

ART ELEANOR PEARSON

Smell it, touch it, feel it, ... then splash that ink

TAKING a sprig of wattle, Bronwen Wade-Leeuwen begins a class at Workshop Arts Centre, Willoughby.

She breaks off a piece for every class member, then rubs lavender oil on their hands for them to smell.

She asks them to meditate for a few minutes on the Mandarin symbol for self, on a card, then tells them to splash inks on large sheets of paper.

"Smell it, touch it, feel it, see it," she says, as she plays classical music.

This is moku expressionism, an ancient Chinese art form, which has been taught at the centre for 16 years. "It's about creativity and breaking bound-

aries, using ink," Wade-Leeuwen said.

Her weekly class is led by Wade-Leeuwen's 80-year-old mother, Trish Wade Quinn.

Holding a finished artwork up to the light, Wade-Leeuwen points out ink splashes that reveal where the painter has hesitated, the fluidity of their expression momentarily halted.

The seemingly simple art method has a rich history in fifth century Chinese rock art and calligraphy.

"Anyone can try it, but it is difficult to master," said Wade-Leeuwen, who is fluent in Mandarin. "You meditate on the scene before you paint. It's like some martial arts."

When Wade-Leeuwen was a

teenager she lived in Singapore, where she and her mother trained at Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts.

In 2005 Wade-Leeuwen and Quinn formed the Moku Expressionist Australia Group.

This year Wade-Leeuwen will deliver a creativity workshop at the Sydney Biennale, with leading Chinese contemporary artist Wang Tiande, whose unusual brand of moku expressionism uses ink and burn methods.

The art of Bronwen Wade-Leeuwen and Trish Wade Quinn and centre members will be on sale at the Workshop Arts Centre's fair this weekend.

The centre, in Laurel St, is open 10am to 3pm. Further details: 9958 6540.



TEAM: Mother and daughter Bronwen Wade Leeuwen and Trish Wade Quinn.