

# 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 inspired 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 at the same time.

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 lies ahead in an exhibition that will appropriately be launched in Warragul before travelling around regional Victoria, to Melbourne, Warragul's sister city Jiujiang, China and later on to Los Angeles.

The artists include Kerrie, Eileen Harrison of Warragul, Gary Miles of Drouin West, Jenny Murray-Jones of Warragul, Leonie Ryan of Nilma and Laurie Collins of Jindivick.

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

"We are basing it on Gippsland so that when we travel 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 ending of this project will

mark another beginning in our careers 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 attended an 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 Leonie 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 these six emerging, professional artists would work together to create the works. Each artist will feature five pieces in the exhibition.

"The artwork will be new, conceptual and contemporary visual art in the genres of indigenous and non-indigenous painting, metal sculpture 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 later be presented to the wider community.

The works will be researched and created during the first seven months of 2006 with the aim of launching the exhibition

in Warragul later in the year.

It is planned the exhibition will tour regional Victoria in the first half of 2007 and then the international stage later that year.

She said they hoped to establish an arts and cultural exchange with artists in Jiujiang who could 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 Baw Baw Shire arts and culture officer Michael Henson will be present at the exhibition openings where possible and the artists will make themselves available to speak about their work.

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

Kerrie's work is abstract environmental expressionism - "it is a direct expression of my unconscious emotion, a spontaneous release of ecstatic creativity. It is a link to my own existence within my 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 us, images that

have been used against us.

"I'm responding to the many ethnographic images which found their way onto 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 nameless faces and insulting captions which still haunt us. My painting is my way of responding to this injustice," she said.

Eileen also is 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 is renowned for his contemporary impressionist works. He paints in a distinctive and spontaneous style to capture the Australian landscape.

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

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

Leonie constructs two and three dimensional photography, exploring and creating images such as truth, consciousness, solitude and time.

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

Laurie works in scrap steel and wood, believing there are so many forms in the industrial world that are not appreciated in any aesthetic manner.

"I recycle 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 humor in my sculptures and enjoy the positive interaction they have with their audience - in some ways they are cartoon-like, only their three dimensional aspect triggers more powerful reactions," he said.

Throughout the project, Kerrie said they also hoped to document their journey on film to record the highs and lows, the hurdles and the 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 nights.



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, Leonie Ryan and (front) Laurie Collins with their mascot, the "wild dog."