

**OPENING OF 'LIBERATED BOOKS' COMPETITION AND EXHIBITION -
ADDRESS BY TRIC HILL, PRESIDENT LEONGATHA ARTS AND CRAFT
SOCIETY – 2 SEPTEMBER 2012**

This is a very good day. Today I am privileged to be part of the Leongatha Art and Craft Society Incorporation as president, and to welcome our Deputy Mayor Mohya Davies, (Cr.Mimmie Jacks) Eileen Thurgood, Dineke MacLean, Life Members Aileen Wightman, Elaine Stainekamp, Vic Rowlands and Pat Dale., Our Foundation Members and Past Presidents and past committee members, right up to current members and committee of the gallery, our contributing artists for the exhibition, also any guests (such as ND and SD) visitors and family, and any Dads out there as it is Father's Day today, so welcome to our 40th birthday celebrations.

Leongatha Gallery has a very long and proud history supporting art and craft in this District. It's first green shoots sprang up long ago when a group of dedicated people with a vision nurtured a need in the community. We have some of those Foundation Members here right now, Maie Riseley, Margaret Nelson, Vic Rowlands and Pat Dale,(and AS whose Mother Dot Court was our first President).

We are indeed very pleased to see many early supporters of the gallery here today, as well as many of our current team of volunteers.

During that first meeting which occurred in August 1972 which was held in the Music and Drama Room of the Leongatha High School, there was a great deal of enthusiasm in the room. Enthusiasm creates a powerful energy and that energy has been the secret

weapon behind the ongoing success of the gallery to this day. It has remained true to its core in bringing together people interested in all facets of art and crafts. To promote and foster creative talent and to bring it to a wide as possible an audience, and to encourage and stimulate its members to achieve higher standards in their work.

Also to provide a retail outlet for its members to sell their work and finally to use the gallery as a way to attract tourists into the South Gippsland area. Well stand up and be counted and feel proud now as you have achieved everything you set out on that day back in the Music room all those years ago.

It was fitting then that another green shoot made it's way up into the light about a year ago now, that it would be a wonderful tribute to the community which has supported the Leongatha Gallery to hold a competition and exhibition once again to stimulate and encourage creativity. Through the wonderful fiscal encouragement of the South Gippsland Shire as well as Regional Arts Victoria, we were able to stage the Liberated Books Artist's Books Competition you see here today. This was the perfect opportunity not only for established artists but for up and coming artists to showcase their work.

So finally we can actually see what an artist's book looks like. Our dedicated committee has produced a fine catalogue as a memento of this occasion. Vic Rowlands has penned a warm Foreward together with some words of inspiration from our judges. It is available at the counter as well as at the Leongatha Gallery. I would now like to introduce Deputy Mayor of South Gippsland Shire , Mohya Davies who will officially open the Exhibition.

Because we wanted to encourage all Leongatha and Meeniyan Gallery members to participate in this exhibition, we had an independent system in place so that the integrity of the competition could not be compromised, this is further demonstrated by our judges who reside and work outside of the district.

Now I would like to introduce Eileen Thurgood: Eileen is Director of the East Gippsland Art Gallery in Bairnsdale, which last year ran the successful 'Books ... beyond words— evolution', a biennial artist's book award and exhibition. Eileen was the guest speaker at the launch of 'Liberated books' last November where she gave a fascinating insight into the concept of the artist's book and how it has evolved. Eileen has judged the Shire Residence section of the competition.

Now I would like to introduce Dineke Mclean: Dineke has come down from Melbourne where she now lives. Dineke has had exhibitions at the Leongatha Gallery, and has been a past member as well. Currently her work can be found in private and public collections and she is a sessional tutor in book arts at adult education centres in Melbourne. Dineke has judged the Open section of the competition as well as the Members of LACS and MAG section.

I would like to acknowledge the current Leongatha Gallery committee for all their wonderful work over the years, there's definitely been a reliable group that have been instrumental in keeping the home fires burning. And as well as to sincerely thank the dedicated artist's book committee that has worked enthusiastically on this project. There's Heather Bruce, Jennifer Hamilton, Alysia Norton, Karen Pedretti and Pat Dale, and Peter Jensen for our technical support on our website. I would like to particularly like to thank Lerida Watts who's expertise and creative talents are visible in setting up of this exhibition.

There is also a folder put together by Pat with some information of the early days that you may find interesting to look into. It is wonderful to see people reconnecting here today and to remember some of those early memories!

When we began this project we realised that we were space challenged at the Leongatha Gallery and so a special thank you to the Meeniyan Art Gallery for hosting this exhibition. I think we can all agree they do a nice little opening!

Now without further ado I would like to ask some of the original members to come forward to help cut the birthday cake and maybe take a photo so that we can start eating this delicious cake.