

In the World Heritage Rainforest Centre at Murwillumbah, a team of local artists have collaborated to create a sweeping panorama of the Wollumbin Mount Warning Caldera.

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SHADES OF GREEN AND BLUE BLEND INTO AN ICONIC PANORAMA



According to Arts Northern Rivers, the north-east corner of NSW has one of the highest concentrations of artists and creative practitioners of any regional area in Australia. From Byron Bay to the southern Gold Coast and west to the foothills of the Great Dividing Range, the landscape is dominated by the distinctive remnants of an ancient shield volcano, furnishing a landscape everywhere that begs to be painted. Standing on the 1157m summit of Wollumbin Mount Warning, you can see the ring of the caldera – across the lush canefields and market gardens of the Tweed Valley to an almost perfect semi-circle of mountain ranges, cloaked in World Heritage rainforests.

It has been recognised as a National Landscape by Tourism Australia – chosen for its unique geography and environmental values, including an outstanding biodiversity of plants and animals.

Up close and personal, this diverse and dramatic landscape offers a wealth of inspiration for artists: misty forests of Antarctic beech trees that have been carbon-dated to 1,500 years old, towering red cedars reaching above the canopy, the gnarled lattice of strangler figs, delicate ferns, tumbling waterfalls, crystal clear mountain pools. Wildlife artists are similarly spoilt for choice with potential models ranging from rare butterflies and microscopic insects through to majestic birds of

prey diving for their supper. In the villages, there are historic pubs and quaint cottages. Along the winding roads, old timber bridges, rustic sheds and river views cry out to be immortalised on canvas.

So it's no surprise that this magic place has inspired the likes of a young Margaret Olley, Digby Moran, Mal Leckie, Dailan Pugh, Hobie Porter, Noël Hart and so many others. Andy Reimanis may not have the global recognition of these art world luminaries, but it's fair to say that no-one has a more intimate knowledge of the Caldera than this humble landscape and wildlife artist from Murwillumbah. For the past twelve months, he has literally painted every single ridge line and swale to

create a jaw-dropping 360° panorama of the entire landscape, as viewed from the summit of Mount Warning.

How it was painted

Stretching across 15 plywood wall panels and measuring a total of 20 x 2.5 metres, the Green Cauldron Panorama circles from Byron Bay and along the Tweed Coast, to the distinctive landforms of Springbrook and Lamington National Parks, to the towering cliffs of the Border Ranges and south along the Nightcap Ranges.

Shadows have been deepened in the valleys to

been a gathering place, a site of ancient ceremonies and part of the initiation rites for young men maturing into manhood."

"As such, the local indigenous community would prefer that visitors consider not climbing to the summit out of respect for their cultural traditions and my submission to them was that the Panorama would give people a 'virtual experience' without having to make a physical ascent."

Working from photographic references, topographic maps and Google Earth images, the earliest stages of the project involved a complex grid system to ensure accurate measurements and

indeed, it could have been a lifetime of work but for the fact that Andy co-opted a team of renowned local artists to collaborate with him on the project. "I couldn't have tackled an artwork of this scope and size single-handedly," he says. "I would still be dabbling away 30 years from now!"

Having founded Caldera Art and the Caldera Art Awards several years ago to showcase the work of artists inspired by the environmental values and biodiversity of the Wollumbin Mount Warning Caldera, Andy had a wealth of talent to draw from.

His core team included Mark Comport, Jaap Roskam, Greg Newland, Barbara Suttie, Roslyn



emphasise an early morning sunrise. Light play and colours have been chosen to replicate the clarity of a winter's day. Every rocky outcrop, rolling hill, sugarcane paddock, village and landmark is depicted in precise detail. In the villages, Andy can even point out individual houses.

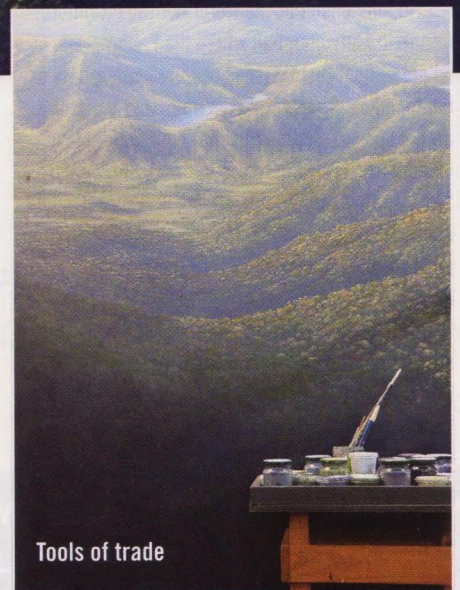
Well before the first dab of paint was applied, Andy sought input from the Wollumbin Consultative Committee that represents the local indigenous groups who have a spiritual connection with the caldera. "For generations of Aboriginal families who have lived in its shadows for thousands of years, Wollumbin Mount Warning is one of the most sacred sites on mainland Australia," said Andy. "It has

perspectives for the initial sketched layout.

