

Sculptor Stuart a metal magician

31 January 2019 - By Mick Jensen - A life-size horse and an Anzac soldier are the latest creations from award-winning local metal upcycling sculptor Stuart Mitchell.

Mitchell's works are being showcased at Ashburton's Grace Gallery in an exhibition running until the end of February.

Some 21 pieces, including a rotating head of a horse, a hare, giant frog, lion's head and Greek archer, have been crafted by the artist.

A butcher by day, Mitchell collects an array of metal that could be upcycled into art.

As well as discarded farm machinery, he snaps up items at car boot sales.

The display of his creative talents is his first solo exhibition and also includes his largest work to date - a life-size horse.

The horse has been a year long project, with six months collecting materials and six more to make it.

Mitchell said most of his creations were determined by the raw materials he foraged and recycled.

He could visualise specific projects through the accumulation of parts.

The horse featured plough blades, plough discs, chains for the mane and steel rod for the tail.

In between items like pliers and vice grips ``filled the gaps''.

Over the last few months Mitchell has extended an original sculpture featuring the head and shoulders of an Anzac soldier into a full-size example.

He's used ammunition tins, old toolboxes, axe heads, a car sump and surplus steel pipe to craft the impressive soldier.

He saw the crude shape of a frog when he came across two old metal wheelbarrows a few months ago and set about transforming them into a quirky sculpture.

Grace Gallery owner Brent Holley said a lot of people could weld, but they could not produce the unique art that Stuart Mitchell created.

``Stuart collects the raw materials, has a vision for how they can be used and then has the technical ability to craft something really special.''

Grace Gallery is on Dobson Street East and open from Wednesday to Saturday between 10am and 2pm, or by appointment.

Stuart Mitchell with his life-size horse.

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