



Cockatoo

I AM

LET'S FLY

Connection

BILLY

Will

sorghum
sunflowers

prejudice

bigotry

Why is he so different

Care

acceptance

COURAGE

natural wonders

history+heritage

living history

Friendship

2001

WILL HAZZARD

FEEL THE ART

Story Susan Cochrane

WILL HAZZARD is eighteen and on the autism spectrum, yet he already has an impressive record of artistic achievement. Will has won prizes at the Royal Bathurst Show as well as the Sofala, Lithgow, Orange, Rydal and Blayney Shows, upstART (Cowra), Textures of One, Evans Art Exhibition and Waste To Art. He won an 'Advocate for Children and Young People' competition and has met the NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian. In 2018, his work Rare Beauty Bathurst Copper Butterfly was exhibited at the Art Gallery of NSW as one of 50 artworks to tour NSW with 'Operation Art'. Although a challenge for him to overcome his disability and speak in public, Will gave the opening address at 'Operation Art', finding self-confidence among people who appreciate art. The previous year his work Lizard Trio (Our Home) was selected as the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO) senior winner of 'Operation Art'.

Living with autism means that Will had some difficulties with social communication and anxiety. This caused him to withdraw from mainstream school in Year 4 and finish his education through Dubbo School of Distance Education in the nurturing home environment shared with his parents, Ian and Kelly Hazzard, at Meadow Flat near Bathurst. Kelly is a talented self-taught artist, while Ian's

Left: 'Why is he less than me?'

This page: Will Hazzard and Billy the cockatoo.





Opposite page:
Garuu

This page top
Gang Gang
Right: Galah (Jessie)

creative streak found a new level of expression when he was diagnosed as autistic at the age of 50.

Some individuals on the autism spectrum demonstrate remarkable talent and aptitude in their area of interest. However, as well as anything that Will's DNA brought to his nature, it is also the nurture aspect of his caring parents which has encouraged and developed his



creativity. Together, Will and his parents assist WIRES bringing wounded animals back to health, and the Hazzard homestead has deliberately become a haven for wildlife.

One rewarding aspect affecting some people on the autism spectrum, like Will, is a heightened sensitivity to sensory stimuli—the importance of touch, the feel of surfaces and textures, the pulsating life of creatures under their skin, soft fur or feathers. When his artwork *Lizard Trio (Our Home)* was selected for the Children's Ward art collection at Westmead Hospital, Will did not want it mounted behind glass, saying it was as important for children to touch and feel the lizards as much as to look at them as they represent living creatures. Feeling the art enhances sensory experience; making contact brings more pleasure than merely looking.

Watercolour is another expressive medium for Will's animal portraits, whether small native animals such as Corroboree Frog, or introduced species like

Koi and even the local lambs. Visiting the Taronga Western Plains Zoo in Dubbo Will was entranced by the majestic African wildlife, resulting in a remarkable suite of paintings showing his deft hand with both watercolour and acrylic to capture the characters of tigers, rhinos and elephants.

At home Will has a symbiotic relationship with birds and animals—like the mischievous Billy, a young sulphur-crested cockatoo who has 'adopted' the family, and his favourite chicken Coco. The arresting cockatoo paintings exhibited in Will's mini-exhibition at Gang Gang Gallery at Lithgow in 2019 express the duality of his passion for individual birds and for painting. The birds Will paints so eloquently are beyond images of spectacular Australian species, they are portraits of individual creatures, each with its own personality. Texture and expressionistic strokes are paramount; each bird's nature is seen in the look of their eye, ruffled iridescent feathers and alert crests. Billy's bold and boisterous nature is captured in his portrait.



When studying for his HSC last year, Will became interested in the effects of collage, but rather than following the tendency to combine an idiosyncratic collection of whole or partial elements, he developed his own style. Working to an underlying theme, words or passages are selected to be embedded into the artwork. Then, after shredding magazine pages into particles he sorts them into colour groups, layers up and textures the surface by pasting and rubbing back to create a representational image.

In the work made entirely from shredded paper, *Why Is He Less Than Me?* the inseparable duo share the image equally. Will feels that animals are soul-mates and we live inter-dependently. He is deeply concerned by «mankind's greed destroying the environment». He says he is interested in animal rights and conservation, and often tries to incorporate these messages into his art.

Susan Cochrane



This page:
Self Portrait after Quilty

Opposite:
Rhinoceros
Bathurst Copper Butterfly
Corroboree Frog

