



• Bevan Honey, Penny Bovell and Kieran Wong with works being prepared for the last Mark Howlett Foundation exhibition.

# Foundation farewell

**T**HE Mark Howlett Foundation is being wound up this year.

It might have been tempting for the foundation's board to throw together a retrospective of the mid-career artists it has supported over its 20 years, but its focus has always been new artwork. So this year's ambitious project has seen curator Andrew Gaynor pull together new works from nearly every artist who's been involved.

It means a who's who of a generation of WA artists will grace the walls of the Fremantle Arts Centre for the Fremantle Festival; George Haynes, Jeremy Kirwan Ward, Theo Koning, Giles Hohnen and a host of others.

## Major innovation

Curator Andrew Gaynor, who cut his artistic teeth as a busker outside Gino's during the America's Cup, says an "archive" gallery will provide context to the artists' work and three galleries will be filled with new works.

The foundation, named after a prominent Perth architect, was a major innovation in WA's art world when established in 1991. It pulled together subscribers who jointly funded a mid-career artist for a year, receiving an

original artwork and a print in return.

"The MHF has always prided itself as a project without a brief, and the artists were included because they were respected and they could go wherever they wanted with their work," Mr Gaynor told the Herald.

With artistic freedom reigning, he says curating the show was a challenge because it had few unifying themes.

"You could be simplistic and divide the prints into abstract and figurative, but even that would be a wrong assumption, because some of the abstract work is based on quite figurative elements," he said.

"We've got three galleries, one with five artists, one with four and one with three artists, so I chose three who are the most figurative and made sure that there was one in each of the galleries, then the three who are the most extreme and made sure they were in each of the galleries and so on."

Foundation chair Kieran Wong, a Fremantle-based architect, said the opening up of opportunities for WA artist through electronic media meant the foundation wasn't as crucial as previously, which prompted the decision to wind it up this year.

Mr Wong, whose subscription supported Bevan Honey, said

in the era before the Australia Council, Artsource and Artbank, WA lost many of its artists just as they were becoming established.

"There were limited options to progress through their career and the MHF helped to kickstart and re-energise their careers," he told the Herald.

Honey says the funding helped give him space to explore.

## Exploring

"The big thing was the time out from other obligations so you could concentrate on a body of research from which a body of artwork could emerge," he said.

Three years later he's still exploring themes that emerged from his research.

Fellow artist Penny Bovell told the Herald the foundation's grants gave her the opportunity to "move out of the garage" and hire an assistant, which improved her confidence.

"I have found that I have been able to manage larger scale projects as a result," she said.

She said it was sad to see the foundation wound up, but was interested to see how a new artistic generation would fill the gap.

**Mark Howlett Foundation  
Anniversary Exhibition  
Fremantle Arts Centre  
November 26—January 22**