

Mali comes out to play

City artists ensure zoo celebrations are seen and herd. By Stephen A Russell

Melbourne's CBD has been overrun by a herd of baby elephants with a difference. Rather than the standard issue grey, these big bubbas come in a wild variety of colours, textures and patterns.

Celebrating 150 years of Melbourne Zoo, its famous elephant calf, Mali, has been immortalised in 50 lifesize fibreglass models, each decorated by a different artist, in collaboration with Wild in Art.

Scattered across the city from the Royal Botanic Gardens to the Myer windows, and Docklands to the Marriott Hotel, all 50 will eventually make their way to the zoo. On October 25 they will be auctioned off, with all proceeds going towards the zoo's conservation work at home and abroad.

Prahran sculptural artist Mia Rappel (pictured) has taken the task by the trunk. Her own Mali, currently grazing

in Fitzroy Gardens, is covered with an undulating collage of exotic coloured papers collected on her world travels or from Dragon Papers' warehouse in Port Melbourne. It encompasses everything from hemp to Japanese prayer paper and bodhi leaf print. "Everywhere I go I buy paper, it's just one of my things. I love using it," says Rappel.

Her Mali is a kaleidoscope of coloured paper, radiating from light to dark. "All the swirly, wiggly pieces are hand-cut on the spot, glued and a new one cut to flow into that. You can't just whack them on."

In our good old Melbourne weather, the paper covering may have ended up a bit soggy. But with each leaf of paper stuck on with PVA glue, then the whole elephant sprayed with UV protection and coated in waterproof varnish, Mali's good to go.

Rappel relished the chance to broaden her canvas, alongside a host of artists

from a wide range of disciplines in the old quarters of the zoo.

"We had about four artists and their Malis in each room, which was really cute," she says. "We all became very affectionate with our little elephants. I'm really familiar working in a three dimensional way, but it was quite challenging for some of the painters working in that form. Mali is only a baby but she's still pretty big."

Rappel was glad to lend a hand to the zoo's celebrations.

"It's such a lovely project that's fun and brings vitality to the CBD. It's a real public engagement piece that brings awareness to the work of the zoo and international conservation." ■

Mali in the City is on until September 21 then will move to Melbourne Zoo.

The auction is on October 25.

Details: visit zoo.org.au.



DARREN JAMES

FLETCHERS
MELBOURNE'S ESTATE AGENT



MELBOURNE 1108/480 St Kilda Road

Spacious apartment with quality, style and stunning views across to the CBD, Albert Park Lake and the Bay. Bright Northerly aspect with open plan living/dining. Secure car park, storage, gym, pool and Concierge.

fletchers.net.au

Sale by Negotiation
Guide \$650,000
Inspect Sat 12:30 - 1:00pm
Contact Danny Smith 0400 031 072
Office 229 Park Street
South Melbourne 9686 8860



reviewproperty.com.au

The **best** way to view what's on the market