

Soldiers Hill artistic community explodes

ARTS AND CULTURE

BY AMBER WILSON

THE leafy, historic suburb of Soldiers Hill is fast becoming the place to be for artists.

With the Soldiers Hill Artist Collective (SHAC) growing bigger by the week, Soldiers Hill may soon become for artists what Castlemaine is for authors.

Following SHAC's hugely successful Art Walk in May, which coincided with the Ballarat Heritage Weekend, the group has not only grown, but started implementing a strategy of promoting and exhibiting its members' work.

This weekend, the group is opening its latest exhibition, *Picture This*, at the Fairbanks Eye Gallery.

Artist Susan Nethercote said the exhibition reflected the diversity of the group itself.

"It's anything and everything from painting to drawing to sculpting to basket weaving," she said.

Nethercote herself joined the group after seeing May's Art Walk, which encouraged visitors to stroll through the suburb and visit various open studios and galleries.

"We're up to 50 artists within Soldiers Hill alone and here's growing involvement. I think we're planning on more group exhibitions in 2017 and also doing the Art Walk again."

Nethercote said connecting artists within the one location was a powerful tool for connecting and engaging.

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SHAC member Susan Nethercote

time connection between artists in our community is just lovely," she said.

"It keeps it very real and it builds greater attendance to exhibitions. It's a family-oriented group so it's larger than the art itself, it brings together families within the community."

She said the group had found a firm home at the Ballarat North Bowling Club.

"The focus at the bowling club is the perfect meeting place in that way - it reflects that lovely social aspect of the group and where our focus is at, which is about connection and shared passion for art and being community-based."

Picture This will be officially launched at Fairbanks, 917 Sturt Street, this Saturday from 6pm.

All welcome, with the exhibition running until December 10.

For more information about SHAC, visit www.shacballarat.com.au



SUBURB OF CREATIVES: Artist Susan Nethercote has joined the growing Soldiers Hill Artist Collective, which is staging another exhibition this month. **Picture:** Kate Healy