

valley pulse

Colourful characters



Mai Long with her creations Aqua Mutt and Dag Girl.

Barry Kennedy

COLOURFUL Asian festivals and the joy of childhood are the two inspirations in an upcoming exhibition in Moonee Ponds.

Aqua Mutt, an Installation with Dag Girl, by Sydney artist Mai Long is a series of 30 papier-mache sculptures depicting two characters – Aqua Mutt the dog and Dag Girl, both mythical and decorated in bountiful colour.

The characters were unsure of their own reality and their exploration of this was a key focus to the exhibit, Long said.

Long chose rich colours for the characters in part tribute to the spontaneous festivals she witnessed in the Philippines and Vietnam.

"I spent 15 years living in Asia so there is a big subconscious influence coming through me still," she said.

The simplicity of childhood was the other main theme Long wanted to explore in this work. She said she chose the papier-mache form in the pieces for its hands-on quality, which children can relate to.

"The pieces are sort of murals wrapped around an object," she said.

It's been an unconventional artistic journey for Long, with her parents initially steering her away from an interest in art. Later studies in Hanoi and Griffith University took her full circle. She now works as a full-time artist from Surrey Hills.

But she can't wait to display her art to a Melbourne audience.

"There's a special buzz in the Melbourne arts scene and I was just keen to get down there and show my work," she said.

■ *Aqua Mutt, An Installation with Dag Girl* is at the Incinerator Arts Complex, 180 Holmes Rd, Moonee Ponds from August 22 to September 16, Wednesday to Sunday 11am to 4pm.