

Friday, 6 January 2023

Beneath the surface: seaweed-inspired art showcased in new IMAS exhibition

Science meets art in a new exhibition showcasing the incredible impressions of artists who have gone beneath the surface to explore the fascinating world of seaweeds – and it opens today at the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) gallery in Hobart.

Curated by Art Historian Caroline Davies Choi, this free exhibition showcases the stunning seaweed art created by local and international artists Amanda Walker, Deborah Wace, John Robinson, Joanna Lawton, Julia Lohmann, Nataša Milenović, Vicki West and Catherine Stringer.

“When Professor Hurd approached me to work on an exhibition about seaweed and kelp at IMAS, I jumped at the idea,” said Ms Davies Choi, who owns [Cuckoo etc](#) in the Huon Valley and is Exhibitions and Events manager at [Wild Island Tasmania](#) in Salamanca

“I’ve been exploring rock pools and the intertidal zone for years – very much as an amateur, photographing seaweeds, kelp, rock platforms, shells and seaside detritus.

“The curious multifarious colours, textures and forms of the sea inspire and intrigue me and so many others, including the eight outstanding artists showcased in this exhibition.

“Each artist has contributed work in their chosen medium, including seaweed and kelp itself, to create the magical, whimsical and elegant pieces we’ve showcased.”

there’s just something about seaweed...

Seaweeds are the plants of our coastal waters, from small and delicate red and green varieties through to giant kelp towering metres above the sea floor, held fast by sturdy roots.

IMAS seaweed scientist (phycologist), Professor Catriona Hurd leads the Ecology & Biodiversity seaweed program at IMAS, and works with phycologists here and around the world who want to know more about seaweeds.

“In Tasmania’s waters alone, there are at least 750 species, including an incredible diversity of red seaweeds. And yet we know almost nothing about the basic biology, physiology and ecology of most of them,” Prof Hurd said.

“Seaweeds create vital habitat and food for marine creatures, and have plenty of health benefits for land-dwelling creatures like us too. They are also a natural source of the gel-forming agent hydrocolloid, which is used around the world in many major industries – from food and pharmaceuticals to cosmetics and biotechnology.

“It is so important that we understand more about our precious seaweeds, especially in the face of a rapidly changing climate, so we can help to protect them – for healthy oceans and future generations,” she said.

Ms Davies Choi said that, while scientists share so much knowledge about species, biodiversity and habitat, artists can create a visual story that everyone can be immersed in.

“As artists, we expand on the beauty, fragility and mystery of the watery, weedy world beneath the surface...”

Are you ready for some seaweed inspiration? Dive in: [opening dates and hours, booking group visits and more are available here.](#)

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