

ONLINE Guggenheim



A quick glance through Cairns web designer Gabrielle Cooney's portfolio will reveal her passion for art. She's helped many a local artist gain exposure through the internet, dreaming up artistic websites for them to display their creations.

And now the business-savvy art lover has taken her passion to a new practical level by creating an online museum where artists from around the world can display their work for sale and purchasers can buy safely over the net.

Gabrielle launched www.justart.com.au in May after years of watching artists take home their unsold pieces, unsure of how to sell them outside an exhibition space.

The website allows potential buyers to search for art under the artist's name or via categories such as jewellery, paintings, sculpture, mosaics and even T-shirts.

Gabrielle celebrated the website's first online purchase within two weeks of its launch. A US buyer

purchased a \$5500 painting and since then Australian buyers have embraced the cyberspace museum.

Gabrielle sees a variety of benefits for both artists and art lovers with the site, saying it gives artists a chance to sell work to a global audience.

"It is an opportunity for the artists to make more money, which is how it should be," she says.

"Exhibitions make the price of art too expensive, whereas when it is direct from the artist, it is cheaper. Hopefully they'll sell more art."

Listings on the website are free and Gabrielle takes a 20 per cent commission, which she says is to cover her costs, not to make profit.

This might sound too good to be true, but it's not the first time the web designer has used her position and talent to benefit others.

As part of her web design business Gabrielle provides hosting, which means the website is hosted on the internet, a service she discounts for artists and provides free for

An eclectic collection of work by modern day artists can be found at a newly launched online museum, writes **Eva Roberts**

community groups and organisations on a sponsorship basis.

She also lends her time to the regional high school IT competition which judges print design, web design and computer games.

While art has always been a part of Gabrielle's life, her move into the digital business world is more recent. A varied career including a stint in hospitality allowed Gabrielle

the country and ended up at Port Douglas for a period of time "just bumming around".

It was a natural progression to move to the Far North permanently.

"We love the tropical lifestyle. We love the weather, that's why we live here," she says.

In Cairns, Gabrielle has immersed herself in the art industry as both artist and art advocate. She's dabbled

Embracing digital technology and the business world does not mean Gabrielle has forgotten her passion for art. She approaches the design of a website from an artistic perspective, aiming to make it aesthetically pleasing so web surfers are encouraged to explore the site.

Ideas often strike her in the middle of the night.

"A lot of design inspiration

"Exhibitions make the price of art too expensive, whereas when it is direct from the artist, it is cheaper."

to travel the world with her partner, chef Craig Squire.

Then 13 years ago the couple moved from Adelaide to Cairns to open the iconic Red Ochre Grill which specialises in creative native Australian cuisine.

Gabrielle and Craig weren't strangers to the tropics. They'd spent years during the 1980s travelling

with numerous mediums including pottery and lead lighting.

Seven years ago Gabrielle completed a diploma in multimedia and launched Just Purple New Media. The web design business has allowed her to work from home so she can juggle business commitments with caring for her sons Jordan, 14, and Connor, 10.

comes to me while I am sleeping," she says.

"I can design an entire website in my sleep. Then I get up in the morning and do it."

And just as Gabrielle's dreams work for her business, her dream of an online museum could help some of the Far North's artists turn their career into business reality.



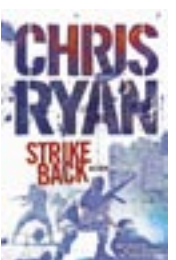
Available online ... *Horse Bag* by Kristin Tennyson and *Family* by Arone Meeks



Creative flair ... *Vanda Parker T-shirt*; *Knife Man* by Marcel Varna; *Courage* earrings by Neolithic; and *Peggy's Leg* by Laila Whiteing.

Strike Back

Chris Ryan
(Century) \$32.95



Strike Back is a fairly good read. Finally Ryan has developed a character in John Porter – former SAS man, now a drunk on the street – that offers a taste of humanity in Ryan's world of soldiers and their enemies. *Strike Back* is extremely topical as well ... a beautiful young journalist has been taken by Muslim extremists in the middle of the Lebanon and her head will be cut off if the British don't pull out of Iraq. John Porter, wallowing in a world of self-pity, vodka and bitterness, stumbles across a possible access to the Hezbollah leader who's holding the girl. Grasping his remaining self-respect around him Porter offers the Firm his services. Before he knows it, Porter is off to the Middle East as an envoy. There ensues Ryan's trademark action with betrayals, double-crosses, assassination attempts, torture and daring-do. This time, however, Ryan's characters are more developed, making this one of his better books.

Verdict // A rollicking action novel that has characters with depth

Niki Bruce

Beach Babylon

Imogen Edwards-Jones
& Anonymous
(Bantam) \$35



The author who brought us *Hotel Babylon* returns with an insider's look at how a luxury island resort is run, or not, as the case may be. Anyone who's ever worked in the hospitality industry will get a kick out of *Beach Babylon* as Edwards-Jones takes the information gleaned from an "anonymous" manager of an exclusive five-star resort and bundles it with alcoholic waiting staff, Russian oligarchs with bikini-clad strippers and formula one drivers on golf buggies. *Beach Babylon* might not be literature but it's a fun look at the "other side" of your holiday resort. The sheer stupidity of head office is probably the biggest eye-opener. Global companies obviously have too much money if they can waste as much as they do on this resort. Edwards-Jones's characters are a bit wooden – there's a token gay male, a snooty Frenchman and some nutty other nationalities to round out the staff, but they are all stereotypical. It's the realistic details rather than the composite characters that compel you to read on.

Verdict // Fun read but probably not the best choice for your next resort holiday

Niki Bruce

Photographs // Chris Scott






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