

# RE//CREATING

*Twenty-two Riverina Female Artists*

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HR Gallop Gallery

1 May – 13 May 2017  
Narrandera Arts Centre

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*We acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of the lands on which CSU campuses are located, the Wiradjuri, Ngunawal, Gundungurra and Biripai (or Biripi) peoples of Australia, and the Haudenosaunee peoples of Canada. We pay respect to their Elders both past and present and are grateful for their past, present and future contributions to the richness of all our cultures.*



# FOREWORD

Welcome to RE//CREATING. This exhibition marks the final year of a three year commitment the Cad Factory and SCCI, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga campus has made to presenting an exhibition of female Riverina artists in the HR Gallop Gallery to coincide with International Women's Day.

The aim over the three years has been to address the gender gap that exists within the visual arts in terms of exhibition opportunities. By supporting women to develop their skills, capacity and confidence, we hope to strengthen arts practice, and, in our own very small way, assist in changing the current statistics.

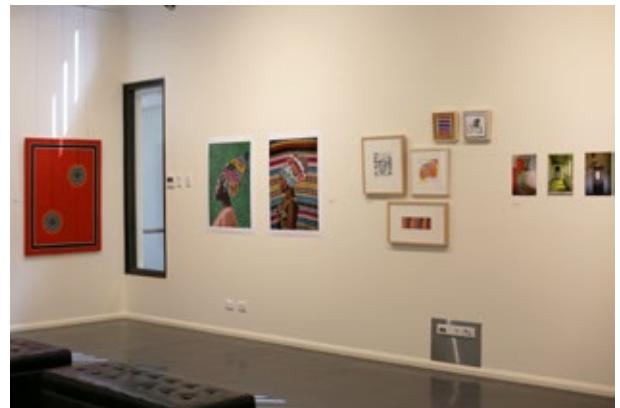
The title of the exhibitions over the three years, RE//ASSEMBLING (2015), RE//CONSTRUCTING (2016) and RE//CREATING (2017) suggest a conceptual arc to focus our attention upon significant thinking about how we can revise, reconsider, rearrange, rebuild and revalue what we think, in order to act in a way, that promotes a platform for a multitude of different voices to be heard.

Over the three years we have worked with artists who are in dialogue with contemporary art; who are questioning their relationship with the world and how they exist within it; challenging historical narratives or presenting new interpretations; or responding whimsically and spiritually to their lived experience within a rural location. We see this suite of exhibitions as a testament to the vitality of regional women's arts practice.

In 2016 we invited Jacqueline Millner from Sydney University and the Contemporary Art and Feminism Network as our special guest to give a lecture and engage critically with the artists and their work. In 2017 we are delighted to have Melbourne artist, Elvis Richardson engage with the artists. Her research via the CoUNTess blog, and presentation at the Contemporary Art and Feminism Conference at Sydney College of the Arts in September 2014, inspired us to actively address gender imbalance in the visual arts through practical means.

We are also excited to be taking RE//CREATING to the Narrandera Arts Centre in May, to share with another Riverina community, the work in this exhibition.

We hope you enjoy this uniquely Riverina perspective of life and arts practice.



Images from the first exhibition RE//ASSEMBLING, 2015

# RE//LECTIONS

## **Lorraine Tye (2015 - 2017 artist)**

Through these series of exhibitions - RE//ASSEMBLING 2015, RE//CONSTRUCTING 2016, RE//CREATING 2017 my artwork has looked at the role that culture has played in my life.

The first exhibition looked at weaving as a vehicle for empowering my family history, particularly women. The second exhibition explored the Wiradjuri belief that everything is transforming throughout our life cycles, using the butterfly life cycle as a metaphor for my life. With the final work, I am connecting back to my heritage through the stories of my ancestors.

Using Sarah's words, "it seems crucial to be providing professional exhibition opportunities, along with supportive and nurturing environments for regional women to present and explore their arts practice." Through these series of exhibitions I have strengthened my knowledge of Wiradjuri Culture and empowered my artistic practise. I would like to thank both Sarah and Julie for the experience.

## **Melinda Schiller (2015 - 2017 artist)**

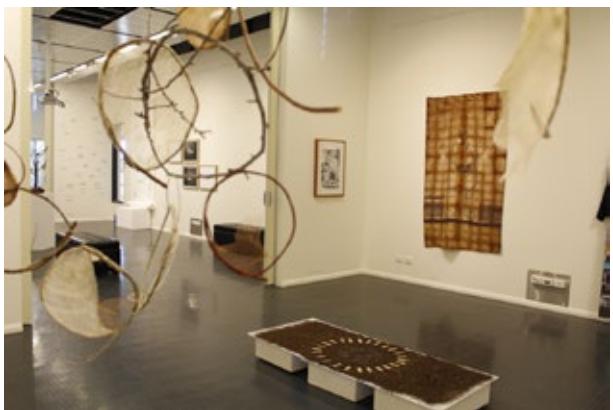
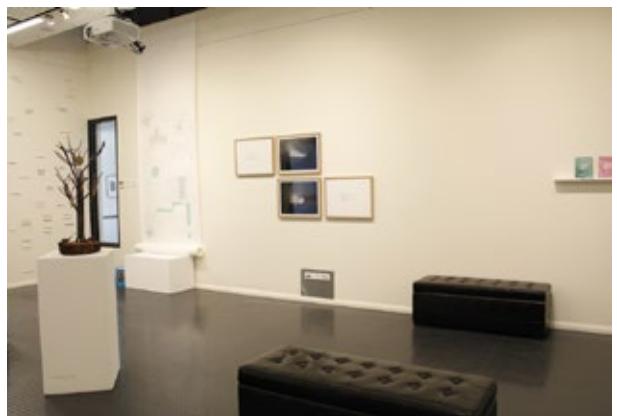
I cannot speak highly enough in regards to Sarah and Julie in their mentoring of me. Being part of the three exhibitions has led me to head in a different direction in my art practice. To challenge myself, think deeply and continue to be accepting of non-perfection. I've noticed that everybody has grown in their art practices. It was good to be involved in something where everybody was encouraging and empowering each other in their own styles.

