double Bush Binding*, an international travelling exhibition of hand-crafted books featuring two short stories by 'France's Henry Lawson', the Franco-Australian writer Paul Wenz, at the Mezzanine Gallery in the historic Forbes Arcade building, 23 Rankin Street, 5pm, Saturday 12 August 2006.

Frank Moorhouse will pay tribute to Paul Wenz's ability to evoke the rural landscape and the lives of ordinary bush folk in his short stories and novels, such as *Diary of a New Chum*, first published in 1908. Wenz (1869-1939) was not a prolific writer, nor was he especially acclaimed in his lifetime but, as Moorhouse observes, even writers who never hit the big time are critically important in "the making of a culture". Wenz contributed to the process of 'culture-making' on two continents and has left an on-going legacy to both his adopted town of Forbes, where he is buried, and to Rheims, the French city in which he was born. The exhibition, ***Double Bush Binding***, acknowledges this double legacy. After its Forbes season it will travel to Rheims accompanied by a letter from the Forbes Mayor, Cllr Alistair Lockhart, affirming the cultural links between rural New South Wales and France.

Guest speaker Frank Moorhouse last visited Forbes in 1950 on a pushbike while he was still at high school and worked for a week at the local abattoir. His subsequent career has been in the 'meat market' of OzLit where he has produced fourteen books and won some of Australia's most prestigious literary awards, including the Miles Franklin. His most recent book, *Martini Memoirs* (Random House), has been described as "a shoulder to cry on", although he himself sees it more as "a project of connoisseurship, folklore, and personal dilemma -- a celebration of the elegant, the arcane and the mysterious." Moorhouse is probably best known, however, for his gargantuan twin novels, *Grand Days* and *Dark Palace*, which track the rise and fall of the League of Nations as seen through the eyes of one of his most cosmopolitan characters, Edith Campbell Berry.

The exhibition ***Double Bush Binding*** is produced by Sabine Pierard of Bookbinding Exhibitions Australia with the support of a Visions of Australia Development Grant. The two featured Wenz stories have been printed on hand-made paper from Euraba Paper Company at Boggabilla and illustrated by Daniel Pata, Rew Hanks and Michael Kempson. This special limited edition has been bound by designer-bookbinders from France, Australia, New Zealand, Britain, Japan, Scandinavia, Estonia, Canada and the USA who have interpreted Paul Wenz's stories and the Australian bush in often surprising ways. The final products are unique and beautifully crafted collectors items.

Double Bush Binding will run from 12 to 31 August in Forbes. It will be accompanied by an exhibition of prints by the illustrators at Mezzanine Style, and by display of Wenz memorabilia at the Forbes Historical Society Museum. It will be followed on **Sunday 13th with a 'French Breakfast' and book reading** by Frank Moorhouse, Sabine Pierard and local writer Merrill Findlay at the Country Bakehouse, in Templar Street, Forbes, from 9.30 am. Community writers and keen readers of all ages will be especially welcome to celebrate Forbes' French heritage.

Frank Moorhouse, Sabine Pierard and some of the bookbinders will be available for interviews. For more information please contact Merrill Findlay on XXXXXX or merrill.findlay@rmit.edu.au.