

WILL'S SUPER-SIZED BRONZED AUSSIES

GAIL THOMAS MEETS AN ARTIST WITH A RARE TALENT

Imagine spotting a couple of metre-high 100-kilogram chooks in the garden warily eyeing off a three-metre blue-tongue lizard, and a 750-kilogram giant turtle. You'd be forgiven for thinking some sort of genetic modification was at play.

These amazing creatures are just a few of Will Wilson's magnificent Willie Wildlife bronze sculptures.

Will, who established his business in 2001, has become a leader in design and innovation on the world stage. He is a self-taught artist and his first designs were inspired by local birds in his Ocean Grove backyard.

Will was brought up on a farm in Western Victoria and worked in national parks in northern Australia and a private game reserve in Africa before turning his hand to creating bronze sculptures.

"I use the ancient lost-wax process," Will says. "This type of casting picks up the minutest detail and with intricate hand-finishing, guarantees exceptional quality artworks."

"Bronze is the ultimate medium as it will not be damaged in any weather conditions, doesn't chip or rust, and is unaffected by the sea and salt air."

While some of the inspiration for his work



Casting call: Will Wilson's magnificent bronze sculptures are inspired by nature. (REG RYAN)

reflects his travels, the biggest influence is our Australian wildlife – birdbaths and bowls feature willie wagtails, blue wrens, magpies, lorikeets, galahs, ducks and kookaburras, plus acrobatic frogs, trout and dragonfly.

"The various birds on the birdbath designs have a sense of fun by looking as if they are



interacting and really make people smile," Will says. "My aim is to capture and reflect that beauty in works and to encourage a love of nature in people's gardens."

Each year, Will displays designs at the world's most prestigious gardening event, the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in London.

His stand was awarded five stars this year. "Chelsea is a mecca that draws people from around the globe. Ringo Starr and his wife come by each year and speak to us, plus lots of royals and English celebrities," Will says.

"One of the biggest highlights was having a few of our sculptures placed in the Australian Show Garden, which won a gold medal and Best in Show in the event's 2013 centenary year. This year, we were honoured to have one of our artworks in Charlie Albone's Show Garden, which won a silver-gilt medal."

His works can be found at Canberra Airport, the new Ronald McDonald House in New York, Singapore Botanic Gardens, the Australian Embassy in Dubai and closer to home, Oakdene Vineyards in Wallington and the Great Ocean EcoLodge in Cape Otway.

After 15 years working from his home garage, Will is moving into The Hive, a new artists' showroom in Ocean Grove. ●

gthomas@theweeklyreview.com.au

» **The Hive, 41 Smithton Grove, Ocean Grove, opens on Saturday, July 9.**

» williewildlifesculptures.com.au