## **Kate Allman (2016 – 2017 artist)**

The RE// experience has been a mind, eye and heart opening trip. It was a welcomed challenge that taught me more about myself as an artist and woman. I used to be afraid to express myself creatively and worried a lot about what other people thought. After working in the same space as so many talented, funny and smart women, I learnt that artists do not go in boxes. There is not a set protocol that deems you an artist. The RE// women taught me that when I feel something, I should explore it with consideration and let my passion for concepts, history and process guide me. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with these badass females and will keep learning from them as their practices evolve.

## **Adele Packer (2015 - 2017 artist)**

The RE// journey has been such an empowering experience. The opportunity to be invited into a space, which is occupied by so many talented women, was a privilege. This space provided a freedom to create, discuss and collaborate without restriction. This way of working will continue to have an influence on myself and my future practice.



Images from the second exhibition RE//CONSTRUCTING, 2016

# RE//LECTIONS

**Natalie Louise Power (2015 - 2017 artist)**

RE//LECTIONS on the last three years

RE//ASSEMBLING 2015  
RE//CONSTRUCTING 2016  
RE//CREATING 2017

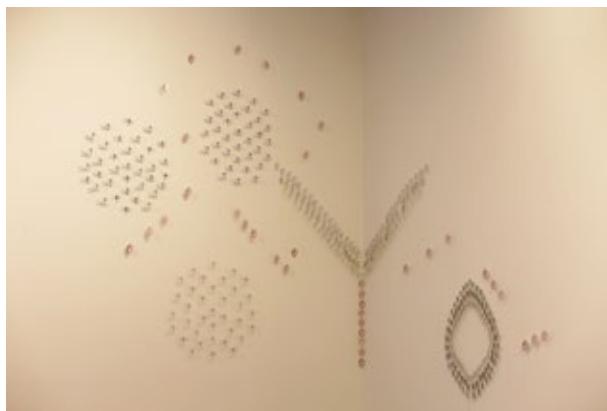
It's been a space to  
RE//EMERGE  
RE//VISIT  
RE//FLECT  
Upon my practice.

I feel I have  
RE//ESTABLISHED  
RE//PLENISHED  
RE//AFFIRMED  
My need to create.

I have  
RE//GATHERED  
RE//GROUPED  
RE//CONNECTED  
With the most  
RE//MARKABLE  
Women

An opportunity like this is rare.  
Professional supported practice in a rural area that was filled with Women.  
Women Artists. RE//CLAIMING

RE//SPECT  
RE//ASSURANCE  
RE//WARDS  
I am grateful for this.  
It will long be  
RE//MEMBERED.



*Fuck Art Lets Wash Dishes* (detail), Casey Ankers, 2010, RE//ASSEMBLING

*Silk Story #2: Women Hold the Knowledge* (detail), Melanie Evans, 2013-14, RE//ASSEMBLING

*Tellus*, Natalie Louise Power, 2015, RE//ASSEMBLING

*Giralang Bundinya* (detail), Gail Manderson, 2015, RE//ASSEMBLING

# ESSAY

## ***The Importance of Enacting: An End Game of Change***

*...the political goal of feminism - change.*

Joan W Scott<sup>1</sup>

I love reading feminist critical theory. I find it exhilarating. I love how it unravels the socially entrenched and constructed fictions of Western thought. When I read words like onto-epistem-ology, or material-discursive or trans-corporeality<sup>2</sup> I just melt. It gives me the illusion of the ballast finally being balanced.<sup>3</sup>

But the fact is, the ballast is not balanced, and has never been balanced. When I think of the lives of the women who have gone before me, from Classical Athenian society onwards, I want to weep, thinking about the restrictions, limits and exclusions placed on girls and women and what their lived experience would have been like given their social and economic position, as well as their geographic location, over various time periods.

It is this fraught and sustained history of inequality, that has driven many women, men, artists, writers, academics, film makers and activists to enact change on small and large scales over the last 150 years, through political mobilisation, consciousness raising, creative outputs, direct action and critiques on the subliminal and overt structures that shaped our Western society. It is this fraught and sustained history that drives Julie and I to offer a platform, to tell the stories of regional women, of various backgrounds, through their arts practice. These exhibitions become a political act of righting and writing the historical ‘wrongs’ that have occurred.

After all, within the hierachal scheme of things, women, nature, regional, they all fall into the same subordinate side of patriarchal hierarchies; a story that has been reinforced time and time again by male philosophers over the last 3000 years of Western

thought. Australian philosopher Elizabeth Grosz, has stated that, “as a discipline, philosophy has surreptitiously excluded femininity, and ultimately women, from its practices through its usually implicit coding of femininity with the unreason associated with the body”.<sup>4</sup>

The women who lived in Classical Athenian society, almost 3000 years ago, had enormous restrictions placed on them. What we know from the writings of men about women during this period - as girls were not formally educated - is that it was their duty, to the State, to produce offspring. Their value was in their reproductive bodies. It was also believed that women were the mere ‘empty vessels to be filled’<sup>5</sup> and it was men who gave life and shape to the foetus. Women were believed to be so inferior to men, that they were not capable of co-creating life.

Women continued to be characterised in secondary ways, with formal education denied to the majority of women (or to any child for that matter, from impoverished and working families), for thousands of years, notwithstanding the exceptions, such as wealthier families home schooling their daughters. Within an Australian context, school became compulsory to all children in the 1870’s. It wasn’t until 1881 that the first Australian woman, Bella Geurin completed a Bachelor of Arts at Melbourne University. It seems unfathomable to me, that 3000 years ago Plato was establishing his Academy to promote rigorous discussions and lectures on the ideas of philosophy, and yet, the first Australian woman graduated university 136 years ago.

Of course there has been many remarkable women throughout Western history who have challenged the socially defined role of women; from

Queens, to authors, to nuns and whores, whose lives and successes, are part of the dominant historical narrative. However, if there was to be a comparison, between men and women as active agents or change makers in politics, culture, religion, science, mathematics, philosophy, economics, engineering etc, the ballast would not be balanced due to the gap that has occurred through the lack of formal education, along with societal expectations of the domestic role women should play.

This fact, gives Julie and I more determination and urgency, to offer a platform for female Riverina artists, who are working from a theoretical place of historical deficit, to be seen and heard, and their lived experience shared within their communities and beyond, to challenge, fascinate and provoke a new understanding of the concerns, ideas and cultural knowledge, specific to the Riverina, that is materialised through their creative practice.

