



Honey working on her art. (April Stevens)



The East End alley was bathed in a soft glow as the youth-led project was installed. (April Stevens)



Paul Sonsie's fish art. (April Stevens)



Participants designed and led the project.

Young people embrace Banksy

By April Stevens

Warm light was cast in a dark and narrow alley of Healesville's east end as the Living and Learning Centre's youth-led art project Be Like Banksy wrapped up on Tuesday 28 April.

Be Like Banksy was a free community workshop that commenced in early February for the town's youth (ages 15 to 25).

The project's aim was to help local youth connect to their creative selves, with a focus on stencil development, spray painting and exploring original concepts with local art experts.

Healesville Living and Learning Centre (HLLC) community development coordinator, Shona Rimmer, and other members of HLLC have worked tirelessly to secure the alleyway legally for recreational use.

The eligibility and obligations of gaining legal

permission from property owners set a precedent for a long and oftentimes difficult developmental process for HLLC, but hope was not lost.

As night fell on the 28th, the art group climbed ladders, directed their visions to be pasted on graffiti-covered brick and celebrated the finality of the workshops with pizza and music.

There was a gentle hum of excitement, but also a concentration that was wise beyond their years.

Well-known local artist and owner of Sonsie Studios, Paul Sonsie, eagerly coordinated all Be Like Banksy workshops and was seen pasting art alongside the group, including some of his own designs.

"The program is called 'Be Like Banksy' simply because it sounded catchy. He's a great artist, but we really just want for you to be like you, to be like yourself," Mr Sonsie said.



Participants at work.

Ms Rimmer and Mr Sonsie agreed there was no big statement enforced and that creativity and mental wellness was front of mind.

"The message is that there is no message," Ms Rimmer said.

"We're just heading in the direction of youth, we need to let kids be kids."

Like many youth-bound projects, HLLC felt and heard that Healesville was hesitant about the project.

Locals even asked whether art made by young people was "worth seeing".

HLLC and the young artists were not deterred. "What is real art? What is worthy art?" Ms Rimmer asked.

"People often undervalue young voices or worry about risk. But that raw, unfiltered perspective is exactly what makes it valuable," Mr Sonsie said.

Since the success of this workshop, youth-led art and more projects will continue to emerge in the community throughout 2026, with Healesville's Living and Learning Centre holding the torch and leading the way.

Peer into surrealism at new exhibition in Warburton

By Oliver Winn

The Warburton Waterwheel is offering a glimpse into the abstract with its May exhibition, Mindfulness.

Hosted by Yarra Valley artist Jerry Osadczuk, Mindfulness showcases a series of vivid abstract paintings until 31 May.

Mr Osadczuk's paintings are layered with rich texture, achieved by using many mediums and taking advantage of their individual traits.

Each layer showcases a state of Mr Osadczuk's mind, culminating in a coalescence of colour and feeling that represents the journey of creating the artwork itself.

Mr Osadczuk said this is what Mindfulness is all about.

"This exhibition is called mindfulness and I think that's basically what it is. It's the setting of my mind."

"When I paint or create something I try to work in that sort of area where my feelings are at the time," he said.

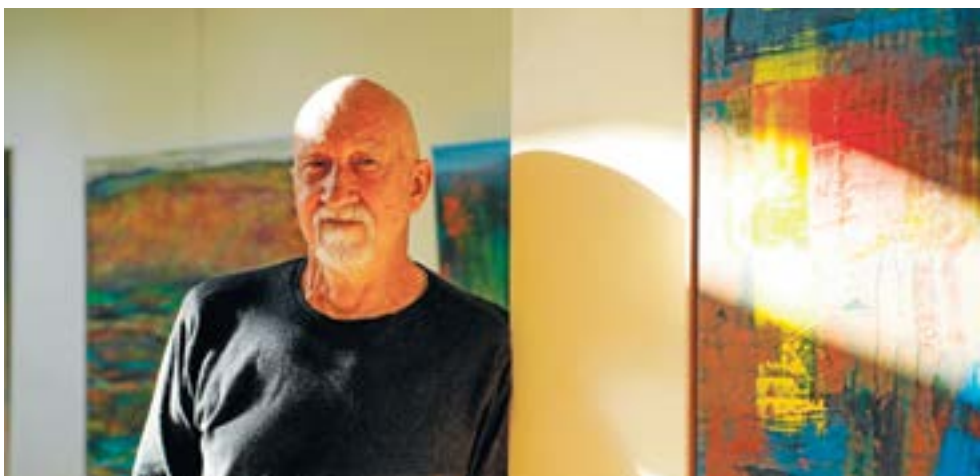
Though some paintings appear to be purely abstract, others loosely echo familiar landscapes — places one feels they've seen, but can't quite pinpoint when or where.

"I do work from some photos, like places I've been to. But then I don't directly copy that image. That's the inspiration I get and the feeling I get when I'm there," Mr Osadczuk said.

Often juggling up to six paintings at once, the floor of his garage-turned-studio is packed with paintings in progress. Mr Osadczuk said this environment inspires him the most.

"I don't sit at one one canvas and work on that, I like to move around because that's how I get that feeling that I'm enjoying it."

His inspiration stems from esteemed abstract greats, such as those from the birthplace of Australian impressionism, the Heidelberg School of Art.



Jerry Osadczuk has lived in the Yarra Valley for 26 years. (Oliver Winn: 551992)

"I like the ones from the Heidelberg School. Those guys, I really admired them, because they worked under a lot of duress, so to speak," Mr Osadczuk said.

Others included Australian abstract painters, Russell Drysdale and John Olsen.

Mr Osadczuk initially pursued a career in graphic design right out of high school in 1967, though he soon branched out.

"I wanted to branch out a bit, but then I just completely didn't do any art. After that, I became a chef."

By 1991, he found himself working as a chef in Japan, where he also studied the Japanese art of Sumi.

A form of calligraphy, Mr Osadczuk uses Sumi in a lot of his paintings, which can be seen in large, black strokes.

Upon returning to Australia in 2000, he moved to Healesville and discovered Yarra Valley Open Studios and other artist spaces and organisations.

Having lived in the Yarra Valley for 26 years, Mr Osadczuk has exhibited at the Warburton Waterwheel five times so far.

With the Warburton Waterwheel committee in a transitional state and the lease for the building nearing its end, he feared for its potential closure.

"I've exhibited here five times, so that's why I'd be very sad if the place closed down. There's just very, very little places that you can exhibit [in the Yarra Valley]."

"Because you've got a lot of people coming through here. If you ever read the comments book, there's a lot of good comments and a lot of people enjoy coming here to look at art," Mr Osadczuk said.

Though one can worry about what might happen, the future can't be determined and largely remains out of our hands.

Perhaps then, solace lies in adopting the exhibition's titular state of mindfulness — staring deep into the artwork and getting lost within it.



Mr Osadczuk worked as a chef in Japan before moving to the Yarra Valley. (551992)



His art evokes many layers of meaning and emotion, inviting the viewer to pause and contemplate. (551992)