



Left to right: Karen O'Clery, Tanja Riese, Prue Acton and Leanne Barnes

Tanja print maker is the next “living artist”

Print maker **Tanja Riese** is the winner of the 2009 Far South Coast Living Artist Project scholarship worth \$35,000. The Tanja based artist, who coincidentally shares the spelling of her first name with the locality where she lives, accepted the award from the acting general manager of the Bega Valley Shire Council, Leanne Barnes, at the announcement at Bega Valley Regional Gallery on 11 July 08.

Ms Riese was one of three finalists, the other two being Craig Cameron and Matthew Jones, all of whose artwork was on display at the gallery for the announcement.

Living Artist Project founder and president Prue Acton said while all three finalists rated well, “Tanja was the clear winner”.

“The judges are satisfied that Tanja has with the ability to produce an excellent and professional body of work within the 12-month period.” Tanja is a professional print maker whose latest focus is the landscape around where she lives, and she has spent considerable time out in the forest making sketches directly onto the plates she uses to etch her prints. “I am interested in how we look at the landscape and how we identify with the landscape,” she said.

She was particularly interested in the edges of the cleared land and that transition between cultivated land and the undisturbed forest or woodland. She said she was delighted to be named the next Living Artist. “I feel very grateful to be chosen and because this is a community driven project, I feel quite a responsibility to do something with it,” she said.

Ms Acton said Tanja would benefit immensely from the scholarship as her life up until now had been balancing her artistic career with her family life, building a home and also catering for conferences. “She has also been a dedicated Spiral Gallery member, curating exhibits for the gallery and being part of group exhibits,” Ms Acton said. “This will be a major opportunity for her for a solo exhibition.”

The biennial scholarship program was initiated two years ago by a group of locals involved in

the visual arts to provide enough money for a local emerging artist to take a year off to concentrate on their art and to develop a body of work.

It was the brainchild of artist Prue Acton and Narek Galleries owner Karen O'Clery who saw a need to provide opportunities for Far South Coast visual artists to develop excellence in their practices. The project does this by providing mentoring, education, financial and marketing support and training in a bid to retain artists in the region.

However, the Living Artist scholarship is much more than just a grant to produce a body of work for exhibition. It also aims to teach general business and practice management skills in tandem with the practical component and furthering professional development. The Living Artist project does this in partnership with local communities as part of a broader goal to raise the regional profile of art and artists on the Far South Coast.

Ms Acton said the project had not only raised more than \$70,000 for the two recipients but had also attracted art lovers from Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne and the region, which was an important boost for local tourism and the economy. Generous private donors, contributing through the Australian Business Arts Foundation, play an important role.

However the bulk of the funding for this second scholarship comes from an art auction and raffles, held on the June long weekend in Tathra.

This year the event raised more than \$30,000 with support from the community, local business, the media and particularly from the artists themselves who are so supportive of each other and of the desire to make the Far South Coast a significant "arts trail" that can attract people from everywhere. The 10-member committee has worked tirelessly over the past 20 months to fund and run the scholarships. "Many are now retiring, going back to their own work so we will be seeking new members and new volunteer teams to run our projects," Ms Acton said.



'Banksias Middle Beach'
By Tanja Reise