Although regional women have been traditionally positioned in a theoretical place of historical deficit, I do see a ‘way out’. The current theoretical turn towards materialism, with the premise of making matter matter, and everything, human and non-human, having worth and value unto itself, even if you can’t see it, metaphorically obliterates past legacies. The ideas offered on the subject by Karen Barad, Stacy Alaimo or the late Val Plumwood, to name a few of the many feminist academics intra-acting with these open ended propositions, unlocks a new theoretical playground to contest past narratives and seriously unbind the binaries.

I see the beginnings of these concepts turning into real manifestations, from the ‘take home messages’ of the 2016 Regional Arts Australia Conference, Artlands Dubbo. It was discussed that regional artists should not place themselves in the mindset of historical layers of deficit. There is the option to RE//FRAME how you see yourself; as living and making creative responses, in a connected way, to your place and community, which, is just another location, with equal importance to the millions and millions of other locations, of varying sizes, across the globe, that all have their

own localised meanings, histories and site-specific contexts. This idea erases the notion of ‘the centre’ as a location of desire, the key holder of knowledge, and a destination to aspire towards if you are from ‘somewhere else’.

If the momentum from this take home message is enacted and gains traction, I am here, in my old school house, surrounded by industrialised agriculture, waiting anxiously, full of query, as to how Australian metropolitan cities, people, artists, and arts institutions adjust, dispute, or ignore their hegemonic power being dispersed amongst regional and remote locations and people.

## Sarah McEwan

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Footnotes: A special thank you to Julie Montgarrett, Vic McEwan, Scott Howie and Sarah Georgopoulos for great conversations which helped generate these understandings.

<sup>1</sup>Joan W. Scott, ‘Back to the Future,’ *History and Theory*, Vol. 47, Issue 2, May 2008, p. 279

<sup>2</sup>onto-epistem-ology (the study of practices of knowing and being) and material-discursive (the relationship between discursive practices and material phenomena, including human and non human accounts) are terms Karen Barad explored in ‘Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter’, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 2003, vol. 28, no. 3, trans-corporeality (the time-space where all human corporeality, in all its material fleshiness, is inseparable from “nature” or “environment”) is a term Stacy Alaimo explored in “Trans-Corporeal Feminisms and the Ethical Space of Nature, *Material Feminism*, 2008, Indiana University Press

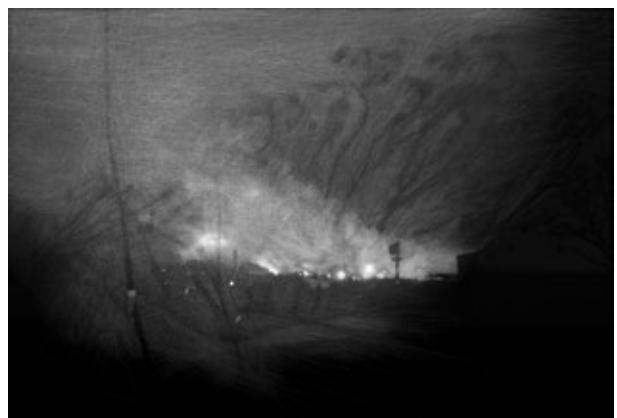
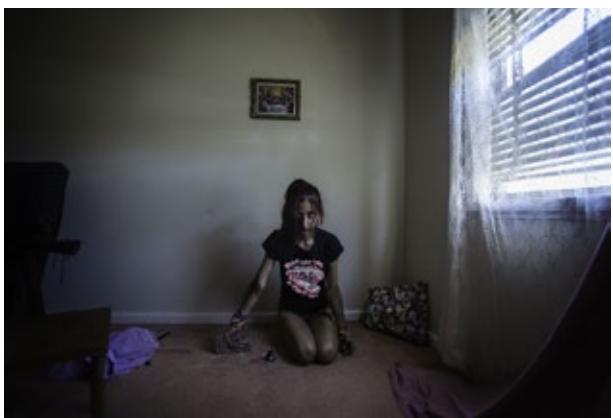
<sup>3</sup>This references the title of the essay, ‘Constructing the Ballast: An Ontology for Feminism,’ by Susan Heckman, *Material Feminism*, 2008, Indiana University Press

<sup>4</sup>Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*, 1994, Indiana University Press p.4

<sup>5</sup>Beth Sundstrom, *Reproductive Justice and Women’s Voices: Health Communication Across the Lifespan*, 2015, Lexicon Books, p.55



Jacqueline Millner and Jacko Meyers at the RE//CONSTRUCTING Opening, 27 February 2016, in front of the artwork *Munsterfield*, by Lindie Mannion  
RE//CONSTRUCTING Opening, 27 February 2016  
RE//CONSTRUCTING Critique Session with Jacqueline Millner, 27 February 2016



*Wild Brushes*, Kath Withers, 2016, RE//CONSTRUCTING

*Salad Days Zine*, Adele Packer and Kate Allman, 2016, RE//CONSTRUCTING

*Guys Like You*, Sarah Mifsud, 2016, RE//CONSTRUCTING

*Bright Hearts* (detail), Angela Coombs Matthews and Julie Briggs, 2016, RE//CONSTRUCTING

# ESSAY

## ***Worse than Beige***

*At the heart of the struggle of feminism ... has been the necessity of making women credible and audible. Billions of women must be out there on this seven-billion person planet being told they are not reliable witnesses to their own lives, that truth is not their property, now or ever. The ability to tell your own story, in words or images, is already a victory, already a revolt.*

Rebecca Solnit<sup>1</sup>

Nice girls don't eavesdrop, my mother tried to teach me. Although I confess there are times when it provides useful intel about the world – a refreshing kind of off-line social media feed. Eavesdropping can take us out of the comfortable realms of 'like' opinions and provokes considerations that we might otherwise not encounter. I recently overheard the claim that 'regional arts is beige' - a generalisation both misleading and unfair. If we accept this assertion – that city centres are the exclusive sites of innovation and critical cultural dialogues accordingly, regional life must be bland and arts practice of those living at a distance must necessarily be beige. Questioning the likely origin of this assertion I realised there is something *worse than beige* – the invisibility of regional arts to audiences beyond each region.

