Arts get boost from IPRA

In 2005, artist Kerrie Warren spent a year in the Gippsland Community Leadership Program (GCLP). As part of the development program, participants are expected to dream up a community project and carry it through to completion.

"I started thinking about forming a group of artists," Kerrie said.

Kerrie lives in Crossover, north of Warragul, and is part of the rich vein of artistic talent that runs through Gippsland. However, there isn't a gallery to showcase the talent in Warragul. So Kerrie's project brought together a number of gifted artists and they called themselves the Wild Dogs from Down Under. It wasn't long before they set their sights on taking their art to China, to Warragul's sister city, Jiujiang.

The difficulty was that not all the members of the group could afford to travel to China. Assistance from the municipal levels of government wasn't available and Kerrie started looking for corporate assistance. She approached Loy Yang B which agreed to purchase two of the paintings after the tour but to pay for them beforehand. This enabled all the artists to travel to Jiujiang. It was the beginning of an ongoing relationship between Kerrie and Loy Yang B.

Following the bushfires of 2009, another group show began coalesce. This one, called 'Fields of View' brought together the work of five artists, Leonie Ryan, Peter Biram, Ursula Theinert and her husband Werner, and Kerrie.

And again, Loy Yang B helped out, purchasing the painting 'Firewall 09', the money from which enabled Kerrie to print catalogues and brochures, and covered her costs for the tour. Kerrie is pictured below in her studio and in front of the painting 'Inner Journey'; she describes herself as an abstract expressionist, a movement begun in the United States after World War II and whose best known proponents are probably Jackson Pollock, Louise Bourgeois and Willem De Kooning.

After the opening of her solo exhibition in New York, a critic wrote that Kerrie had the capacity "... to animate and stabilise all activity on the picture plane, and finally, apprehend the calm stillness at the centre of the painterly storm."

Apart from her show in New York, she has also been invited to exhibit in Bologna, Singapore and twice in China. 'Fields of View' is still touring throughout Victoria. Following a presentation to Parliament, the show has toured Maffra and Warrnambool. In June it will be at the Walker Street Gallery in Dandenong and finally the Maroondah Art Gallery in Ringwood in August.