Then came the application of acrylics: sweeping blocks of base colour - Payne's Grey with increasing amounts of Indanthrene Blue and white; followed by layers of detail - the outlines of the twin Cougal peaks, Springbrook Mountain and the Border Ranges; the patchworked plantations and dairy pastures of the Valley; the winding rivers; the distant coastline.

And, finally, the painstaking fine work: isolated farm homesteads, tiny village houses, the urban cluster of Murwillumbah, the far-off high-rises of Tweed Heads and the Gold Coast and hundreds of trees in far more than fifty shades of green and blue.

The end result is the work of a lifetime - and,



Tools of trade

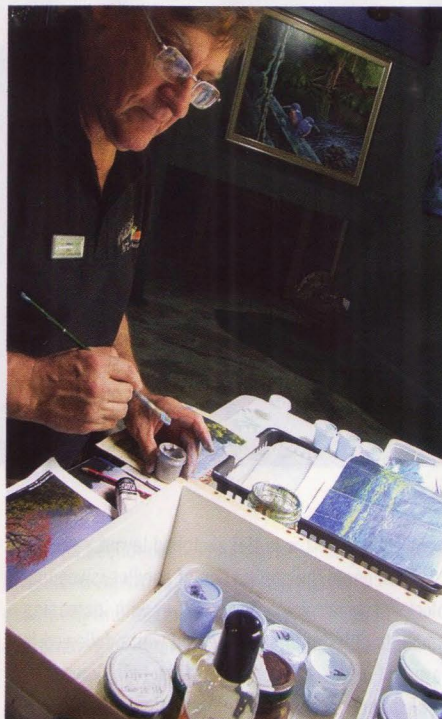


THE CREW From left to right, back row: Cameron Pitcher, Christian Griffiths, Andy Reimanis, Greg Newland; front row: Roslyn Oakes, Barbara Suttie, Regina Rossdeutscher, Mark Comport. (absent: Jaap Roskam and Mark Brombal)

Oakes, Regina Rossdeutscher and Christian Griffiths. On any given day over the past year, you'd find two or three of them crouched in separate corners, using Andy's coded colour system and matching the photo-realism style. "You couldn't put a price on the time they have devoted to the task and you certainly couldn't put a price on the finished artwork," said Andy. "It has been a labour of love for all of us – reflecting both our passion for the creative process and our respect for this magnificent landscape that inspires everything else we paint."

Working onsite at the World Heritage Rainforest Centre in Murwillumbah where the Panorama is now on permanent display, the crew did double-duty as unofficial environmental educators and tourism ambassadors, stopping to chat with hundreds of visitors who called in to see the work in progress. "My overall vision for this project was that it would allow people to see the full scope of the caldera and be inspired to learn more about the geology, geography and biodiversity," said Andy.

The Green Cauldron Panorama can be viewed at the World Heritage Rainforest Centre and Visitor Information Centre, Cnr Alma Street and Tweed Valley Way, Murwillumbah. Entry is free and the Centre is open seven days a week. Artist and school group tours, hosted by Andy Reimanis, can be arranged by phoning the Visitor Information Centre on (02) 6672 1340.



Principal Artist and Project Co-ordinator, Andy Reimanis, at work.

PANORAMA PARTICULARS

Commissioned by Tweed Shire Council and measuring 20m x 2.5m, it depicts a 360-degree panorama of the view from the summit of Wollumbin Mt Warning – a place of great spiritual significance to the indigenous people of Northern NSW and the first place on mainland Australia touched by the rising sun each morning.

Width: 20 metres (around 4 walls)

Height: 2.5 metres (average)

Time taken: 371 days

Total painting hours: 4000 (estimate)

Materials used: 50 litres acrylic paint on 12mm plywood, 20 brushes of various sizes

Funded by: Tweed Shire Council

Site provided by: Destination Tweed Inc

Supported by: Caldera Regional Arts, Wollumbin Consultative Group, Jaap Roskam photography, Larkin Electrical.