

'Sea of mongrels' to shine at Viva La Gong

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Artist Mai Nguyen-Long with her mongrel creations. Picture: KEN ROBERTSON

A social experiment has paid off for Wollongong City Council, and the results are high on creativity, diverse in participants and vibrant in colour and form.

More than 114 mongrel dogs have been created in a project conceived and facilitated by artist Mai Nguyen-Long, which will culminate in a parade in the Viva La Gong festival.

Ms Nguyen-Long said her own mixed cultural background and travel abroad inspired the concept.

“This project is inspired by the mixed up, crazy, chaotic life that I’ve led and that we all lead these days, but the beauty of that chaos, complexity and difference,” Ms Nguyen-Long said.

“Everyone has their own different story, everyone has something to say and there’s many ways people can express that. Through reconstructing their pieces into these creatures, this project gives people that chance.

“People will love to see this sea of mongrels at the festival. There’s an initial sense of joy from seeing these really strange, mixed-breed creatures.”

Wollongong City Council cultural development co-ordinator Megan McKell said the project allowed a diverse range of people to be engaged in the festival.

“The beauty of this project too, is that you don’t have to be an artist - anyone can do it,” she said.

“It’s six hours of hands-on creativity that is accessible to everyone. It’s an easy, fast and fun way for everyone to get involved.”

Groups already working on their mongrel art across the Illawarra include local Men’s Sheds, Aboriginal women elders, primary and high school students, people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds and young people with disabilities.

Coniston Men’s Shed member Agostinho Moreira said he found the project a challenge, but interesting because it was so unlike anything he was used to doing.

“I wasn’t expecting mine to turn out so well. We’re all very happy and proud of our finished mongrels, but what was really good was making them together too” he said.

The public launch of the Viva La Gong 2012 program will take place at Wollongong Art Gallery on Friday, October 26 at 11am.