Having lived in regional NSW for the past 20 years I am familiar with city-based colleagues perceptions of the cultural landscape of the bush as out of touch with city arts events. Connected to this, is a matching blind-spot about what other debates and creative works are being made in communities beyond the sandstone curtain. These alternatives – dynamic regional relationships with other centres both nationally and internationally is rarely imagined. My home, often described as 'the middle of nowhere' half-way between Sydney and

Melbourne, is no less isolated than Sydney is from Los Angeles or Berlin – ironically. However mere geographical distance, the usual explanation for the invisibility of much dynamic arts practice across Australia, is far too simple an account. The Bush, to most city-dwelling Australians, is the go-to for a gourmet weekend to rest and recharge – just far enough to escape the city briefly rather than seek out significant cultural events. While coastal real-estate has long remained the preferred address for most Australians, until recently many had at least one close relative living in regional Australia. This enabled first hand encounters with more distant communities, preventing the gradual relegation of regional lives to invisibility and irrelevance. These relative encounters have dwindled dramatically in recent decades and likely play a significant factor in the disconnection of city-dwellers from the remote Bush.

The perception of regional Australia as a zone of perpetual cultural drought, is born of entrenched conception of 'the country' as an 'other' place. The Bush, beyond the coastal fringe, is a place of contradictory cultural meanings – long mythologised as the alleged source of the Nation's true identity and spirit of resilience - it is equally perceived as a place of *mamba*: miles and miles of bugger all. The bush remains at once a place of romance and utter disdain – a problematic dualism contrarily and uncomfortably held in the mind's eye of most Australians.

Contrived settler mythologies frame our dominant history and continue to distort cohesive conceptions of a nationally respectful collective identity. Stories of brave frontier heroes who built the nation amidst the unruly bush, wilfully ignore issues

pertaining to the hard lives of women and children, the squandering of natural resources and the brutality of two hundred years of violence and the dispossession of First Nations peoples. Evidence of these counter-histories may be found in countless letters, journals and diaries and in the works of artists, culture keepers and activists whose works remain generally overlooked. Many of these voices, who speak of the darker histories of suffering in 'the bush' and the small quotidian joys and bounties of country, belong to women - writers Barbara Baynton, Katharine Susannah Prichard, Eleanor Dark and Miles Franklin, activists Anna Euphemia Morgan and Daisy Bindy, and more recently Patricia Cornelius and Maree Clarke.

Misconceptions, of both the past and present of regional Australia, may largely be considered the product of European Enlightenment Colonialisation projects that justified the dispossession of First Nations Australians via the British doctrine of *terra nullius*. According to feminist philosopher Nancy Hartsock<sup>ii</sup> rationalist Colonial assumptions of the rights of a superior elite to power and privilege are closely aligned with racism, sexism and the ideological capitalist exploitation of the natural world. Hartsock asserts that each prejudice supports and excludes the majority 'other' to confirm the legitimacy of the power of the elite who consequently creates its own reality.<sup>iii</sup> Stereotyping and homogenising the deficiencies of a binary 'Other,' in turn denies all social, cultural, religious and individual integrity and diversity as the dominant class 'draw on an anonymous collectivity' that sustains their wealth and position through labour and subservience.<sup>iv</sup>

Outstanding Feminist philosophers such as De Beauvoir, Grosz and Frye and postcolonial critics such as Said, Fanon and Bhabha amongst many others, refer to this as an example of hegemonic centrism - a hierarchical order established by a primary central power underpinned by sexist, racist and colonial authority. Australian feminist

philosopher Val Plumwood further refined this dualism as hyper-separation or dissociation which creates a sharp ontological break or radical discontinuity between the group identified as the privileged 'centre' and those subordinated.<sup>v</sup> From the earliest years of colonisation this hyper-separation is apparent, the British elite became increasingly socially and geographically distanced from the free-settler classes and squattocracy, the convict classes and most distinctly from First Nations Australians they were brutally and systematically dispossessing. Far beyond the colony, elite London-based Colonial Office regulators had little idea of the circumstances of the colonial 'Others'. This model of a distanced wealthy governing class remains a feature of Australian society, a century after Federation sustained by economic rationalist models of governance inherited from nineteenth century rationalist constructs. Plumwood further elaborated her concept of hyper-separation identifying that,

*Modern economic rationalism maps the heroic narrative of the modern economy onto the older heroic narrative of the supremacy of male-coded reason [...] Economic rationalism has replaced the classical warrior of earlier rationalism by the corporate warrior of the global economy. It establishes their privilege through the subordination of all other aspects of social life to the form of economic organisation controlled by corporations and loaded in their favour, the rationalist 'free-market' ... [is] portrayed as a detached, disengaged, supremely rational mechanism. [...] in this neutral and dispassionate guise as 'rational machinery'... the historical social relations that have selected its rules and established its cast of players in far from neutral ways have been disappeared from view.<sup>vi</sup>*

Australian artist and academic, Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll focusses on additional anachronistic effects of hyper-separation on colonialised 'Others' which results in their *being out of time*.<sup>vii</sup> Nineteenth century rationalist definitions of time as an ordered linear progression fundamental to the European process of civilizing the colonised,

ensure that the ‘Other’ is forever unable to catch-up with centuries of superior civilized advancement from the point of invasion. As von Zinnenburg Carroll also notes, history has often failed to represent art in its practitioners’ own idiosyncratic terms while also ignoring those beyond the colonial narrative.<sup>viii</sup>

The Colonial binary, that stereotypes and homogenises in racist and sexist ways the perceived deficiencies of the ‘Other,’ as Hartsock asserts, endures as a relic of nineteenth century rationalist thinking, framing conceptions of city and Bush as *out of time and late to history*. As ‘Other’, the Bush appears distant and invisible in its diversity and value, while the city-centre remains the hegemonic focus of rationalist models of engagement. Similarly, the first step of dispossession, the assertion of an undifferentiated identity of all First Nations Australians as ‘Aborigines’, is similar to perceiving regional Australia as undifferentiated communities of ‘Others’. Beginning in 1770, the generic term ‘Aborigine’ describes the original inhabitants of *any country* on earth and disregards the sovereignties of a diverse set of Australian First Nations and the continued use of the generic term ‘Aborigine’ demonstrates the enduring effects of rationalisation’s subliminal hyper-separation.

