

A NATURAL affinity *A deep relationship with the* COROMANDEL region has brought *CHRISTINE RABARTS'* artwork into the GLOBAL LIMELIGHT.



CHRISTINE RABARTS
New Zealand patchwork
dress with handmade kauri
buckles, \$191.

Nature infiltrates all avenues of Christine Rabarts' work, a feature that transcends boundaries between people, nations, race and religion.

It's precisely this uninhibited spirit that has recently brought an international invitation to Christine's rural letterbox – from the art capital of the world, Italy.

The Florence Biennale's Internal Committee of the International Biennial of Contemporary Art discovered Christine's artwork on the internet. The sixth edition of the exhibition will take place at the start of December in the historical Fortezza da Basso in Florence, Italy.

In 2001 the United Nations recognised the Florence Biennial as an official partner in their program "Dialogue Between Civilizations". It's precisely this ethos that brought the work of Christine to their attention.

"Their mission statement is about showing artists with cultural and spiritual compassion and peace. It's about coming together from different natures to speak under the same language of art – that makes sense to me. I am very happy to be part of that," says Christine.

The multi-media artist was born in the Coromandel, and after travelling in Canada and the UK, she returned to Tuatēawa and realised her best source of artistic inspiration lay at home.

"Returning to the Coromandel reignited my art instincts. The Coromandel environment is crucial to my work. I need that energy from the nature around me: pohutukawa trees, the sea crashing, the bush and being in solitude with those things."

From gems to rock, tiles and glass, Christine will use whatever material catches her eye to create her work, which usually comes to life between the hours of 9pm and 3am.

"I'm a night owl. I need to be on my own when I'm creating... it's all about having that energy transference and, if I can get that through to someone through my work, then I've achieved what I wanted."

Christine is currently in the throes of creating her piece for the Biennale, alongside 775 other artists from 73 nations. This year's edition will also include, as honoured guests, acclaimed artists Gilbert and George, and Tim Marlow from the White Cube Gallery, London.

Constantly seeking out a new challenge, Christine is now branching out to create clothing. Unsurprisingly, the predominant role of nature in her artwork transfers through to her clothing designs. Buttons and buckles handmade from kauri, patchwork birds, owls and organic shapes take centre stage. Christine says distinctly New Zealand patterns, based around the koru and pohutukawa flowers, are intended to create a sense of wellbeing in the person that wears them.

"I love colour and fabric. I want to incorporate a wearable arts feel, but I want these pieces to be things people can wear – as an expression of something that makes them feel good about themselves." **NATALIE BRIDGES**



Brown skirt
with braces,
\$72, mustard
round-neck
tee, \$52.



Red spotty
dress, \$189.



Orange fantail skirt,
\$227, and jacket,
\$346,
baby-doll top, \$139.

Baby-doll
top, \$139.



Retro pink spot dress, \$167.