



East and West, old and new combine in an exhibition that explores the relationship between WA and our favourite overseas holiday spot. **Pip Christmass** reports.

Freo plays home to culture of Bali



It's a sad but true fact that much of what we hear about Australians in Bali relates to the drunken shenanigans of schoolies and yobbos in Kuta, the tourist precinct that many first-timers to the island make a beeline for.

But talk to Chris Hill, who has one of the biggest private collections of Balinese art in WA, and you quickly realise what a misconception it is to equate Bali only with Kuta or to assume that all Australian visitors are misbehaving louts.

Hill is the co-curator of BALI: return economy, an exhibition at Fremantle Arts Centre that aims to dig deeper into the relationship between the Balinese and West Australians in particular.

Looking beyond the tourist clichés and the not-so-positive newspaper headlines, this mixed-media show explores the idea of cultural and artistic exchange between these two close neighbours, investigating the connections between the places and their people.

"Part of the object of the show is to get more people interested in Balinese art and culture," says Hill, who has been travelling to Bali since the late 1970s.

"Some of what's in the exhibition will surprise people because they may not have been exposed to this side of Bali culture on their holidays. We wanted this slightly deeper engagement with Bali and we hope it



NEW PERSPECTIVE Abu-abu, by Made Aswino Aji.



VIBRANT Balinese Boys from the Bintang Shopping Center (#1), by Toni Wilkinson.

encourages people to seek out things that they haven't been led to on previous visits — beyond the tourist traps and the places the hotel guides take you to. There are some wonderful things in Bali if you take the time to look."

Several items from Hill's private collection feature in the exhibition, held as part of the Perth International Arts Festival.

These include traditional wayang paintings based on the wayang kulit

shadow puppet shows popular throughout Indonesia. These classical works sit alongside contemporary video art, photography, cutting-edge paintings and political cartoons, presenting a fascinating mix of old and new, East and West.

Balinese artists on show include Jango Pramatha, Wayan Upadana, Pranoto and Teja Astawa, while local artists on show include Kerry Pendergrast, Toni Wilkinson, Paul Trinidad and, of course, Rodney Glick,



A TASTE OF BALI Co-curator Ric Spencer, left, and Bali art collector Chris Hill with a painting by Ketut Liyer, one of the artists represented in BALI: return economy. PICTURE **ROBERT DUNCAN**

who set up Seniman Industries with his partner David Sullivan and now lives in Bali full-time.

"Until going on research trips with the show's co-curator, Ric Spencer, I wasn't very familiar with the younger, more avant-garde artists in Bali," Hill admits.

"I was more drawn to the traditional artists whose work I had been buying. Looking at the contemporary artists has been quite an eye-opener for me. The art scene is very vibrant and there

are a lot of very committed young and mid-career artists who are quite experimental, but who also have great respect for their forebears and the artistic heritage they are a part of."

The WA artists explore the sometimes vexed and tender political and cultural relationship between Australia and Indonesia, which has been in the headlines again in recent months over spying allegations and the ongoing refugee debate. But rather than focusing on divisions, Hill says

the exhibition focuses more on the ways in which Australians and the Balinese work in unison — collaborating on art projects, supporting one another's work, or taking seemingly disposable bits of each other's cultures and turning them into artistic works of surprising beauty.

"Lucinda Crimson, for example, went to Bali and stocked up on box-loads of cheap, commercial items from local markets and supermarkets," Hill explains. "She's doing a large

installation in the main gallery in which she rearranges these items — things like packets of coathangers — into a quite startling, visually arresting work."

Hill has known Rodney Glick, whose popular coffee shop in Ubud is the go-to place for discerning travellers wanting to avoid the chaos of Kuta, for some time. Glick, it transpires, is almost as passionate about coffee as he is about art, a fact made clear by his contribution to BALI: return economy.

"We're creating a 'reading room' in the gallery that has much of the same atmosphere of Glick's Ubud coffee shop — minus the coffee," Hill laughs. However, visitors will be able to sit at a table and peruse a coffee-themed book that Glick has produced: a coffee-table book about coffee, if you will.

It was Hill who helped Glick find the Balinese wood-carvers he now collaborates with on much of his sculpture work. After a first family visit in the late 1970s, Hill and his wife bought a villa overlooking the Ubud River in the late 1980s.

