

Heart and soul in mask

By Meredith Clisby

THE new artist in residence at the Belconnen Arts Centre will use her overseas mentoring experience to inspire her in the creation of a series of masks.

Cross cultural artist and actress Hanna Cormick has just returned to Canberra after spending March in Bali under the tutelage of world-famous mask maker Ida Bagus Anom.

She is part of the Australia Council's JUMP National Mentoring Program for Young and Emerging Artists.

Ms Cormick says she has always been interested in mask making and she is enjoying the experience of working within Balinese ideas.

"It's a very interesting style to work in because it's different to the mask work I do," she said.

"It's a lot more earthy, a lot more spiritually based."

She said the masks she would create would be used in a performance as it was important for her that her creations are active.

"It's really, really important, from my perspective as an artist, that masks are made for a performance, not just as a pretty piece to put on the wall," she said.

Each mask is painstakingly carved out of a block of wood and after hours of intense carving and sculpting, 40 layers of paint are added before the fine detail can be expressed.

"My mentor made me promise I



Hanna Cormick is the new artist in residence at the Belconnen Arts Centre and she will make masks inspired by her mentorship in Indonesia. **Picture: Elesia Lee**

would hold to that when I came back to Australia," she said.

While in Indonesia she practiced her mask making skills by copying traditional Balinese designs and her mentor gave her the courage to have her own creative input.

"It's not about an educational process - it's about the mentor getting the mentee to be able to come to their own conclusions and push their own boundaries," she said.

Ms Cormick is also very appreciative of the opportunity the Belcon-

nen Arts Centre has given her to continue her work. She said it was quite common for people on mentorship programs to have no place to continue their artistic creation when they returned home.

The artist will return to Bali mid year to further develop her performance with her mentor and will perform and display her work in Indonesia, and on her return, in Canberra.

She said the experience had enhanced all aspects of her artistic practice.