

# the perfect fit



MOSAIC DESIGNER DOMINIC JOHNS HAS COMBINED ELEMENTS OF HIS DIVERSE, COLOURFUL LIFE TO CREATE VIBRANT PRODUCTS WITH A DISTINCT FAR NORTH FLAVOUR, SAYS MICHAEL HARTSHORN.

**A**rtist, tiler, teacher – Dominic Johns could lay claim to each of the titles, but like many small businessmen facing a seemingly never ending workload he wasn't quite sure how or if he would ever be able to bring his skills and passions together.

But fortune and opportunity favour the brave and when the chance to lead a work-for-the-dole scheme producing butterfly mosaics at the Esplanade Lagoon came along, Dom jumped at it. "We came up with a great end product and I had such a great time doing it," Dom recalls of the project which led to the formation of his mosaic design company Shardworks and the melding of his skills and passion.

"I then put a proposal to (Cairns Deputy Mayor) Margaret Gill to do some street beautification along Shield St. Halfway through that the lease on the workshop I had ended and I saw this (the present Shardworks' Palm Ave headquarters) and thought right, I can set up a dedicated studio."

Even though there have been some hard times in the two-and-a-half years since, the support of his family – wife, Lou, and daughters Bianca, Indigo and Ruby – and a strong group of friends who had confidence in his vision has helped him through.

And like his latest major work, a huge collection of mosaics in a new pool at Coconut Grove Resort,

it's increasingly sunshine and smiles for Shardworks.

He says Cairns is the perfect canvas for expressing himself with this artistic medium.

"I believe Cairns has an opportunity to be talked about in terms of its mosaic decorations. Every building is a canvas. People travel to Barcelona just for that."

Removed from the European influences and trends which dominate work in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, Dom has created a Far Northern style which reflects the colour and vitality of the region and has led to an invitation to speak at the next major mosaic symposium in Perth in 2007. Dom still returns to the odd bathroom, but more as a showcase for his work which is now mainly designs for pools and corporate clients. The Shardworks studio also has Cairns's largest and most affordable collection of mosaic tiles for hobbyists or do-it-yourself projects, pre-made mosaics for wall mounting or fitting into floors and pools, and Dom's funky and humorous series of beer clocks including a very tongue-in-cheek XXXX-man John Howard design.

The future, he believes, is via the internet, allowing artisans to produce their work, enjoy the lifestyle of Cairns and sell it around

Australia and the world. "It is really a matter of getting the product on the web and people can order from there.

"The system we have is they just have to unload it and it's ready for installation," he said.

