

Shoes to woo go on view

A haze of anticipation hangs in the air at Casuarina Library as 45 glass shelves await the arrival of the works of art soon to adorn them. But these are no ordinary works of art and **MARLENE KRANZ** is no ordinary artist.



TEXT
Row Booker

IMAGES
Julianne Osborne

RIGHT
A pair of
hand-crafted shoes.

In a project requested by Darwin's Casuarina Library as part of its ongoing renovation work, students from CDU's shoemaking course will exhibit their "wears of art" in an exhibition designed not only to jazz up the foyer of the new-look library, but also to entice more people through its doors.

Students will showcase their creative feats not only to promote CDU's shoemaking courses, but also to do their bit in preserving the art of hand-crafting shoes.

BELOW
Marlene Kranz works in
her shoe studio at CDU.

Apart from being visually intriguing, each of the 45 bespoke pair of shoes on display will demonstrate the intricate process of shoemaking, using traditional techniques passed through the generations and now taught in the Top End by course leader and distinguished fashion designer Marlene Kranz.



Ms Kranz's career spans theatre, costume design and fashion, the latter including a stint at world renowned fashion house, Vivienne Westwood, London. But she's probably most passionate about the art of handmade shoes, having learnt the secrets from an Australian maestro based in Melbourne.

Compelled to keep the tradition alive, Marlene began teaching the techniques at CDU with the sole intention of inspiring the next generation to maintain the craft, which is being overtaken rapidly by machine mass-production.

She said she immediately saw the Casuarina Library exhibit as a perfect opportunity to raise appreciation and validity for shoe making as an art form.

"When a person first sees a pair of handmade shoes, they're always impressed by the quality and attention to detail that only exists when a shoe is handmade. I teach the students proper shoemaking techniques, including cutting the leather and the assembly process. On the advanced course I also teach students to apply foot anatomy principles to the production of shoes, a skill that becomes redundant when mass producing a shoe by machine," Ms Kranz said.

A self-professed shoe obsessive, she is constantly on the look-out for the unexpected to use as materials in her designs. "I am always on the look-out for new and interesting resources that I can use for my shoes. Cane toads provide a small but charmingly structured hide, chicken bones certainly will help to create a rather unusual visual impression, and I am still very pleased with what you can do using door knobs and similar items non-related to the shoe industry."

And she encourages her students to join her "outside the box" in their own designs. "All the shoes on exhibit at the library will be 'out there'. I don't want to give too much away ahead of the exhibit, but all I will say is that each pair will be new, exciting and fun, not to mention fabulous to look at," she said.

The shoe exhibit will open at the Casuarina Library foyer in November.

