

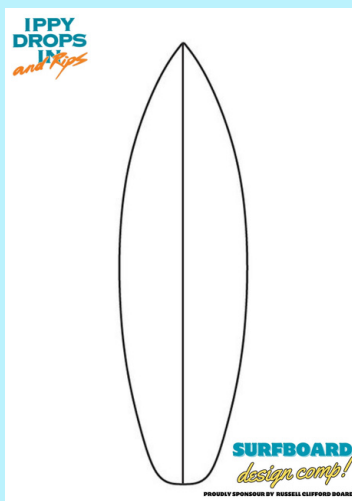
# IPPY DROPS IN *and Rips*

2-22 December 2023  
Ipswich Community Gallery

**30TH  
ANNIVERSARY**

## ART COMPETITION

1. Grab your Surfboard Art Design Template.
2. Create your design.
3. Put your details on the back.
4. Read the terms and conditions to check your eligibility.
5. Hand in your finished artwork to staff.



**ORIGINAL BOARD  
MADE BY  
RUSSELL CLIFFORD**

This exhibition is about the surfing sub culture of Ipswich, a city 100 km from the nearest surf break.

As outsiders, these enigmatic surfers have to battle distance, identity and for their place on the waves.

In 1993, videographer Kate Ellovee (Versace) undertook an ambitious project with the support of Ipswich Art Gallery alongside photographer Doug Spowart to capture this sub culture's double life.

“DROPPING IN” onto another surfer’s wave is an unacceptable behaviour.  
To “RIP” is to surf brilliantly.

“SLAGHEAP” is the coal byproduct of mining.  
“SURFARI” is the search for the best waves.

This current exhibition is reimagining the original showcase in the very building where it all began.



# WIN A SURFBOARD!

# KATE ELLOVEE

## Concept & Videographer

As a born and bred Ipswich person who loves the surf, I am living this sub-cultural conundrum! That is why I created this video and thesis topic for my Master of Arts (Film and Television) at Griffith University. When my gallery boss heard the idea in 1992 she thought it would make a great exhibition.

Ipswich surfers are hardcore ... because they have to try harder. They have to find the right board to ride, friends to go with and a way to cover the distance to the beach. Sunshine or Gold Coast 'locals', years ago, would tell them "Get off our waves and GO HOME!"

When I was a kid on beach holidays in the 1970s I stole my brothers surfboards to get in and have a go. Women weren't welcome and crocheted bikinis felt like a deliberate design to humiliate us. Meanwhile both my grandfathers captured these early surfing days in photos and 8mm movies. Growing up in Ipswich I loved art, music, theatre, sport and particularly photography.

## 1993 IAG TEAM ON OPENING NIGHT



Liz, Kate, Shirley, Marie & Alice-anne



Kate Ellovee (Versace) 2008 MAROUBRA. Photographer Melissa Herdy

As a camera operator at Curtis Video Productions in the 1980s, I learnt to be a filmmaker. Experimental filmmaking at the University of Queensland and Brisbane Festivals expanded my vision.

The "IPPY DROPS IN ... and Rips!" photography evolved from the video "SLAGHEAP SURFARI". Doug Spowart's incredible compatibility with the project enabled us to share our subjects. Either together or separately, and always with humour, we captured these unique characters and landscapes.

We invited family, friends and put a call out to the general public to participate. Thirteen people stood with their surfboards in multiple Ipswich and coastal locations for portraits. Three surfers went looking for waves on a slag heap whilst twelve others were interviewed for the video.

30 years later the world has changed. See for yourself the faces and places of our unique surf sub-culture.

Thank you to the original 1993 Ipswich Surfers who showed us who they were then.

## THANK YOU TO 1993 TEAM

Liz Bates - Senior Curator

Shirley Powell - Assistant Director

Marie Longworth - Gallery Assistant

Alice-anne McRobbie - Director

Thank you to the Versace family.



# DOUG SPOWART

Photographer

In 1993 I received a phone call from Elizabeth Bates a curator at Ipswich Art Gallery. I had worked with Elizabeth at Araluen Art Gallery in Alice Springs a few years earlier on a documentary exhibition commenting on the tourist experience in Central Australia, so she was aware of the style of my photographic work.

Elizabeth introduced the project she was working on with Kate Ellovee (née Versace) in which Kate was to create a documentary video commenting on Ipswich's landlocked surfers. It was suggested that I could create photography works that would complement the video presentation in the gallery. In the initial project development meeting with Kate she discussed the concepts behind the 'Slagheap Safari' video. Her project was full of the curiosity, irony, and humour that had resonance with my approach to documentary work.

My partner and fellow artist Victoria Cooper and I were intrigued by the idea that there was such a strong surfing culture in Ipswich. It seemed surreal to us and we wondered: where could we find a concept of surf or surfing in this mining town at the western edge of Brisbane?

Who were these surfers and how did they navigate the cross-over from Ipswich to beach?

After contemplating these questions I put forward a proposition consisting of three concepts:

- (1) Re-photography portraits – commenting on the dual identities that surfers have living and working in Ipswich and yet maintaining a surfing life on the weekend down the beach,
- (2) 'Hold-ups', where I would search Ipswich town settings and mining landscapes for evidence or connection with the beach or surf and
- (3) Photomontages – through improbable interventions I would metaphorically bring the surf and surfers to Ipswich.

In making the photographs we sometimes collaborated with Kate and at other times we worked independently. Kate's energy and coordination skills were important to the project as surfers usually have one specific thing in mind – surfing.



Doug Spowart with Hold Ups, 2023, photography courtesy of Victoria Cooper.

With Kate we went to the beaches to seek out these lppy surfers in their preferred natural environment. In this quest we too “searched for the best waves” to find the surfers. Interestingly the lppy project was pre the proliferation of mobile phones, so we needed to check the radio's ‘best waves’ reports, we then went to the beaches and then looked out for the surfer's cars, boards or the surfers themselves.

Working on the project's themes Victoria and I would cruise around Ipswich looking for places that resonated with the concepts of beach and surfing. Gradually these were revealed to us: the top of a water tower with skateboarders, a tunnel leading into the mine, navigating a graffiti covered underpass, a mine cutting that looked like a wave. Each place we found was evocative and full of potential metaphors of surfing culture within this inland mining town.

Documentary projects, either as video or photography, have the potential to tell stories and create a commentary on contemporary culture and social life. Thirty years on, the lppy Drops in and Rips show returns to a new era, a new audience, and for those who participated in the original project, a possibility to recall memories of a different time.

In re-viewing lppy Drops in and Rips Ipswich surfing culture story, perhaps not much has changed – or has it? Is the credo of the Ipswich surfing culture – surf to live and live to surf, still as strong as ever ... ? And finally ... Do north and south coast locals cuss the new generation of Ipswich surfers when they “DROP IN ... AND RIP ...?”

# Upload your surfing photos & stories to **PICTURE IPSWICH**



1979 Michael Smith & Russell Clifford



1982 Kate, Greg & James Versace

**“The first board I made”**  
Russell Clifford

...was...

**“The first board I bought”**  
James Versace



1. Register with Picture Ipswich
2. Click on the "Upload" button in the menu list.
3. Select " Upload Images - Crowdsourced" and follow the prompts to load your image/s and add details.
4. Do not forget to click on "Submit & finish" when you are done.

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