Soon after, he started up a small business exporting handicrafts back to Fremantle, where he co-owned a shop called Rebecca Design. He then began



CONTEMPORARY Couple in Paradise by Wayan Upadana.

to explore Bali's fine arts scene, and after completing a degree in the history of Balinese painting at Murdoch University, began collecting Balinese art. He continues to visit regularly, speaking at art conferences, and his Fremantle home is full of Balinese art and objects, which sit — rather incongruously, as even he admits — with works expressive of his other artistic love (minimal, abstract Western art).

"In putting this exhibition together we were thinking of it as a point of departure," he says. "It's not intended as a comprehensive survey of every up-and-coming Balinese artist. It's a more personal collection, one that reflects that contacts that we've made on our many journeys to Bali."

BALI: return economy is at the Fremantle Arts Centre from January 31-March 27.

ARTE FACTS

STEPHEN BEVIS

SCREEN SCHOOL KUDOS

The WA Screen Academy has been ranked second among the world's top 10 film schools as voted by student filmmakers on the online magazine Reelshow. The Mt Lawley academy came in after the top-placed London Film School and ahead of such institutions as New York's Pratt Institute and the Toronto Film School. WASA senior lecturer and former director John Rapsey said the result was a magnificent affirmation as the academy called for final applications from aspiring filmmakers for the remaining places for its 2014 program. The 6th Annual Reelshow International Top Ten Film Schools 2013 Survey was carried out among members and website visitors over the past six months of last year. Academy places are available in production, management, scriptwriting, cinematography, directing, editing and others through: ecu.edu.au/schools/communications-and-arts/study-areas/wa-screen-academy.

LOCAL LAUGHS WEEKLY

Top Australian comedians **Lawrence Mooney** and **Fiona O'Loughlin** will help launch a weekly comedy night at Fremantle's freshly restored heritage venue the National Hotel. The launch next Wednesday night also will feature local American expat Mike Goldstein as MC. "We're very excited to be launching a regular weekly comedy night at the beautifully restored National Hotel," hotel chief executive Karl Bullers said. "We'll be showcasing the best in comedy and are confident the residents of Fremantle will love the events." The National Hotel's Comedy Nights will run every Wednesday night, at 98 High Street, Fremantle. Tickets, \$10, can be booked at bookings@nationalhotelfremantle.com.au or on 9335 6688.



THREE-DIMENSIONAL Spectrum by Monique Tippett.

LANDSCAPES ABOUT TO LEAVE

Sylvan Landscapes, an exhibition from Monique Tippett, is entering its final days at Gunyulgup Galleries in Yallingup. Inspired by the South West forest where she lives, Tippett combines her experience in furniture making with painting in a series of layered artworks that bridge the gap between painting and sculpture. "I construct timber components to create a three-dimensional canvas, with spaces and textures that imbue each piece with the evanescent elements of the forest that capture my imagination; perspective, colour, light and shadow," Tippett says. Her show runs until Sunday at Gunyulgup Valley Drive, Yallingup. Details: gunyulguppalleries.com.au.

OZ CONCERT IN THE WINGS

Saseedaran Anandan has been appointed artistic director of Oz Concert 2014, to be presented in Government House Gardens on Sunday, March 16. Now in its 26th year, Oz Concert celebrates Australia's cultural diversity during Harmony Week. Broadcast nationally on SBS television, the free concert will feature diverse musicians, artists and dancers. A call-out for WA performers who want to register is open until January 22, with details available at kulcha.com.au. Tickets are available from February 1 from the Kulcha website or by phoning 9336 4544.

Model railway tracks all the days of our lives

An interactive installation uses people's trains of thought, writes **Emilia Vranjes**

Fancy being Barack Obama for a day? Perhaps Queen Elizabeth II or Pope Francis?

The WA public will soon be able to let their imaginations run wild thanks to a free family-friendly interactive installation created in collaboration with model railway hobbyists, which is making its way west after wowing audiences at Melbourne's Federation Square and Sydney's Central Station.

Inspired by children's tale *The Little Engine That Could* and produced by Intimate Spectacle in association with Hobart's Terrapin Puppet Theatre and Fremantle and Districts Model Railway Association (for the WA instalment), *I Think I Can* is based on a scale-model layout incorporating advanced digital technology that invites people to become a temporary resident of a miniature community via an avatar, in the form of a tiny puppet.

With the help of "the host", a story is created about the chosen resident and its relationship with other residents within the imaginary community, with the action filmed by a media artist for display on a large screen above the layout.

