



Reunion exhibition a 4-tifying experience

Description



Warrnambool print maker and photographer Peter Bryant, who will be part of a reunion show by four artists who are exhibiting for the first time in 27 years. “It’s a bit like getting the band back for one more gig.”

By Carol Altmann

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"]W[/dropcap]hen artists **Peter Bryant, Chris Small, Tony Neylan and Graeme Altmann** first decided to exhibit together as the “Gang of 4”, the idea was to do so regularly.

That first exhibition in Warrnambool was way back in 1988 – when Bob Hawke was Prime Minister – and their second will be held this week (opens July 17), a full 27 years later.

(Mental note: *do not* hire these guys to organise your wedding.)

It has taken a little longer than planned, but the quartet – only Peter and Chris remain in Warrnambool – are eagerly anticipating reuniting at The Artery, which is only a few blocks west of where they held their first group show.

“It’s a bit like getting the band back for one more gig,” says Peter, a print maker and photographer.

“But the question is whether anybody else will give a s***,” he adds, letting out an infectious laugh that sums up how these four artists have always got along.



A newspaper clipping from the original "Gang of 4" show in 1988 when Chris Small,

Peter Bryant, Graeme Altmann and Tony Neylan were all final-year art students.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"]T[/dropcap]he four first met in 1985 as first-year art and design students at what was then the Warrnambool Institute of Advanced Education and were part of a colourful, crazy, but supremely talented group of young artists (and lecturers) who are all still connected, and still producing great work, today.

This week's exhibition, *4tified*, will provide a snapshot of that creativity, including Graeme's works on paper and up-cycled boat sculptures, Tony's delicate, Japanese-influenced ceramics, Chris's slow-fired raku ceramics and Peter's limited edition prints and photos, most of which have been created specifically for the show.

For Peter, who runs Shipwreck Coast Art & Design, it is a refreshing return to exhibiting. It has been 12 years since his last show, which was also with Chris Small.

"It's a bit of an adjustment to go from screenprinting as a business, to screenprinting my own art again, but one that I am enjoying...I think," he says, with a grin.

Peter's studio is tucked down a laneway behind the former Fletcher Jones factory, with the famous silver ball water tower a constant backdrop. Not surprisingly, it features prominently in his work.

"Yes, there are some very strong Warrnambool references, for sure, but also a few surprises," he smiles.



With a studio across the road from the Fletcher Jones silver ball, it is not surprising to see the icon reflected in Peter's new work.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"]A[/dropcap]s we move through the flotsam and jetsam of Peter's studio, where he picks up various pieces of work-in-progress, you can't escape the sense that *4tified* is more than just an exhibition.

It is also a time for reflection – although not necessarily a quiet one – on each artist's journey since they were 20-something-year-old graduates, full of hope about their creative futures and dreaming of lives as professional artists.

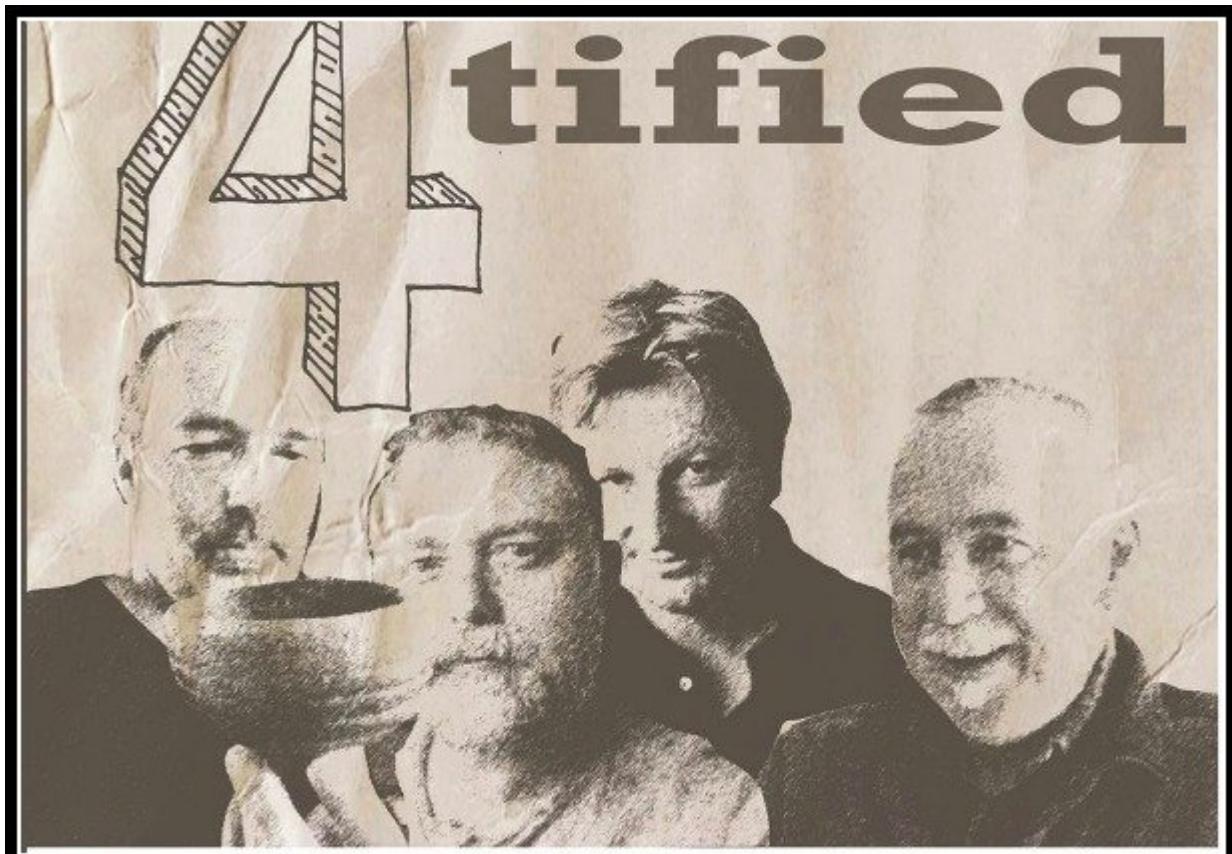
But as for so many young artists, the other diamonds and demons of life disrupted the best laid plans. Families, mortgages and the need to make a decent living have meant that art has often had to take second place.

4tified, however, has provided a renewed focus.

"I am looking forward to the moment when I can step back from it, because it's done, but at the same time it is a really good thing that this exhibition has forced me to get back into it and to prepare works by a deadline," explains Peter, who now has four young children.

"It's a return to form for me and maybe if I can continue to do this, then who knows what might happen as I get toward retirement: there are now entirely new ways of selling and promoting your work that didn't exist when we first started."

You have been 4warned, the Gang of 4 will be back.



Artists Tony Neylan, Peter Bryant, Graeme Altmann and Chris Small as they are today, reuniting for the *4tified* exhibition.

[box]4tified runs at The Artery, 224 Timor St, from Wed July 15 until August 1 with the official opening by Glenn Morgan on Friday July 17 at 6pm. Another Deakin/WIAE alumni, Kathryn Ryan, opens her show, *A Quiet Place*, at the W'bool Art Gallery on Sat, July 18 at 6pm.[/box]

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