

Human Rights Art Award and Exhibition 2003

Darwin Community Legal Service Inc. (DCLS) is once again hosting the Human Rights Art Award and Exhibition to celebrate International Human Rights Day on 10 December.

The theme for this year's exhibition is fresh water, in line with the United Nations Year of Fresh Water.

United Nations International Year of Fresh Water

And we need to free women and girls from the daily burden of walking great distances in search of water – time and effort that could be better spent on education and building better lives for themselves, their families and their communities.

- Kofi A. Annan 2003

Artists from across the Northern Territory, from preschool to professional, are invited to enter work in this exciting and challenging exhibition.

Work may be in any medium and may either address the theme of fresh water or a human rights issue of interest to the artist. Artists may submit individual work or may like to work collaboratively with other artists or community members.

The exciting part of this exhibition is that it gives everyone the opportunity to have a say on human rights issues. The work may be celebratory and focus on improvements in access to human rights or draw attention to areas of human rights that need urgent attention.

Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits. (Article 27:1, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948)

The exhibition will be held in the Northern Territory Supreme Court foyer in Darwin. The exhibition will open on 10 December and run until 19 December. A number of prizes, worth over \$1500, will be awarded at the

opening night function, which is being held from 5.30-7.30pm on Wednesday 10 December.

DCLS has hosted the exhibition since its inception in 1995 in the International Year of Tolerance. The exhibition was conceived as a key awareness-raising campaign in a week-long program of events commemorating Human Rights Week culminating with International Human Rights Day on December 10.

This initial exhibition was called 'Rights On Show - Human Rights in the Territory' and was shown at Casuarina Library. While the visual arts were seen as a potent imaginative medium in which NT artists could imagine the plight of others less fortunate, the exhibition also reinforced the notion that the issue of human rights is very much a local, every day concern.

"It can seem an abstract concept, yet our human rights are practical realities of our everyday lives. They include the right to be treated fairly, without discrimination, and the right to fair treatment by government, police and the judicial system." (DCLS Exhibition flyer, 1995)

Over the years, DCLS has been ably supported by a number of public and private bodies in hosting these awards. In-kind support together with cash and gift prizes for different award categories each year almost entirely come from Darwin's legal, arts and business communities.

DCLS is very grateful to all sponsors – both major and minor – of 'Rights On Show' for championing the promotion of human rights and artistic expression.

'Rights on Show' has also greatly benefited from the work of many volunteers over the years, including the exhibition's first (voluntary) curator,

Bernadine Denigan, and the voluntary participation of judges and guest speakers for opening night. There are usually two judges appointed each year and at least one of the judges is an acclaimed local artist.

After modest beginnings at Casuarina Library, 'Rights On Show' moved to the Darwin Entertainment Centre Gallery for a few years, then to Parliament House's Great Hall and finally to its current location in the Supreme Court foyer.

The exhibition has consistently attracted entrants representing a wide cross-section of NT communities; from schoolchildren of all ages to professional and non-professional adult/elderly artists including inmates of the Territory's correctional centres.

School-based art teachers are encouraged to integrate preparation for the exhibition into their curricula and DCLS offers relevant lesson-based material for this purpose.

While the theme for each year's exhibition coincides with the UN's international theme for the corresponding year, the artworks generally explore a diverse array of human rights concerns and often reflect topical, controversial issues in the lead-up to the exhibition's opening.

These openings have also been an occasion for celebrating other artistic media (poetry readings, performance art, live music), building on an ethos of art as a vehicle for social justice and change.

Entries closed on Friday 28 November. For more information about this exhibition please contact Pip Hodge on 8982-1121 or via email at Pip.Hodge@fcl.fl.asn.au. ①