



Plastic approach to art

Will Irving's art is synthetic to the core, thanks to rendered polystyrene and an open mind, writes **Elizabeth Allen**



ON A pedestal ... Irving's David, above, and trompe l'oeil Nirvana, main picture.

WHEN Sunshine Coast artist Will Irving was asked to make props for his wife's school drama class, he was taken aback when a parent offered polystyrene. "I thought that was pretty silly because it would disintegrate," Irving says from his Maroocha home.

It didn't. Coated with render and paint, the material proved to be flexible and strong, well up to the demands of the performance.

Afterwards, Irving approached parent Chris Cameron, founder of national architectural coatings firm, Rockcote, and asked him to sponsor his next exhibition.

The result is Murals, an exhibition of more than a dozen paintings on polystyrene topped by architectural coatings.

The exhibition, at Brisbane's Circle Gallery at West End from tomorrow, includes works of diverse size and subject matter, ranging from a 20cm by 30cm

delicate fern painting to a 2.5m by 1.45m whimsical take-off of the statue of David.

Irving's David, with towel slung over his shoulder and swimming goggles in hand, is a tongue-in-cheek comment on the stature of Australian sports people.

"I was sort of musing on the way Australians put their sports people on a pedestal while we poor artists have to rely on sponsorships from companies and governments," Irving says.

"So I thought I would put David back on the pedestal where he belongs as a sportsman."

Other works such as a painting of a Buddhist temple in Angkor Wat, Cambodia, have a trompe l'oeil style. Another is a copy of Monet's *The Japanese Bridge*.

"I get bored easily," Irving, 43, says of his varied subjects.

"It's also an artist's obligation to take people to places they can't get to themselves."

Irving is available on commission to paint murals on the interior or exterior walls of homes.

"But I can also provide (pre-fab) murals for people without disrupting their lives," he says.

Polystyrene, which is often used as housing insulation, can be tinted any colour.

"I just put paint on top of the render which is usually grey," he says.

"The main reason I've taken this up is because in the arts industry, the normal kind of thing is oil paint on canvas, a very old-fashioned way of doing things."

"So these are modern materials that give much greater flexibility, durability and strength."

A percentage of profits from sale of the paintings, which range from \$60 to \$3000, will go to Guide Dogs Queensland.

"Ocular blindness is an increasing problem with diabetes and macular degeneration," Irving says.



BLUE heeler ... Temple Dog.

Murals

Will Irving
Circle Gallery
274 Montague Rd, West End
Tomorrow until Wednesday