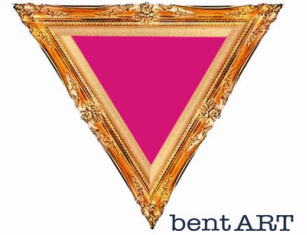


**MEDIA RELEASE
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AN ARTISTIC BENT IN THE MOUNTAINS

The Blue Mountains have long been known as a refuge for artists of all pe they can escape the pressures of the city to enjoy the freedom to express their creativity. However, living away from the metropolis does have some drawbacks.

Just over 5 years ago, three art loving women living in the Blue Mountains were frustrated that in such a renownedly creative community, the opportunities for artist to exhibit work were limited, especially for emerging artists in general and for gay and lesbian artists in particular. In a stroke of inspiration, the women turned their frustration into action and the bentART annual exhibition was created.

“The formation of bentART was a wonderful example of women creating something positive and empowering and providing an opportunity for lesbian and gay artists to show their artwork” says Julie Martin, the current president of bentART. She notes that “At the same time as providing an outlet for artistic expression, bentART also increases the visibility of queer art in the wider community.”

Indeed bentART has been so successful in increasing awareness, the exhibition, now in it’s 6th year, is now open to GLBT artists all around Australia, and this year for the first time, thanks to the generosity of the local and regional businesses which sponsor the event, the exhibition includes prizes specifically aimed at encouraging emerging artists, artists under 25 and also queer Aboriginal artists.

Past bentART exhibitions have allowed both emerging and professional artists to exhibit their work in a welcoming and inviting forum. In 2009 Michael Burge won the bentART award with his painting “Becoming Visible” (attached) while Pamela Hourani and Valerie Ingham won the “painting” and “peoples’ choice “ categories respectively with their works “Interval at a Music Hall” and “Biensience” (attached).

The exhibition, which opens the June long weekend, also marks the start of a pink festival in the Blue Mountains that runs for a couple of weeks and includes a disco in Blackheath, the Three Sisters Ball, bushwalks, picnics, as well as the pinkFEST film festival run by QueerScreen at The Edge cinema in Katoomba.

bentART exhibition is being held at the Wentworth Falls Art School and opens Friday 10th June, running until Monday 14th June. Art submissions are open until Weds, June 2.

*For more details, visit www.bentart.com.au
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