

Visual Arts in the Valley festival 2024

Blessed with wonderful weather, this year's Visual Arts in the Valley was an unqualified success, attracting large numbers of visitors and delivering strong sales for local artists.

The festival was officially opened on Friday night by legendary Australian journalist Geraldine Doogue, who said how lucky the Kangaroo Valley community was to have its Arts in the Valley events.

"The research is unequivocal," Doogue said. "It is relationships, relationships, relationships. That is what keeps us alive, that is what keeps us flourishing. It is the regularity of these relationships that is critical and events like this are the new form of regular contact. Communities that don't have people who put up their hands and do the work for events like this are depleted. I think you should revel in it."

Visitors and locals took Doogue's advice and revelled in the range of exhibitions and events that were presented across numerous venues.

The Salon of Local Artists featured 39 works selected by Boe-Lin Bastian, Curator at Bundanon. Over 200 people came to Kangaroo Valley Hall for the official opening and hundreds more viewed the works over the weekend. More than half the works sold during the festival and a number of additional works were commissioned.

The four prize winners, judged by Bastian, were:

- Ann-France Fulgence – First Place (\$1,500)
- Karen Barker – Commended (\$500)
- Carla Jackett – Packing Room Prize (\$300)
- Kerrie Leishman – People's Choice (\$250)

Australian Galleries hosted a special exhibition in the hall, featuring a number of legendary artists including Arthur Boyd, Fred Williams, Garry Shead, Jeffrey Smart, Sidney Nolan and William Robinson. In addition to the rare opportunity to view these wonderful works in the Valley, opening night visitors, and further groups across the weekend, were lucky enough to hear Rex Irwin provide insights into a number of the paintings.

There was also a small selection of John Olsen prints, presented by the Olsen Gallery, and this linked to one of the highlights of the festival – Saturday night's sold out screening of the documentary "The King Sun: John Olsen at 85" at Upper River Hall.

Ticket holders enjoyed a delicious supper box prepared by volunteers and a highly entertaining Q&A with the filmmaker and local Kangaroo Valley resident Tony Williams.

This year's festival placed a strong focus on the Art Trail, which allowed art lovers to visit 11 studios and view a wide variety of media and styles, including painting, ceramics, sculpture and traditional shoe making. The Art Trail included a collaboration with The ARTSLAB in the Upper River Hall, with artists who had been part of the Shark Island residency program.

The feedback for the Art Trail was extremely positive, with artists grateful for the exposure and visitors grateful to see artists at work in their studios.

“Thank you again for the opportunity to work with you on this project,” said Upper River Road artist, A-F Fulgence. “The weekend has been terrific with around 200 people visiting the studio.”

Kerrie Leishman’s ticketed workshop at her studio on Upper River Road was very well attended, with participants creating two artworks in two hours, inspired by the surrounding bushland.

In the centre of the village, Greer Taylor, Alex Ritchie and Isabelle Bribosia presented “3 Arts of a Kind” in The Hive, which involved audience participation, and Tehri Hakola, Akira Kamada, Kerry Laws and Warren Parry combined their talents for the installation project titled “Between Sheets” at The Pony Club.

“For me personally, it was perhaps the most satisfying team art work effort that I’ve done,” said Hakola. *“Great event. Great team. Big job. And I also think the whole event was a rich and colourful kaleidoscope of valley art.”*

Visual Arts in the Valley 2024 Director **Gudula Dornseifer** adds *“The success of this year’s visual arts festival truly exceeded our expectations. The vibrant ambience created by our amazing and talented local artists attendees and the community, including an army of volunteers, brought our vision to life. It was a celebration of creativity and connection, where every corner of the venue, from the village events to the art trails & John Olsen movie night, resonated with inspiration and enthusiasm. We are grateful for the incredible support from within the community that made the event not just a showcase of talent, but a memorable experience for everyone involved or visiting.”*

by

Michael Sharp

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