



Heart-felt praise for Vic exhibition



AN exhibition now on at the Koorie Heritage Trust in Melbourne is being hailed as

a glowing example of how truly multicultural modern Australia is today.

From The Rainbow To The Sea features Koorie Elders from Nambucca Heads (northern NSW) working with Swiss artist Margrit Rickenbach using an ancient form of Mongolian felt art. The subsequent artwork is being praised as a colourful cultural mix of Australian, European and Asian influences.

Fifteen artists from the Gumbaynggirr nation in the Nambucca Valley and the town of Bowraville in northern NSW spent about a year producing pieces for the new exhibition.

Ms Rickenbach said Mongolian felt art originated in Central Asia and was crafted by layering cleaned carded wool to a desired thickness, then wetting and rubbing it until the fibres mat.

She said she had first seen the unusual art form when she visited Mongolia in 1995.

"I knew nothing about it until, my visit. The local people were using felt to make clothes and to

build their traditional indigenous homes and it totally interested me," she said.

The Swiss artist said she was employed to work on the exhibition by Beyond Empathy, an independent organisation in Bowraville that uses the arts to strengthen disadvantaged communities.

"The Indigenous artists I worked with loved the ancient art form,

especially the vibrant colors involved," she said.

Gumbaynggirr artists in Melbourne for the exhibition opening included Anne Edwards, Emily Walker, Cheryl Blair, Val Blair, Lizzy Jarret and Marjorie Buchanan

Ms Jarret, 32, said locals had known little about Mongolian felt art until the arrival of Ms Rickenbach.

"The Elders really took to it and started to incorporate their own totems into the work ... things that are strong to our people like rain forest owls and platypus," she said. "It took us about a year to get together and involved at least 15 artists. We loved the work and are raring to go on our next exhibition."

From The Rainbow To The Sea is continuing at the Koorie Heritage Trust.



Swiss artist Margrit Rickenbach, centre, with northern NSW artists, from left, Margory Buchanan, Loretta Riley, Denise Buchanan, Val Blair and Lionley Donovan.