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Wild Dogs set to innovate and inspire

by Yvette Brand

Images of Gippsland will be brought to life in an innovative and exciting travelling art exhibition conceived by six local artists now known as "Wild Dogs from Down Under."

The diversity of Gippsland will be represented through diverse art mediums in an exhibition that will take on the world.

While an international exhibition is sometimes a romantic dream of many artists, this group will not only be making it a reality, but promoting their home in the same breath.

Wild Dogs from Down Under is an idea born by Crossover artist Kerrie Warren. But, she said, the concept did not take much developing.

Five other artists were quick to jump on board, recognising the wonderful opportunity that lay ahead in an exhibition that will appropriately be launched in Warragul before travelling around regional Victoria, to Melbourne, Warragul's sister city Jujuy, China and later on to Los Angeles.

The artists include Kerrie, Eileen Harrison of Warragul, Gary Miles of Strzelecki West, Jenny Murray-Jones of Warragul, Leanne Ryan of Nilma and Leanne Collins of Ballarat.

"We all come from such different backgrounds. Gippsland is so diverse it still so we are promoting Gippsland in its true light because we are diverse.

"We are trying to go Gippsland to the place we travel so we will create an atmosphere of Gippsland so that people visiting the exhibition will feel they have been to Gippsland.

"We are also creating a Gippsland soundscape so that background noise will be sounds of Gippsland.

"In many ways the making of this project will work another happening in our concept as artists," she said.

Kerrie said a travelling exhibition was something she had been thinking about for a couple of years and was finally born a couple of months ago over coffee with other artists.

She said she decided on arts advisory committee meeting and afterwards a few people went out for coffee.

She said she was talking about her idea and jokingly put forward the idea of "Wild Dogs from Down Under."

Kerrie said Leanne also hit on the idea and the next day they registered the name for the purpose of their exciting new project.

Since then Kerrie has been involved in applications for grants from Regional Arts Victoria and Arts Victoria for materials to assist in creation of the exhibition works, as well as Tourism Victoria to assist in touring the exhibition.

"If we get it (a grant), it's a real bonus. If not, we are going to do it anyway," she said.

Kerrie said there is an emerging professional artists world were together to create the works. Each artist will feature five pieces in the exhibition.

"The artwork will be new, contemporary and contemporary visual art in the genres of indigenous and non-indigenous painting, mixed mediums and three dimensional photography based on Gippsland," she said.

Kerrie said the artists would explore and develop their own unique styles and applications to create a strong and united body of contemporary visual art that will have to presented to the wider community.

The works will be produced and created during the first seven months of 2006 with the aim of launching the exhibition in Warragul first in the year.

It is planned the exhibition will tour regional Victoria in the first half of 2007 and then the international tour takes place later.

She said they hoped to establish an arts and cultural exchange with artists in Jujuy, who would be invited to come and stay with local artists and put their works in an exhibition at the West Gippsland Arts Centre.

Kerrie said the artists and project manager Bastian Stier arts and culture officer Michael Heenan will be present at the exhibition openings where interviews and the artists will make themselves available to speak about their work.

The diversity of the artists and the works they will produce can be seen in what they say about themselves.

Kerrie's work is abstract environmental expressionism - "It is a direct expression of my unconscious emotional, a spontaneous release of outside environment. It is a link to my own existence within the environment.

A contemporary indigenous painter, Jenny said her work was "the images which are a part of my identity."

"I recreate the many images which have been taken from my images that have been used against me.

"I'm responding to the more aforementioned images which found their way into postcards and into the archives of government departments. These are to a great extent locked away. These images are our faces and the faces of our ancestors, yet we have had no access to them.

"These are the narrative faces and creating captions which will hang in. My painting is my way of responding to this knowledge," she said.

Eileen sees it a contemporary indigenous painter who likes to depict her homeland around Lake Tyers as an expression of her cultural connection with the land and her ancestors.

"My work is inspired by my culture. It is a representation of my perspective, how I see the world through an Aboriginal woman's eyes," she said.

Gary acknowledged he is a contemporary impressionist artist. He paints in a distinctive and spontaneous style to capture the Australian landscape.

"When I work in create a before series, I set up camp in remote parts of the outback for weeks at a time to fully orientated my senses.

"My paintings are unmistakably Australian, so realised and reflected within myself," he said.

Leanne concentrates mixed media, three dimensional photography, exploring and creating images such as: truth, consciousness, solitude and time.

"My work is expressive, contemporary and of a metaphysical nature, breaking the boundaries of conventional photography," she said.

Leanne works in scrap steel and wood, believing them are so many items in the industrial world that are not appreciated in any artistic manner.

"I believe material that has already had one life in another form and many of my pieces are left unpainted so that they can rust naturally.

"I encourage viewers to my sculptures and enjoy the positive interaction they have with their environment - in some ways they are curiosity-like, only that these dimensional aspect triggers more powerful reactions," she said.

Throughout the project, Kerrie told they also hoped to document their journey on film to record the highs and lows, the frustrations and opportunities.

She said the camera would follow them as they research and observe the Gippsland landscapes, conduct meetings at their local café and into their studios to see the works in progress and finally at the opening night.

Wild Dogs from Down Under — local artists ready to take on the world include (back) Jenny Murray-Jones, Gary Miles, Kerrie Warren, (centre) Eileen Harrison, Leanne Ryan and (front) Leanne Collins with their mascot, the "wild dog."

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