

SQUARE DEAL FOR KIDS

Proceeds from Melbourne Art Rooms' end-of-year show will help brighten the lives of sick children, writes **Mary O'Brien**.



CHRISTMAS means different things to different people. To photographer Jason Kimberley, the festive season is slightly absurd — a cold-climate celebration transplanted to sunny Australia. He sees Santa as a comic figure bogged down on a beach while a lifesaver takes centre-stage.

Kimberley's humorous iconic vision of Christmas down under — *Oh What Fun It is to Ride* — is the focal point for Melbourne Art Rooms' end-of-year show. The event is all about the artistic community helping sick children, and 10 per cent of the show's proceeds goes to TLC for Kids, a charity that paints murals in hospital wards.

Thirty-seven of Melbourne's leading and emerging artists have banded together to produce works that measure less than 12 inches by 12 inches — *One Square Foot* is the title of the show — to tie in with the 12 days of Christmas.

"I really wanted to do something that was heartfelt and reflected the spirit of Christmas," says gallery director Andy Dinan. "I believe the show has given a soul to the place that can be missing in galleries."

The money comes out of Dinan's commission.

She says the artists really embraced the concept when she approached them six months ago and made works specially for the show. Most of the exhibits are small and affordable to encourage first-time buyers to invest in art works while also donating to a charity. The average painting, sculpture or ceramic work costs about \$600.

Jeremy Kibel was so enthused by the idea that he decided to

delighted to have his still-life works in a show for a good cause.

"I spent a lot of time caring for the work and nurturing it in the hope that it will be seen and someone will like it well enough to buy it," he says.

Tim Conolan, CEO and founder of TLC for Kids charity, says this is the second time that Melbourne Art Rooms and TLC have collaborated.

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donate the total cost of both his paintings to TLC for Kids.

"It's a privilege to make art for a living and, if it can help people, it's a bonus," he says.

The message of hope and healing is central to Kibel's two paintings. One of the works was inspired by a tree struck by lightning on his Daylesford property that is now starting to regenerate.

Artists have a strong social conscience, according to painter John Scurry. He was

immediate distraction for kids, and a happier environment," he says. "Murals are a real fantasy. They take the kids away and they can look at them for hours."

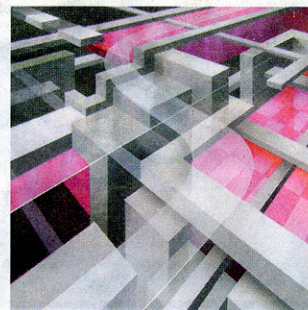
TLC for Kids, which was founded in 1998, delivers support services for sick children in hospitals and medical centres across Australia. It provides distractions for children, organises visits and offers urgent programs for the seriously ill.

Some of the artists — Jan Senbergs and Andrew Sibley —



are well-known. Others, such as former graffiti artist Peter Daverington, are relative newcomers. Names to look out for include Zoe Amor (creator of the bronze sculptures *Warring States and Still Life*) and Jane Hall, whose delicate monochrome book has already been sold.

There's polished porcelain by Mollie Bosworth, and hand-burnished ceramics by Petrus Spronk. Xiao Yu Bai's trees reflect her Daoist philosophy, and Catherine Swan's ethereal butterfly collections tell a story. Dinan wanted to create a



gallery with a difference when she opened Melbourne Art Rooms in Port Melbourne last February. The building was a run-down, rat-infested, old dairy that had been used as a mechanical workshop, but Dinan knew its high ceilings and light had great potential. Today, the gallery is spacious and bright, with a cafe at the front. She wanted a relaxed space where all would feel welcome.

Dinan comes from a public relations background, but has always been interested in the arts. She used to represent

Heide Gallery and various artists, and is a founder of the National Gallery of Victoria's Artbeat group. She has a long-standing interest in charity work and was the originator of the Off Your Back coat drive for the homeless. She hopes the show will become an annual event and inspire other galleries to hold similar shows at this time of the year.

One Square Foot is at Melbourne Art Rooms, 418 Bay Street, Port Melbourne, until Thursday. Details: marsgallery.com.au, www.tlcforkids.org.au

Fancy footwork: (clockwise from above) photographer Jason Kimberley's *Oh What Fun It is to Ride*, and works by former graffiti artist Peter Daverington and Jeremy Kibel.