

The Thursday Plantation in Ballina is a little example of corporate support for the arts that could be a model for other businesses.

Curator Merran Morrison explains why a fuzzy bottom line isn't necessarily bad for business.

ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT ASPECTS OF CORPORATE SUPPORT FOR arts and cultural development is quantifying what the benefits are. We talk about the warm fuzzy feelings that all those board members and CEOs should be feeling when they contribute to something beyond the bottom line, but it's still only a small percentage of companies in Australia that contribute to the arts. The good news is that the 'triple bottom line' – factoring in community benefits – is starting to be used more frequently in the corporate conversation. Companies are starting to realize that their relationship to their community – consumers, suppliers, neighbours – is vital to both the consumer perception of the company's products and services and the psychological health of the company itself.

Christopher and Lynda Dean, founders of Thursday Plantation Health, an unlisted public company which manufactures and distributes natural health care products, have been thinking this way for years. Their ten year commitment to the Thursday Plantation East Coast Sculpture Show has renewed my faith in corporate Australia.

Christopher first came to the Northern Rivers in 1973 when he was captured by the magic of the region and the life-changing experience of the Nimbin Aquarius Festival. Discovering that the world's best tea tree grew in wetland 70 km from Nimbin, he and Lynda moved to the area and began their long road researching, growing and distilling tea tree.

Thursday Plantation Health now exports to over 22 countries and has an annual wholesale turnover of over \$20 million. For the past five years the company has been in the top 100 companies for growth in Australia and has won a string of awards for product development and tourism. Lynda has been a nominee for Business Woman of the Year and voted one of the *Business Review Weekly's* ten most innovative Australian business people.

Thursday Plantation, the national headquarters of TP Health, sits on 15 hectares of remnant rainforest, a tea tree maze and botanical gardens, as well as the paddocks of tea tree. It's a beautiful spot that lends itself to sculpture, particularly large scale and installation work.

Always great supporters of the arts and culture, it was this fabulous setting which prompted the Deans to establish an annual sculpture show which, since 1994, has been drawing about 70 artists from around Australia for an extraordinary four month exhibition. With precious few opportunities for contemporary sculptors to exhibit outdoors, Thursday Plantation has now become a unique environment for small and large scale art works and the acquisitive nature of the exhibition means that it is also home to a growing national collection of contemporary sculpture.

The sculpture show might seem like an unusual adjunct to a seriously successful local and export business, but it fits precisely in the Deans' life ethos of giving back to the community which supports them. The show has given regional artists a national exhibition opportunity at their doorstep and, with the support of the vibrant artistic community of the Rainbow Region, it has become the largest outdoor show of its kind in Australia.



Gary Deirmendjain's 'Divine Proportion', 2003 prize winner

"Sculptors are passionately driven to express their art, and through their work they comment on the sacred, the landscape, relationships, love, politics and the profane world we all face every day," says Christopher. "These sculptures bring us moments of intense joy and the realization that creativity and the love of art are vital to our human existence."

Admittedly, not many CEO's have that perspective but we do have to keep trying to tap their souls! ■

CONTACT Merran Morrison, Curator
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August

5 - 29 August

👁️ *Travels With My Art Works* by artists who have been influenced by their experiences in their travels and have brought the experience back with them into their own communities. Manning Regional Art Gallery **TAREE**. Tel 02 6592 5455 Email mrag@tpgi.com.au

6 - 8 August

👁️ *Weekend Watercolour Art Exhibition* Featuring the work of Rupert Richardson. **NARRABRI** Art & Craft Society. Contact Helen 02 6792 1861

7 August

👁️ *Last Cab to Darwin* Follow Broken Hill cab driver Max on the first and last great journey of his life. Presented by Pork Chop Productions and the Sydney Opera House. Directed by Jeremy Sims. **BROKEN HILL** Entertainment Centre. Tel 08 8080 2222

7 August

👁️ *Springtime Ball* - New Vogue Old Time Dancing Enjoy the charm and elegance of dancing and mixing in a friendly atmosphere. **NAMBUCCA HEADS**. Contact Helen Boorer Tel 02 6564 7146