Regional Artists, ascribed as the ‘Other,’ are collectively disenfranchised despite extensive evidence of dynamic projects achieving international standing<sup>ix</sup> and routinely denied cultural legitimacy and cultural capital for their arts practices because they lack close proximity to established metropolitan centres. If we accept Hartsock’s conclusions as to the interconnectedness of race and gender as a result of longstanding hegemonic-centrism, it follows that regional women artists and women artists of colour face doubled and tripled disadvantage.

RE//CREATING, is the last of three annual exhibitions which aimed to address the invisibility of regional women artists. Not claiming to be on the cutting-edge of innovation in contemporary practice, nonetheless these works remain vital and significant.

They bear few similarities to contemporary feminist artists like Deborah Kelly and Elvis Richardson (CoUNTess), whose practices challenge the representation of women, quoting propaganda posters and the visually dramatic graphics of print-media. Neither do they align with works by women artists from different regions. By and large these works adopt fragile, small scale and unassuming voices, but they are NOT beige. Some may require time and quiet reflection to uncover their meanings; to see past the expectations we bring to them. Each reflect the quality of time the artists’ spent in sharing, mutually acknowledging and incubating their ongoing practice – gaining the confidence necessary to claim this time despite the obligations of lives indebted intimately to others.

Telling their own stories as Solnit says is, ‘[...] *already a victory, already a revolt*’ and these works are in their own way, disobedient objects<sup>x</sup> refusing to remain invisible. As *disobedient objects*, these are not predictably finely crafted aesthetically, refined, works. The unhemmed edges, awkward hand-written graphic signatures, found materials, and quirky forms are purposeful, expressive and intentionally *noncompliant*. Each work is a determined choice to challenge the prescriptions of ‘quality’ in craftsmanship, refusing to demonstrate a culture of groomed discipline, training and normalisation patronage requires which echoes the restrictions typically placed on women who are similarly narrowly defined. As Flood and Grindon note, ‘...Fine Objects are themselves mostly failures in the task of making change<sup>xi</sup>. The works in these three exhibitions are testament to the vitality of regional women’s arts practice by women who, lacking the opportunity, formal education or confidence to share their work with audiences beyond their own families, may counter invisibility when granted exhibition opportunities that enable them to share these valuable documents of lived experiences with us all.

This exhibition opportunity has offered each

artist at least some experience of creative practice approaches, tracing pathways through process, toward unknown outcomes. They have discovered the need to be reliant on both tacit knowledge as much as invention. Negotiating unexpected questions is essential to creative practice – an unpredictable process; contingent and performative driven by discoveries of visual and material solutions of ‘what works’ can only arise through uncertain and brave practice. Each woman has discovered the *unruly* nature of their own arts practice and a certain fearless intent to identify the importance of the symbolic, visual, material and formal character of their own work no matter how unsure they are at the beginning. These are examples of an ‘attention to the process of creativity’<sup>xii</sup> as defined by Merleau-Ponty. Creative practice-based approaches understand art-making as an enactive space of living enquiry; a performative, material ‘making visible/tangible’ production of meaning. According to Academics Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt:

*the innovative and critical potential of practice-based research lies in its capacity to generate personally situated knowledge and new ways of modelling and externalising such knowledge while at the same time, revealing philosophical, social and cultural contexts for the critical intervention and application of knowledge outcomes.*<sup>xiii</sup>

Some of these women will venture their works over the horizon, claiming audiences in cities and internationally, as they seek to establish voices from the ‘other’ Australia. For others, this has been a chance to establish a foundation, to identify the ways in which their work can move forward towards new conversations, collaborations and opportunities. For many, circumstance and responsibility will suspend their work with art temporarily. Although they may return to living between other kinds of uncertainties – the spaces between the rock and the hard place that is so frequently women’s lot – each will undoubtedly return to their studios later as so many of Australia’s best women artists have done long before them: Rosalie Gascoigne and Elizabeth

Cummings to name just two. These works attest to the lived experiences of marginalised invisible communities, challenging us all to find new ways of seeing this country and respecting our landscape and its inhabitants by reflecting upon what we have made, what we have destroyed, and what we have become in the process.

## Julie Montgarrett

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Solnit, Rebecca. <http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/174918/> accessed January 27, 2017.

<sup>xii</sup>Hartsock, Nancy. 1990 Foucault on Power: A theory for women? In Nicholson, L.(ed.) *Feminism/Postmodernism*. Routledge, NY. p. 161.

<sup>xiii</sup>Op.cit

<sup>xiv</sup>Plumwood, Val, 2002. *Environmental Culture: The ecological crisis of reason*. Environmental Philosophies Series, Brennan, A. (ed.) Oxon, UK: Routledge.p.101

<sup>v</sup>ibid

<sup>vi</sup>Plumwood ibid. p. 22

<sup>vii</sup>Von Zinnenburg Carroll, Khadija. 2014. *Art in the Time of Colony*. Surrey, UK : Ashgate Publishing Ltd, p. 2

<sup>viii</sup>Op.cit

<sup>ix</sup>artlands National Regional Arts Conference Dubbo 2016 confirms this claim.

<sup>x</sup>Flood, Catherine and Grindon, Gavin.(eds.) 2014. *Disobedient Objects*, Bloomsbury,UK: V+A Publications. p.8

<sup>xii</sup>ibid

<sup>xiii</sup>Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. ‘Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence’ in Johnson, G. (ed.). 1993. *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting* pp. 76-120. M. Smith (Trans.). Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press. (Original work published 1952)

<sup>xiv</sup>Barrett, Estelle, Barbara Bolt,(eds) Chapter 1, Introduction. 2005, *Practice As Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry*. London: I.B.Tauris, p. 2

# ADELE PACKER + KATE ALLMAN

**1992 & 1990**

**Both live in Wagga Wagga**

Kate and Adele are like salsa and guacamole; they are great by themselves but fucking awesome together. They have been international soulmates since 2012 and have been collaborating on various projects since. The worthiest to date being *Salad Days* - a zine that combined Kate's knack for words and wit with Adele's flair for contemporary design and photography.

