



## St Leonards artistic duo showcase creative abilities in exhibition

Louise Starkey, Reporter, Mosman Daily  
February 8, 2018

EVEN after 40 years of marriage, the careers of Debbie Mackinnon and Mike Staniford have been kept separate – until now.

The artist and former graphic designer, who both moved to Australia 24 years ago, have come together to showcase their creative abilities in their first exhibition as a couple, *Two artists, One journey*.

Mr Staniford, who turned his back on the corporate life to develop his skills as a painter and writer at the end of 2016, said the exhibition was developed during the pair's time attending an art residency in Andalusia – an autonomous region bordering Spain's southern coast.

The duo, who then went on to travel Italy towards the end of 2017, were able to dedicate time to their artwork during this experience, which will be showcased at me Artspace from March 7.

“The art residency was an intensive catalyst for it,” Mr Staniford said.



Debbie Mackinnon and Mike Staniford, sitting with their artwork at me Artspace in St Leonards, will celebrate 40 years of marriage during the upcoming exhibition Two artists, One journey.  
Picture: Rafal Kontrym

“We were in the driest part of Spain and both thrown into a visual feast, and I just could not stop painting.”

Ms Mackinnon, founder and director of me Artspace in St Leonards, said the exhibition was a collaboration of the pair’s art styles – Mr Staniford paints colourful abstract art, she added, and painting contemporary seascapes and landscapes in oil has become her speciality.

The pair’s passion for contemporary art and love for travel was also the secret to their success in marriage and in art, Ms Mackinnon said.

“We’re always in touch with what’s going on and I think we keep a strong individual identity,” she said. “A lot of my artist friends get quite jealous I can frequently travel with – and bounce ideas off – a fellow artist, who just happens to be my husband.

“It’s exciting that we’ve been able to come together for this exhibition, because not only is this Mike’s first one, but we’ll also be celebrating 40 years of marriage during the exhibit.” Mr Staniford, who has been named a finalist in the 2018 Adelaide Perry Prize for Drawing, said the exhibition would feature the pair’s artwork, and host artist talks and landscape drawing workshops.

To get in touch with the artistic duo or for more information on the exhibition, visit [meartspace.com.au](http://meartspace.com.au).