



Art with altitude

The building is a Melbourne landmark, but it's the creative group within that is keeping the Nicholas Building alive. Mary-Jane Daffy visits the high-rise artistic community. Pictures by Darren James.



They're a protective group, the tenants of the Nicholas Building. They are somewhat put off when they open the door to an unannounced photographer and journalist.

benchtops replacing the often disheveled work spaces that exist now.

mers, the Nicholas family, and architect Harry Norris ingrained themselves in Melbourne's architectural history.

Luckily for the residents, the Nichols Building is a vibrant hub of creativity – one of the only spaces full of working artists' studios left in the city.

the renowned lit ladies, ready.

vaulted leadlight ceiling in the arcade and traversed the many staircases in search of that artist, shoemaker or jeweller who can design and create a lasting and distinctive piece of Melbourne's history.

piece of art. Many just like her roll for lunch at the Subway or

The building has occupied the corner of Flinders Lane and Swanston Street since its opening in March 1926, when its



**in McGill
weller**

McGill is skilled in the art of lost wax casting. Quietly explaining what appears to be a somewhat complex and lengthy procedure, he moves between the machines in his tall, box-like studio, which he set up eight years ago. He comes to a standstill at the almost finished product lying on his workbench — two silver cufflinks shaped like toy planes. "It's a great outcome at the end of the process," he says, smiling. The "outcome" is fantastic.



lyn Fraser
press printer

Dahl's BFG could capture the Carolyn Fraser's passion for letterpress printing, I'd be knocking on her sixth-floor door. The light-filled room is also filled with original letterpress equipment that has come from America, where she had established her printing business.

ay, Idlewild Press. Fraser
es animated presenting
her self-published books.
“I ask me why I continue
this equipment, but to me
it’s obvious,” she says. “I believe
people respond to texture and
that people like to see the
illustrations on a page and feel the
weight of quality paper when a page
is turned.”



Peter O'Connor
Weatherworker

ter O'Connor is community-spirited. He has ideas for opening a corner studio as a mixed retail space with other creative people in the building. It's his way of directing public interest into Nicholas Building and drawing off the work taking place inside. O'Connor has a tauture and husky voice that demands attention, much like his leather bags, which are simple takes on vintage signs made with top-quality materials. Each bag's birthdate is stamped into the leather. The bags only need a name, and time will give them personality.