

Respect at the heart of artist's fresh take on our city

TEGAN GUTHRIE

A visiting artist whose work includes pieces that some might find shocking and disturbing says she is looking forward to earning the respect of the community by creating a major artwork at the end of her time in the city.

Georgie Mattingley is completing a six-week residency in Kalgoorlie-Boulder, thanks to a partnership with International Art Space and the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder.

The 33-year-old arrived in the city this week and will be helped by local Owen Hinton to host various workshops and engage with the community.

While her website shows a variety of art that may shock some, Mattingley says she is not here to be controversial.

A series of photographs documenting Mattingley's 18-month journey to produce her faeces in "every colour of the rainbow", along with photos and videos of animals being anaesthetised, and images from her three years working in an abattoir, are among the images on her website.

"I actually really don't think art is ever shocking, but I do think that life is, and I do think that human behaviour is," she said.

"It's not about pushing boundaries just for the sake of pushing boundaries.

"It's about creating a fresh lens to look at the things we have naturally accepted in everyday life.

"The decisions we can make can be shocking.

"If we look with fresh eyes, sensitivity and empathy, everyday life where we live, it is shocking, it just depends the way you look at it."

Mattingley said she enjoyed shedding light on all aspects of life and showing a different side to things that are "not supposed to be OK".

"How we live our life and what makes us so privileged, what usually underpins that is often

some kind of exploitation or suffering," she said.

"It's not about necessarily making that a bad thing.

"It's about how does this become a family-friendly topic?

"How does this become an enticing image so we can talk about and consider it in a really honest way?

"I definitely don't set out to shock my viewer in the way that they don't want to think or look at something ever again.

"I like to make something potentially horrible or true, interesting, so we can continue to look or consider it and not just turn away."

Mattingley said she often forgot her work could be seen as vulgar, but liked the challenge of being able to earn people's respect after they formed first impression based on her website.

"I see the world through my own lens, which is full of so much empathy and care," she said.

"I care for all of my subjects and I genuinely care for all of the people who I am yet to meet in Kalgoorlie and I already respect them so much and am so humbled to be here.

"But I forget how scary it can be at first glance.

"There's this strange, awkward process, which is actually one of my favourites, of earning people's respect."

For part of her residency Mattingley has been welcomed to stay with Madam Carmel at Questa Casa, Kalgoorlie's only remaining brothel — an offer she is excited to take up.

Mattingley said she was particularly interested in hearing the stories of Kalgoorlie's historical red-light district, having experienced being a sex worker during her life.

She is also interested in reaching out to the local prison and women's refuge, having worked in similar spaces in other towns as an art teacher.

One thing she will definitely be offering the community is a



Georgie Mattingley.
Picture: Carwyn Monck

landscape painting workshop, which is a key part of her residency.

The rest of her time will be spent finding inspiration for the final art work she will produce at the end of the residency, which is called Rural Utopia.

Mattingley was paired with Kalgoorlie-Boulder after submitting to the program that she would like to work with the idea of mining as an industry and how it informs society's expectations of space and utopia.

"That is what drew me to engage in the residency because I think that utopia, the idea of a

perfect place, can really easily fall into the flip side of a dystopia," she said.

"The worst imaginable place and how often for places to be incredibly commercially successful we need a bit of both.

"If our utopia is something like wealth, family values, access to infrastructure, development, education, all these facilities come at a cost, which if I look as an outsider into Kal, the cost is the mining of the earth.

"That's not to judge things.

"It's just looking at the way we build our perfect place and our perfect world in today's time, and to make art about the whole

of the reality, looking at the good and bad."

Mattingley said she would do her best to get to know as much about the community as possible before settling on the plan for her final art work.

"I'm very much relying on locals and the community members I meet along the way to really open my eyes to the other aspects, the less obvious aspects of Kal that make up its social fabric and culture," she said.

"That's really important, so that the project I produce doesn't end up being judgmental or clearly produced from an outsider."