

Media Release

John Mutsaers Infinite Birdcage Series

Art, Words and Freedom – Writing Competition

What constitutes freedom? A life free from religious or political persecution? No mortgage? Cancer-free? Escaping a violent relationship? Inverloch-based artist John Mutsaers has explored freedom in his art series, Infinite Birdcage and is inviting writers to do the same.

The works of John Mutsaers are held in collections around the world, including the late Princess Margaret and astronaut Charles Duke. John, who has held 38 solo exhibitions worldwide is soon to hold his most evocative yet. And like much about John, it has a twist to it.

Ironically, in the midst of the organisation of the Archies Bald Portrait Prize cancer fundraiser in honour of the hairless head, of which John was Chair, he was himself diagnosed with prostate cancer.

As John stood on the podium at the opening, teasing people into answering whether they would have liked to be there at the inaugural Archibald Prize in the same way that they were this evening - “Of course not - you’d be dead,” he quipped - he was not thinking of his own mortality, but what he still needed to do.

What he needed to do, he says, was complete his Infinite Birdcage Series of paintings, which symbolise the human need for freedom.

As John’s paintbrush carried out where his imagination was guiding him, he started filling canvases with symbolism, metaphors and themes – anything from cheeky sulphur crested cockatoos pecking at a starched linen tablecloth to Aboriginal totems to scorched earth.

While he is always complimented on his fine artwork, John says: “Thank you, but it is those who can create a picture without using a drop of paint whom I admire. It is these people I hope to engage in my project.” He is, of course, referring to writers.

Part of the upcoming Infinite Birdcage exhibition is a callout to all writers, whether established or beginners.

“I want to bring a broader understanding to the notion of freedom by enlisting the help of writers to engage with my paintings. Some Infinite Birdcage works will be hanging in a special art installation at ArtSpace Gallery, Wonthaggi, for their inspiration and interpretation.”

John hopes writers will craft their own picture of freedom in no more than 2,000 words using the Infinite Birdcage paintings as a catalyst. Writing can be fiction or based on lived experiences. First prize will be a \$400 framed original Infinite Birdcage drawing.

The work of three finalists will be published in a leading Gippsland lifestyle magazine and later published in a book featuring Infinite Birdcage paintings and selected narratives.

Writers who are interested in taking part, or interested in the concept, can see John’s work at <https://www.johnmutsaers.com/about-the-table>, or contact artspacewonthaggipresident@gmail.com for more information.

The official opening of the Infinite Birdcage Series will be held between 4 and 6pm on February 23, 2020 at ArtSpace Gallery, 1 Bent Street, Wonthaggi, and will run until March 30, 2020.



