



Waiting in the wings: Jeremy Kibel's 12-metre bird mural.

State-of-the-art living

A bold innovation in Port Phillip has given creatives and residents a brighter outlook.

Residents in an apartment complex that incorporates the work of local artists in its street presence and ground level are the latest to benefit from Port Phillip council's urban art planning strategy.

For the past decade, big developments in Port Phillip have been compelled to include urban art as part of their permit requirements. At Fifty Albert Road, South Melbourne, this has led developer Hamton to incorporate a sound sculpture that doubles as a seat, dramatic chandeliers tipped by cherry blossoms made from a synthetic resin, and an extensive bird mural that starts at the facade and moves inside to the foyer.

Hamton development manager Peter Forsyth says he has no doubt integrating the art into the 29-level apartment building has increased its appeal, with the slate mural and a chandelier visible at street level.

Mars Gallery's Andy Dinan, who co-ordinated the artwork, says the demand for art by developers provides an opportunity for local, mid-career artists.

For instance, Jeremy Kibel, the artist behind a 12-metre bird mural sandblasted into a side wall, had never worked with slate before, Dinan says. But there can be no

doubt about the quality of his work, which runs from the street entry and continues through the foyer to the interior to form the backdrop of what will be the residents' lounge.

Emma Davies created the two large cherry blossom chandeliers, one at the entry and a second that will light the way to the building's Pan Asian health and well-being centre. James Hullick's sound sculpture will be installed later in the year, with the seats programmed to play seasonal recordings of sounds from Japan.

"The general public get to be the winners in this, as well as the residents and the artists," Dinan says. "To be given the opportunity to work on that scale – it's an artist's dream. They're just rapt."

Port Phillip mayor Amanda Stevens says her council is one of few in Victoria that impose an urban art requirement on developers and, a decade on, the policy's positive legacy is obvious.

"The impact is the contribution that distinctive urban art makes to the urban landscape, individual developments, and in the clusters of urban art now found in many of our central activity areas," Stevens says. "It's contributed to keeping Port Phillip a vibrant and engaged place."

KATE ROBERTSON