

Local artists get in on the action



WANTING to be a part of the action, a group of local Murri artists presented their own three-day exhibition to coincide with this year's

Cairns Indigenous Art Fair (CIAF).

Presented by cyberTribe, the 'Love local Murri' exhibition showcased local creative talent including traditional and conceptual contemporary Aboriginal art such as shields, paintings, film, photography, portraits, video installation, prints and poetry.

The artists were Paul Bong, Shannon Brett, Luke Briscoe, Cheryl Creed, Leigh Harris, Elverina Johnson, Arone Meeks, Zane Saunders, Nicole Williams, Gertrude Ygosse and artist/curator Jenny Fraser.

CyberTribe is an unfunded artist-run initiative with a focus as an online gallery but makes use of opportunities in other gallery spaces and places for Indigenous artists locally and internationally. The online gallery is part archive, part gallery, part museum and part publisher, founded by Jenny Fraser more than a decade ago.

'Love local Murri' was the first exhibition held at a new venue in the Cairns city centre, the Cultural Place, a multi-million-dollar Indigenous performing arts centre.

Traditional owner Henrietta Marrie Fourmile welcomed people to country at the opening on 18 August, and many Murri art lovers



Artists Nicholas Mills, Zane Saunders, Paul Bong, Jenny Fraser, Cheryl Creed, Shannon Brett and Gertrude Ygosse in Cairns.

came to support and gain some insider perspective from local Aboriginal artists.

Zane Saunders and Nicholas Mills gave a live performance at the opening.

Paul Bong presented shields and paintings for the group exhibition. The Bong ancestral history and family are in and around the Cairns region, and Paul's style is traditional Yidinji art.

His previous commissions have included works at Brisbane International Airport.

The screen-based presence was maintained by Luke Briscoe and Jenny Fraser. Kuku Yalanji filmmaker Briscoe wrote and directed his film *Jhindu* in and around the Mossman and Cairns communities, with a cameo appearance by singer Naomi Wentlong.

Murri new media artist Fraser, who was born in north Queensland, offered a video installation titled *A dark day at sea*, shot on the reef and also previously featured at Strand Ephemera in Townsville.

Photographers Gertrude Ygosse, Shannon Brett and Elverina Johnson also show work relevant to the local context.

Ygosse is of Gugu-Yimithirr

and Kuku Yalanji heritage and she works as a documentary photographer at many events.

Johnson, a Kungurri woman from Yarrabah, showed documentary-style photography of her home community.

Wakka Wakka, Budjula and Gurang Gurang descendant Brett's work *Un-Titled* seeks to reinforce respect for those who remain divided.

The exhibition also featured portraits of local people painted by Cheryl Creed, which she has taken mainly from friends and family Facebook albums and then translated to canvas to produce an intimate portrait of time, place and people. A direct descendant of the Gungarri, Pitta Pitta, Qandamooka and Bindal peoples and originally from Cherbourg, Creed has been a Cairns resident for the past 11 years.

Local artists Zane Saunders, of Batdjala, and Laura-born Arone Meeks also showed their signature works in the exhibition, along with poetry from Nicole Williams.

The exhibition marked the new National Sovereignty Day, on 22 August, announced on 26 January at celebrations marking the 40th anniversary of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy by representatives from First Nations peoples across Australia.

Supporters can buy a T-shirt online to help pay exhibition costs. The website is www.lovinglocalmurri.com/