For the final RE// exhibition we wanted to diverge from exhibiting an issue of our zine and create something unlike anything we have made before. The piece still references our zine and its values of celebrating women, challenging the patriarchy and playing with pop culture.

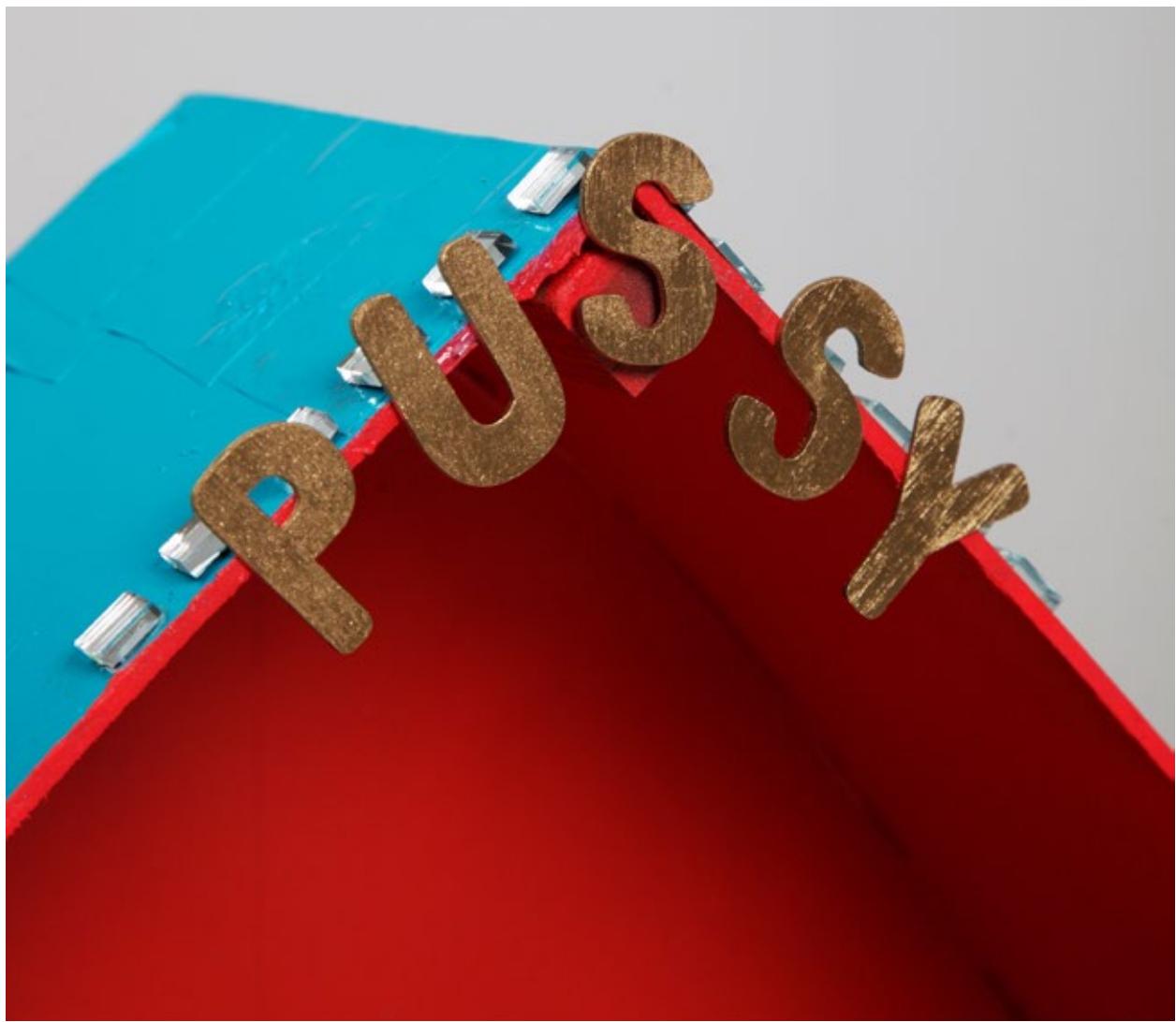
*Pussy* is reminiscent of a shrine with the use of ornaments and icons. It was made in response to the current misogynistic discourse that exists in our newsfeeds and daily conversations. *Pussy* is a reaction to the repression of female bodies. It is also a decision to reclaim the word and raise it above its common connotations of weakness, fragility or an acceptable place to be unexpectedly grabbed.

This is our ode to pussy, in all its forms, narratives and classifications. Through this creation we are giving power to the pussy.

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Kate Allman is a North Carolina native who has called Wagga Wagga home for the last few years. She has always had an interest in art and artists, but has only recently found the courage to explore her own creativity through writing, drawing and collaborating with artist, and dear friend, Adele. Kate holds a Bachelor's Degree in Art History from the University of North Carolina - Wilmington and is currently working towards a Master of Information Studies from CSU.

Adele Packer is a young Australian artist whose practice involves a combination of design, illustration, type/lettering, zine making, collage and photography. She makes things because she wants to; for her friends and for herself. Adele holds a Bachelor Degree in Design and Photography and in 2016 she was a recipient of the Young Regional Artists Scholarship from Arts NSW.



*Pussy* (detail), 2017, wood, bric-a-brac, jewels, glitter, cross stitch, found imagery

# ANGELA COOMBS MATTHEWS

**1975**

**Lives in Temora**

During a residency in Arenys de Munt, Spain, I focused on creating abstracted versions of what I saw and absorbed while in Spain, through the layering of images and mark making, using the direct to plate polymer photogravure and carborundum on plastic print mediums.

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Angela Coombs Matthews makes work largely underpinned by landscape. She abstracts and recreates perceptions through the layering of imagery and marks, and by working in an exploratory experimental way searching for a particular mood and feeling. Her works evolve across a range of media, including photography, printing, painting and drawing. Angela works as a teacher of art and has recently undertaken a six-week residency in Spain learning to create large photogravures and carborundum prints.



