

Counter-culture Creativity



by Chasseur Gibbeaux A non-illuminated photo of an inmate of Junee Correctional Centre

The Junee Correctional Centre, run by the GEO Group Pty Ltd, has turned a former gymnasium into a Cultural Centre where days such as Australia Day, Chinese New Year, Waitangi Day and others are celebrated by the disparate cultures within the prison population. The centre is decorated with over 100 representative paintings, from the Great Wall of China to a Russian Orthodox Church, to Polynesian warriors. Aboriginal art is entwined with these alternating images, all of which have been produced by inmates of the gaol. The artwork varies in size from less than a metre square to some as big as five metres.

One artist, inmate "Paul", who has contributed substantially to the artworks in the centre, says that the practice and experience has given him the confidence to volunteer when requests are made to produce paintings for charity. "Recently I sent eight paintings to Sydney which were included in a fund-raising auction for the Shine for Kids Foundation and I'm currently working on a number of paintings for the Variety Club bash to raise money for cystic fibrosis research", Paul said.

These and other challenges are regularly presented to the inmate artist community within Junee and without doubt are assisting to achieve better outcomes for individuals and for the community at large.

The person responsible for the programme, the gaol's Cultural Centre Advisor, Mr Jerome Brodin, said that the centre is a forum for prisoners to express themselves, "in artistic and cultural endeavours". "It instils a sense of accomplishment and pride in a group separated from society, which we hope will carry on with them post (their) release," he said, adding, "the perception of a violent and oppressive culture in prison is becoming less accurate. And some of the artwork is just terrific". □

*Church of The Saviour,
acrylic on particle board, 2.4 x 1.7m*





Clara Waters, acrylic, A3 canvas (4 sheets)

In His Own Words From "Paul"

Another inmate, a poet named Karl, asked me to illustrate a song performed by Slim Dusty called Clara Waters. I felt the story develop from left to right and saw a huge truck thundering past, breaking the spell. I started with an A3 sheet of Montemarte canvas, acrylic gesso primed. As my thoughts developed, I added an extra sheet - in all I ended up with 4 sheets side by side.

Acrylics are our preferred medium here at Jinceo because acrylics are all we can use! Turpentine is a no go here! Some paintings are produced directly onto concrete walls and others onto particle board.

The painting of the Russian Orthodox Church of the Saviour in St Petersburg is on particle board, primed with white undercoat (household variety). Then once sketched up, which took five hours or more, paint was applied. To finish this painting took approximately 170 hours. It is 2.4m x 1.7m and it is to be bolted to the inside wall of the Cultural Centre.

ANZAC Day this year saw the unveiling of a monument here which

was dedicated by the General Manager, Andy Walker. Soon after, a request came to do a painting. I have used Eraldo di Paolo 20" x 30" canvas. I prefer placing the background first and then slowly moving forward, producing the best results. I manage to achieve clear and crisp meeting points between say the clouds and the principal item, be it a tree, or a building.

Brushes range from 'whatever we can find', to a personal collection

of flats, rounds, liner and detailer brushes, built up over time. Often, when someone leaves to go home, brushes are bequeathed.

Such is life at Jinceo Correctional Centre in the 'art department' of the Cultural Centre. I subscribe to Australian Artist each month and always find something inspiring, or practical or useful to either try or emulate... or simply copy (for practice of course!) Thank you for showcasing the work we do here.



Monument, acrylic, 20" x 30"



Variety Club Bash, acrylic on canvas, 20" x 30"