

Case study



Holly Hughes – diving into new mediums

Award-winning airbrush artist inspires and educates with vibrant marine-themed show

What

Visitors to the 2017 Mary Valley Art Festival immersed themselves in an underwater world through a vibrant glow-in-the-dark exhibit by artist Holly Hughes.

The award-winning artist, and keen diver, used UV paint, pre-loved surfboards and a pitch-black room to recreate a night-time world beneath the waves. With the boards as her canvas, she brought to life the beauty and colour of breathtaking marine species in her show *The Art of Ultra Violet*.

For some pieces she added a 3D element, using a process called ChromaDepth to enhance the audience experience when viewing the art through special glasses.

The works were a step in a new direction for Holly, an airbrush artist specialising in body art and portraits, and a repeat winner in competition at the festival.

An annual event on the first weekend in July, the Mary Valley Art Festival showcases art from the region and across South East Queensland.

When and where

Mary Valley Art Festival, Imbil – 29 June to 2 July 2017

Key stats

- Eight artworks created on pre-loved surfboards
- Four other works on stretched canvases
- Three to four months of preparation
- Festival attracts up to 100 exhibiting artists each year, with about 300 works on display



Marine life glows in *The Art of Ultra Violet*

Arts Queensland investment

\$1500 – Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF)

RADF is a partnership between the Queensland Government and Gympie Regional Council to support local arts and culture in regional Queensland.

In 2017-18, Arts Queensland invested \$2.08 million to the RADF partnership across 59 councils statewide to support local talent and arts experiences.

Artist comments

"The concept was experimental – I had experience with body art and wanted to do something on a different canvas."

"I do a bit of scuba diving and free diving, which gave me the inspiration for it. Diving has educated me and I wanted to open people's eyes to the incredible colours fish have."

"The exhibit was intended to educate and inspire the audience about marine life and their ultraviolet chemistry compounds. – Holly Hughes"



Holly at work on a previous project

Outcomes

- Educated people of all ages about marine diversity through an exciting and visually appealing art form.
- As an addition to the Mary Valley Art Festival, it drew more interest for the 2017 event.
- Holly also conducted demonstrations throughout the festival showing how she creates her works. Through this she gained more confidence performing in public.
- Holly hopes she has encouraged other artists to step out of their comfort zone and experiment with unusual and sometimes tricky mediums.



The Art of Ultra Violet

Reflections and learnings

"I challenged myself by creating something from the ground up and was able to share it with the community."

"I constructed the tent from scratch and blocked out all light so the audience walked into a pitch-black room and discovered ultraviolet paints lighting up before their eyes in the form of species that inhabit the Great Barrier Reef."

"When using ChromaDepth for the first time, it was a matter of trial and error as I had to change the way I looked at depth." – Holly Hughes

Tips for others

"Pick up a brush and give it a go!" – Holly Hughes

What next?

The show led to other opportunities, including exhibiting at Gympie's Rush Festival and a youth development afternoon for students to experiment with UV and ChromaDepth painting.

In 2018 Holly moved to the Gold Coast, where she says she will continue to explore underwater beauty and remain inspired.

Find out more

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