*Cuenca*, 2016, Polymer photogravure

# ANGELA COOMBS MATTHEWS + JULIE BRIGGS

**1975 & 1954**

**Lives in Temora & Narrandera**

Julie and Angela first collaborated for the RE//CONSTRUCTING exhibition in 2016. They have revisited their collaboration for RE//CREATING – this time each producing two works to which the other responded, Angela with images, Julie with poems.

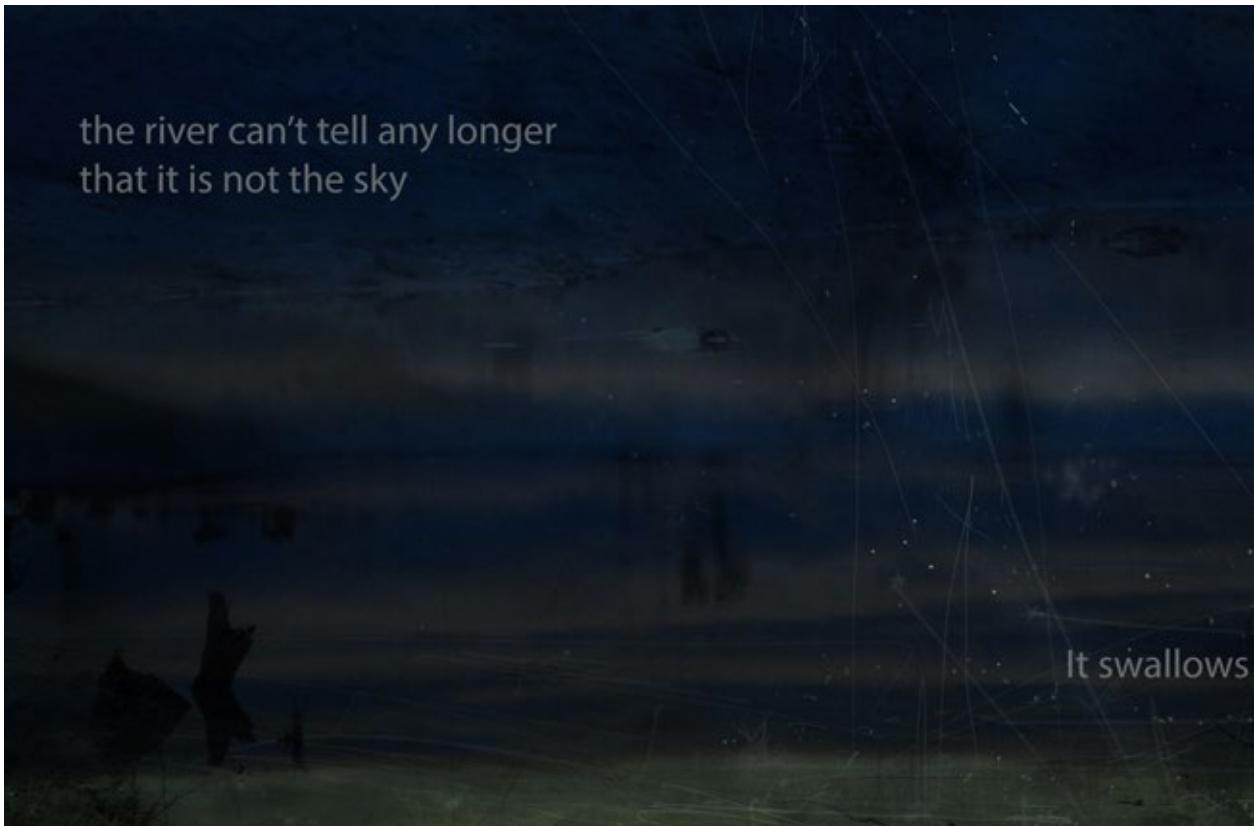
Angela: The atmospheric abstract play on words and the subject matter in Julie's poems resonated with the way I create imagery, using colour, tone, light and layering. Responding to *After Nightfall*, I aimed to convey emotion, a feeling of comfort within a dark, unknown seemingly ominous place. Responding to *As Daylight Becomes*, I created light, shapes and forms to represent the dazzling and the dazzled.

Julie: I saw Angela's ethereal images as landscapes heavily impacted by the actions of humankind. I saw the light in the images as representing the agency and resilience of nature as an integrated system which prevails despite the destructive impact of humanity throughout the Anthropocene Epoch, through constant selection and adaptation, contraction and renewal.

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Julie Briggs is a poet and installation artist and enjoys collaboration with other artists. Through a recent residency at the Cad Factory she explored the use of text in visual work, and collaborated with Romanian born artist and resident of Italy, Barbara Bartos, to produce work which will be exhibited at Wagga Wagga Art Gallery during 2017.



the river can't tell any longer  
that it is not the sky

It swallows

*After Nightfall*, 2016, inkjet print on paper

# ASHLEIGH MCDONALD

**1991**

**Lives in Wagga Wagga**

*An Earthmoving Performance* is a series that considers the connections you find when you place unexpected things together, that have both played an important role in shaping the world, such as earth moving machinery and women's performing bodies. Using the machinery as a stage, the performer can express strength and contortion.

This work is exploring the way we perceive the world and how it can change when viewed from another angle. The more we see the connections surrounding us, the more we can see that everything is relatable.

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Ashleigh McDonald has just completed her Bachelor of Arts (Photography)/ Bachelor of Arts (Graphic Design) at Charles Sturt University. Her photography is influenced by her history with the circus and aerial performing community in which she has trained in silks, trapeze, acrobalance and pole dancing. Ashleigh explores how mundane artefacts and locations can become an interactive stage for a performer where they can express their artistic style.



*An Earthmoving Performance*, 2017, photography

# CANNY KINLOCH + MELANIE EVANS

**1946 & 1973**

**Lives in Uranquinty and Wagga Wagga**

Canny and Melanie have worked alongside each other within education and formed a bond through their shared love of art and how this can bridge the gap between generations and cultural divides. Both artists have a shared fascination for the unusual, the contemplation of the self, and the open expression of the body letting go of the past through the remembering held within. Their interest in symbology, significance, a sense of fun and a deep spiritual connection to Mother Earth has led them to create this work.

On walking this spiral, there is a need to be focused on accomplishing the task, to travel with care to the centre of the spiral and out again. The whole body is present and held in the moment as you walk with self-absorption. You become aware of a conversation in the mind, querying your efforts and realise the need to press on to complete the journey from the inner to the outer worlds, where transformations and realisations may occur.

