



Artists go up in light

festival Vivid

Sydney Opera House, Circular Quay, The Rocks and various locations; May 26-June 14, vividnsydney.com

PITY light artists — it's not often they get the chance to shine.

We barely notice the everyday work of people such as designer Ruth McDermott, whose work can be seen in corporate headquarters, hotels and other venues across the world, including popular city watering hole The Establishment.

But as part of the inaugural Vivid festival, McDermott is working with two colleagues on a light installation inspired by our flying fox population. The piece is being devised for Observatory Hill, as part of the Smart Light Sydney element of the Vivid festival.

"I've never done an outdoor piece before and I must say, it's very nerve-racking," she says.

McDermott's work will be one of 25 along the Harbour foreshore, beginning at the Opera House where Brian Eno — curator of Luminous, the music segment of the Vivid festival — will create a light display on the sails.

"To see my name on the same list as his [Eno's], I was just blown away," McDermott says.

People will view installations at The Rocks and make their way to the Opera House.

"It strikes me as something like Sculpture By The Sea, but in light," explains Events NSW CEO Geoff Parmenter.

His intention is to show off the ability of people such as McDermott and showcase Sydney's creative capabilities.

"Sydney and NSW is by any measure the creative capital of Australia. A disproportionately

large number of people working in the creative industries work in Sydney and NSW," Parmenter says. "We've allowed other parts of Australia to talk up their credentials and we've probably not taken the opportunity to remind people of the facts. A platform like Vivid is a good way of reminding people that this is creative HQ."

And not a bad little earner for the tourist industry either. Parmenter says the festival is expected to bring in \$20 million, which will increase in subsequent years as festival awareness grows.

McDermott is just happy to be a part of the whole thing. Besides her work for the "light walk" she is also constructing a piece for an exhibition at UTS, which is part of the Smart Light program and looks at sustainable lighting.

McDermott's work uses acrylic with laser patterns etched into it, mounted on plinths and illuminated via LED lighting.

Chris Hook



Shine: Ruth McDermott with a sample of her work Picture: John Fotiadis