

Designs on success, outside the square

Freyla Ferguson
reports



THYLACINE may have left its prints on Canberra with the Childers Street-scape, the artwork on Lake Ginninderra and, most recently, Kent Street's bright blue bridge in Deakin, but for more than 10 years the Canberra-based design and project management business has been leaving its mark all over the country.

The hybrid art-design team were the brains behind many public art works around Australia including the "Taylor Square Cases" in Sydney; the footpaths in Bondi Junction Mall; plus works in Adelaide, Brisbane and Melbourne.

They've also developed exhibitions for galleries and museums interstate including the permanent exhibition – "Sex and Death" – at Hobart's renowned Museum of Old and New Art. "We want an environment to have an identity, a sense of meaning and excitement," Thylacine director Caolan Mitchell said.

Mitchell, whose background is in fine arts, founded the company in



Thylacine director Caolan Mitchell... "You just need an ability to think outside the square." Photo by Silas Brown

1999 with Michael Starling (who left in 2008).

Fresh from completing a stint at the Australian War Memorial, Mitchell sought out ways to utilise his skills and experience while staying in Canberra. From that idea, Thylacine (named after the "mystical" Tasmanian Tiger) was born.

And it appeared to be a business that Australia needed; in its first 18

months the company had won major contracts with the National Museum of Australia and the Melbourne Museum – the team growing from three to 52.

It was one of their first jobs, the \$1.5million National Museum project with The Acton Peninsula Alliance – which involved designing, fabricating and installing displays – that set Thylacine up with a national reputation

that quickly flowed on to other jobs in urban art, creative design, and the provision of art and collection services to museums and galleries across the country.

"We have artists that love what they do, who have attention to detail to create a unique and highly finished product," Caolan said.

"People are seeking us out rather than us pitching."

Thylacine now has design studios in Canberra and Melbourne; in their "Canberra" studio – based in Queanbeyan – Thylacine's "creative makers are nestled, creating away".

There are nine designers who work in 3D, 2D industrial and interior design and in the adjoining 1200 sqm workshop are eight "skilled artisans and makers".

"The guys who work in the workshop creating – they love what they do," Caolan said.

"They're quite playful; it's a quite left-of-field way to work."

His employees come from varied fields in sculpture, jewellery, architecture, interior, graphic, multimedia and industrial design.

"You don't have to have a fine arts background," he says.

"You just need an ability to think outside the square."

More information at thylacine.com.au



Kent Street's bright blue bridge, Deakin.



"Listening for home", a permanent artwork at Bonegilla Migrant Visitor's Centre, Victoria.



"Taylor Square Cases", Taylor Square, Sydney.

What's for dinner?



Creamy Beef Curry

SERVES: 4
PREPARATION: 10 min
COOKING: 15 Mins

INGREDIENTS

- cut in strips
- 2 tablespoons Continental Essentials, Red Curry Paste
- 1 Continental Stock Pot Beef
- 1 cup coconut cream
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon fish sauce
- 1 cup green beans, sliced
- 1 cup mushrooms, sliced

METHOD

1. Heat 2 tablespoons of oil in a fry pan over a medium heat. Fry beef in batches, until golden brown. Remove to a plate.
2. Lower heat, add curry paste and fry for 1-2 minutes, or until fragrant.
3. Return beef to fry pan with Continental Stock Pot, one cup of water, coconut cream, sugar, fish sauce and vegetables. Simmer gently for 5-10 minutes or until cooked.
4. Serve with rice.



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