



President's Report – 2018

It has been a very big year yet again - enormous thanks to the hard working committee and supporting artists who help with all of the Gallery operations, exhibitions and events. We have generated a great deal of creative activity this year, well beyond that which is seen in the Gallery, although the Gallery remains the focal point.

Looking back over the year it amazes me what we have achieved as a tiny volunteer artist-run Gallery with only intermittent project-based funding. Here are some highlights:

Art Projects and Exhibitions

- **Artist Residency, Sofie Dieu, August 2017 – March 2018** - Sofie unleashed her creativity across a dizzying range of media as she embraced the community in her vision for what ended up being a vast project: *Calling for Rain*. Beginning with workshops in Benambra, Omeo and Swifts Creek in schools and in the community, Sofie shared her abstract ink techniques and began work on *Calling for Rain*. On her own initiative, Sofie returned in February 2018 for more workshops using natural fibres to create sculptural works with the Basketry group and others, which were displayed alongside massive portraits and her other amazing work at the East Gippsland Art Gallery. The work has subsequently been toured to Sydney.
- **Apothecary, March 2018** – an exhibition in conjunction with the Swifts Creek Bush Nursing Centre's centenary. Wacky and thoughtful works from the imagination encompassing folk remedies and bush cures, with reminiscence from Merrybelle Hayes on her bush nursing days.
- **The Great Alpine Arts Trail, May 2018** - a beautifully balanced program running from Tambo Crossing to Omeo and Benambra, featuring open studios, workshops in felting, dyeing and basketry, a craft market in Swifts Creek, pop-up basketry shop in Omeo, *All Thing Wool* at Benambra Hall, performance/installation at Tongio bus stop, a talk at Nullamunjie Olive Grove, an opening night with *Bonfire, Burgers and Banter* in Omeo and music and dinner at the Albion Hotel. There was an overwhelmingly positive response from visitors and the local community – a real showcase of the hidden treasures within our valley.
- **Fresh Off the Mountain, February and June 2018** – in February five gallery artists undertook a two week residency in Falls Creek, thanks to the support of Falls Creek Alpine Resort. An exceptionally productive time both in exploring their art practice and producing work, the artists then held an exhibition in the Gallery in June, with a great response from the public.

- **Wolfensohn Gift, August 2018** – thanks to some quick footwork by Andrea Court from EGSC, we were able to host two kits packed with treasures from the National Gallery in our Gallery for the day. We had a stream of visitors throughout the day of people who came especially to see these exquisite works.
- **Heather Leatham, Artist Talk, August 2018** - ceramic artist Heather Leatham gave an inspiring artists' talk, unpacking her reflective contemporary practice. An ongoing project with Heather is in the pipeline! Thanks to Annie for initiating this very rewarding exchange.
- **20 Years: Water Under the Bridge, October 2018** - a celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the Gallery, with a fabulous lunch in the Gallery and talk by Deirdre Jack about the early days of the Gallery. Some of the founding members were able to attend this fantastic event, including Valerie McCann.
- **Living River** - we successfully applied for a \$5,000 grant from the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal plus \$4,000 from East Gippsland Shire Council for **Living River**, a woven sculpture project which will celebrate the riverside **Poets Walk** and raise awareness of the valley's life blood, the Tambo River. John Butler, a founding member of the Great Alpine Gallery, commenced the **Poets Walk** many years ago with a poem that he wrote about the river, with the intention of inscribing verses on plaques on stone cairns along the riverside walk. Unfortunately John passed away before the project could be completed, but now with the assistance of the Swifts Creek Ensay Landcare Group, the EGCMA, DELWP, the Swifts Creek Angling Club, Omeo District Health and EGSC, work on the **Poets Walk** is underway again. **Living River** will begin in February 2019 and will involve our skilled local artists and basket makers in running community workshops to create large waterbugs and other river creatures from locally foraged fibres, cumbungi paper and silk. They will feature in a celebration in May 2019 to mark the completion of the stone cairns.
- **Timber! East Gippsland, November 2018** – the Gallery hosted this travelling exhibition by Heritage Network East Gippsland. The topic was of particular interest to local people with a history of working in the timber industry and local mills.
- **Poppy Making, November 2018** – a productive and creative group gathered in the Gallery to create the Gallery's contribution to Remembrance Day. It was a very enjoyable to do some hands-on making.
- **Studio Sneak Peeks** – informal gatherings for the Gallery network in the studios of our artists: **Annie Richardson** opened her studio in August and gave demonstration of Encaustic on mounted photographs, plus fabulous afternoon refreshments, and **Rob Logie** opened his studio in November, sharing his printmaking processes with a packed house.
- **Christmas exhibition** – opens today!

Gallery Business

- We successfully applied to East Gippsland Shire Council for a \$5,000 grant to gyprock the entire gallery and add additional spotlights, which will greatly enhance the display of all the fabulous artwork. Work will commence in 2019.
- The Gallery was featured in Gippsland Country Life with a 3 page spread, and we have had great coverage on a regular basis in media across Gippsland.
- Guidelines have been developed for the hire of Gallery spaces by guest groups or artists.

Special thanks to:

- All our committee members and supporters who come to meetings, events and working bees, as well as set up/take down exhibitions and events and do a hundred other things,
- Helenka King for her exceptional work with the Arts Trail, and taking our marketing of the Gallery far and wide with very effective and targeted promotional campaigns,
- Ann Bingham for embracing the digital world of finance, and Sally Doyle our bookkeeper (and artist) who volunteers her time and skills,
- Ann Bingham again for the impossible task of managing the monthly roster and being available to be the gallery at short notice,
- Carole Pepper for her curatorial role, adding her special touch and lateral thinking to the Gallery's displays,
- Annie Richardson, secretary and communicator extraordinaire, keeping us and the wider community connected, keeping our Facebook page fresh and current, and gracing us with her fabulous skills as a photographer, documenting all that we do,
- John O'Neill for keeping on top of our website,
- Deirdre and Penny who still support us from afar, and Lilli, Tiff and Rob for their help with exhibition hanging,
- All the Gallery volunteers who spend their days in the Gallery – our doors would not open without you.



Tracey Johnson

President

28/11/2018