

Choice fairytales

■ VISUAL ART

Siobhan Duck

VINCENT Fantauzzo hopes *Red Riding Hood* will bring homeless young people their own fairytale endings.

The 29-year-old artist says painting characters from myth and fairy stories saved him from a life of crime and dead-end jobs.

He now hopes his paintings can save others.

Fantauzzo says he had not even heard of Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* when he decided to turn his life-long interest in drawing into a painting career.

An undiagnosed dyslexic, Fantauzzo left school at 14 and didn't learn to read until he secured a place at university with a few tall tales and an impressive collection of his work.

"I first picked up a paintbrush when I was 21," he says.

"No matter where or when we



were born, whether we are rich or poor, at some time we all come to a fork in the road and have to choose between right and wrong.

"I was lucky enough to have art push me in the right direction."

Drawing on his own experience, Fantauzzo has reinterpreted some of literature's most famous characters as modern people facing their own forks in the road.

He thinks the myths and stories he heard as a child remain compelling and relevant to young people.

In his paintings, Lady Macbeth

stares at her reflection in a bleak bathroom mirror, a suit-clad Dorian Gray languishes in an armchair next to a magazine article about himself, and a girl in a red cloak walks down a dark stairwell where "wolves" could be waiting.

Fantauzzo has painted himself as Icarus (left) — the boy who flew too close to the sun and was burnt — because, he says, it's the story with which he most identifies.

Fantauzzo left school at 14 to help support his family.

"I got into trouble with the police. I was mixing with the wrong people," he says.

"I was lucky I found art because it gave me something positive to be passionate about."

Fantauzzo will donate proceeds from his first exhibition, *Nature of Fate*, to the Lighthouse Foundation, which provides support and accommodation to homeless young people. Foundation spokesman John Nolan says Fantauzzo's donation will help

the organisation to continue its work with 26,000 people aged 12-22.

"Like many of the young people at Lighthouse Foundation, Vincent knows what it's like to not fit in," Nolan says.

"As a sufferer of dyslexia, a condition that affects the ability to read and write, Vincent found school a never-ending round of criticism and failure. He soon gave up on a system he felt had nothing to offer him.

"His early academic record clearly does not reflect his potential. It is easy to understand how the frustration he experienced in his early 20s left him feeling undervalued and resentful."

■ NATURE OF FATE

Where: Dianne Tanzer Gallery, 108 Gertrude St, Fitzroy, until March
Details: 9416 3956