Each participant is also given a passport that allows them to return to



the layout and help reshape the events of the day, with a blogger documenting the narratives for immediate publication in an online newspaper. "It really is a very fun, irreverent work and I think it piques a lot of people's curiosities," says co-creator and director Sam Routledge.

While technology plays a central role in the work, Routledge — who is also artistic director of Terrapin Puppet Theatre — is committed to honouring the traditions of puppetry.

"I'm interested in the way technology can be integrated into old forms of puppetry," he offers.

"I think technology has a really important role to play, while always remaining true to what is unique about puppetry, which is that wonderful animation of things by hand."

Routledge, who developed *I Think I Can* with media artist and dramaturge Martyn Coutts, says an important facet of the work is taking model railway hobbyists out of their clubhouses and



NO RAILROADING People can make up a character in *I Think I Can*.

into the public arena. They have developed relationships with clubs in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Fremantle and Morgantown, West Virginia, with the work due to be presented at the International Performing Arts for Youth Showcase 2014 in Pittsburgh next week.

And as the project moves to a different town, each location's local model railway club brings a fresh layout and, with it, unique colour and character. "It's a wonderful way to promote their hobby and to also transform the layout and have all these new people living on it," Routledge

says. "Each train set is different. It has its own little peculiarities and that's really exciting for us, because the work is made new every time we do it."

While some people choose to engage directly with the work, others opt simply to watch.

"The work is about people being able to shape a miniature society . . . and having the power to change the way the town operates," he says.

"Some choose their figure and come back every day to reanimate their figure and tell a new story, but they might only do it once, or they might not do it at all and only come and watch the city live."

Beyond its WA stint, *I Think I Can* could find itself embarking on a world tour.

"We think the model of the work is strong — engaging with a model railway club wherever we go — and the clubs are all over Europe and the US," Routledge says.

"So we hope it has a long life because of the necessary level of local engagement and ability to reach a broad audience."

I Think I Can is at the WA Museum in Perth from February 8-19 and the Albany Entertainment Centre from February 22-March 1.

FRINGE WORLD Festival

Randy on the wagon for Perth

SHANNON HARVEY

If you've only seen talking felt funnyman Randy as one half of the comedy duo Sammy J & Randy, then you've only seen him on his best behaviour.

On the other hand, Randy is Sober is the purple people-pleaser both solo and salacious as he admits to a long and glorious battle with the bottle.

"I was a notorious booze-hound for many years," the cotton-bunted comedian confesses on the phone. "I was drinking pretty much every day for about 20 years and I loved it! I was a great booze hound! It wasn't a struggle at all. But then one day I just stopped drinking and really went the whole nine yards on the self-improvement thing. I changed my diet. I changed my exercise. I had a lot of spare time on my hands without being hungover or s... faced."

Yet the bawdy baldy wants to point out that Randy is Sober, which plays at the Perth Fringe Festival's Spiegelgint over the Australia Day long weekend, isn't just drinking stories or the horrors of alcoholism. The former sous, who is still "swinging single," says the show is much faster and looser than his usual gigs with Sammy J. No one is safe and nothing is sacred.

"It's classic Randy," he chirps. "It's all about the delights of being booze-free and all the things I do to fill in the sober times. Things like rock climbing, macrame, jujitsu, skateboarding and Pilates, where I can get my legs right up behind my head!"

"It still has a point and a narrative and twist at the end, but mostly I'll play with the crowd, muck around and do some local material."

The smiley-faced wit has been on the road "ever since Sammy J stitched me up" in 2008. The duo became regulars on shows such as Good News Week, Q&A and The 7PM Project and won Australia's top live comedy gong, the Barry Award, for Sammy J and Randy in Ricketts Lane at the Melbourne International Comedy Festival in 2010.

Clearly Australia's hardest-working humorist with ping-pong ball eyes, Randy says his solo shows will never replace his work with his "skinny compadre Sammy J".

"We've been churning out a lot of material and getting a lot of stuff done. We've just released Sammy J and Randy's Difficult First Album and we're hitting the road with it soon."

For now, the funny purple people-pleaser is looking forward to being in "very silly spirits" for his first Perth solo show.

"I've never done a show at Perth Fringe World either, but people here say amazing things about it. So I'm very excited to get over there and get amongst it, Perth style. But if it's s... I'm going to be pretty devastated and tell everyone."

Randy is Sober is at *The West Australian* Spiegelgint, The Pleasure Garden, Northbridge, from January 24-27 at 7pm.



BAWDY BALDY Randy is doing his first solo gig in Perth.