

Capricorn Caves - Art Retreat

Amber Countryman – Capricorn Caves

If you are reading this journal, you are already obsessed with caves. Me too! It's hard to believe there are people out there who haven't experienced them, let alone spent a decent amount of time learning and exploring everything they have to offer. There is so much they have to offer isn't there?! I'm not just talking environmental significance. They offer wellness to those of us who need the wild in our lives. They offer backdrops for photographers who stand in awe. They offer places to hide for those of us searching for some solitude. They offer acoustics to those of us with well-shaped vocal cords. They offer many things; however, I'd really like to talk about the inspiration they offer to visual artists.

Before I was employed as a tour guide at Capricorn Caves, I spent some time as a professional artist, an environmental artist. Using art as my tool to highlight my concerns to the general public, in an effort to make the world a better place. As an eco-warrior I am continuing to fulfill my purpose, using the privilege of tour guiding to have positive environmental impact on those who visit. As a creative coming into the cave environment, I am constantly bombarded with inspiration. This place fills me with wonderment, so much so that I want to share that wonderment with other creatives and give them the opportunity to fall in love with this place as I have.... and spread that love once they leave.

We at Capricorn Caves have just held our first art related event, inviting artists to take part in a three-night, immersive Creative Retreat. We were able to secure grant funding from the Regional Arts Development fund to pay three facilitating artists and three arts workers. The artists designed workshops that were able to take full advantage of the surrounding environment, including the limestone, dry rainforest, and fauna - both past and present.

Erin Dunne guided eager participants through the experimental drawing process, using charcoal from our fire damaged forest along with more conventional art materials to create the most talented celebration of the caves ecosystem I have ever witnessed.

Roxanne Oakley, a Gangulu woman, showed her group how to use art to connect to country. In addition to block printing and traditional painting, the group experienced Didirri (deep listening), yarning circles and walking on country. This spiritual element to Roxanne's workshops will be remembered for a long time to come.

Noel Brady, a sculptor, brought several different materials and tools for his group to try. Once he had demonstrated techniques and possibilities, he allowed the group to wander and find their own inspiration from the environment before them. The diversity of the final works showed how much inspiration is to be found and how we all connect to different things in different ways.

Our intention at the Capricorn Caves is to continue the celebration of the cave environment, emphasizing it's significance, through the arts. Placing value on wild places that need our care and protection for the long-term future to benefit each and everyone of us.



**The Winning Entry of the Creative Arts Category
of the IYCK Competition**

Title - Harwoods Hole



Created by - Peter "Snablet" MacNab - NSG NZSS

Statement - Inspired by the thrill and trepidation of descending into the void

Medium - Digital Art using Procreate and Apple Pencil'

Date - 14th November 2021