We have invited people to write any words, realisations, positive messages, hopes or dreams that become clear while walking ‘the spiral within’ installation.

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Canny Kinloch has been exploring her arts practice over the last 50 years through the mediums of painting, public commissions in sculpture, butoh, theatre direction, music and performance. Currently, Canny is working on short videos relating to her experience with various lake environments as observer and performer. She has a long interest in meditation.

Melanie Evans wishes to capture the spontaneous and gestural in her artworks, whether she's making a woven object, drawing, printing, bush dyeing textiles or performing. Melanie's interest in creating woven forms, both miniature and large scale, are based upon research into her family history and the body adornments traditionally worn by women and girls from Mudburra and Jingalee people from the Northern Territory, and also Wiradjuri people from New South Wales, where she currently lives. Melanie was a recent finalist in the 2016 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award.



*The Spiral Within* (detail of performance), 2016 - 2017, photographs, video, mixed media and found objects

# CASEY ANKERS

**1973**

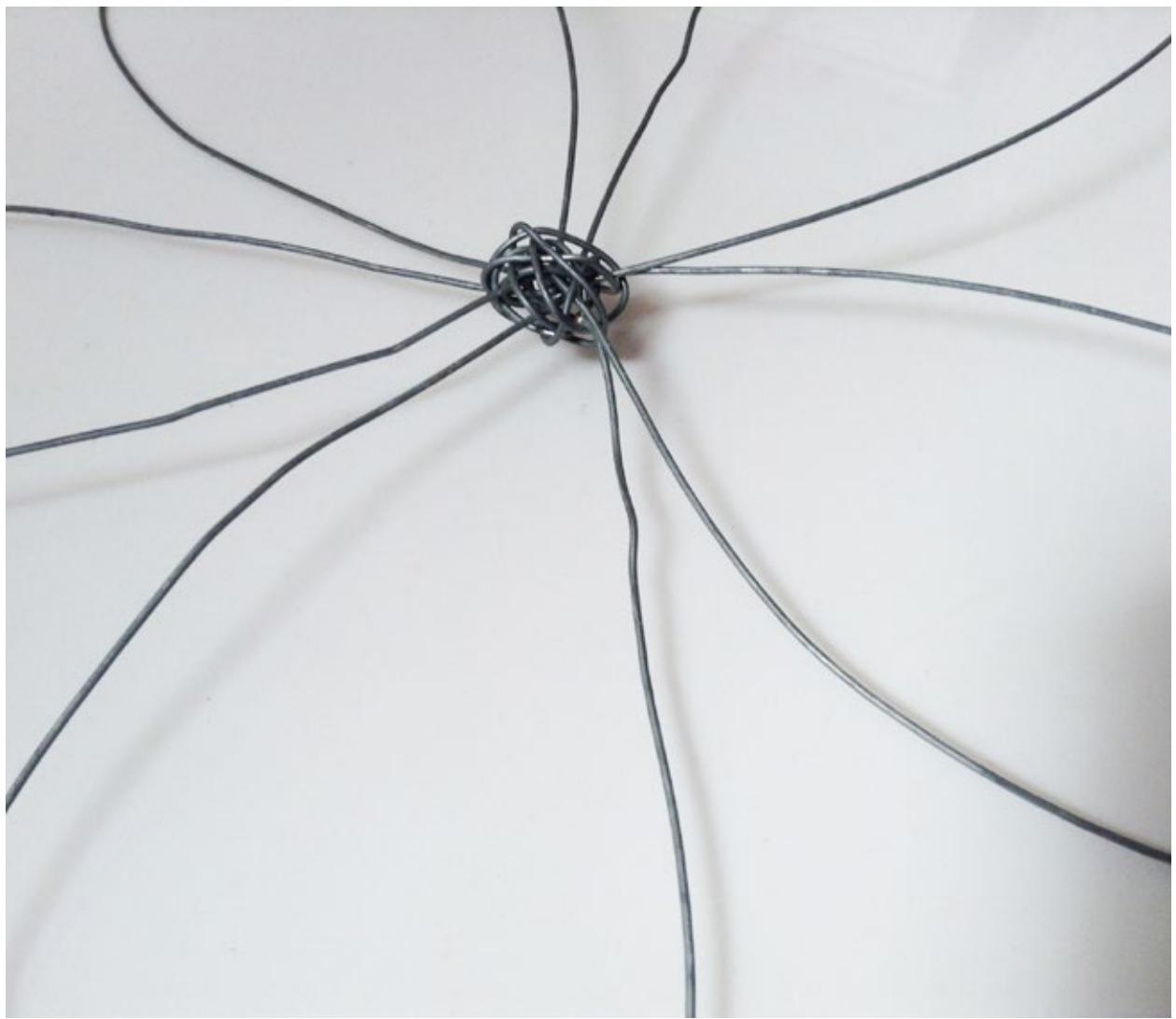
**Lives in Uranquinty**

At the end of 2003 Casey attempted to make 2468 wire flowers during her installation 75:2468 at the Wagga Wagga Art Gallery. Each flower represented a death by suicide in Australia that year.

*untitled (flowers)* repurposes the flowers, providing Casey an opportunity to interrogate her (and our) relationship to these objects thirteen years later.

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Casey Ankers has a background in metalwork, community broadcasting and community cultural development. Casey now spends time designing gardens, raising her children, talking to her chicken, thinking about art and doing way too much housework.



*untitled (suicide flowers)*, 2017, metal

# CASEY ANKERS + LORRAINE TYE

**1973 & 1950**

**Both Live in Uranquinty**

This work looks at the story of how the Murrumbidgee was formed. The gugaa (goanna) is the Wiradjuri totem and has an important role in many stories. In this story it highlights the role of women in maintaining strength in Wiradjuri heritage and knowledge.

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Lorraine Tye is a Wiradjuri Elder, artist and maker using basketry techniques and other fibre practices. In 2015 Lorraine completed the Graduate Certificate in Wiradjuri Language, Culture and Heritage at Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga. Having learnt more about her culture, Lorraine is creating work that reflects place and connection to Country.

Lorraine is a member of the Hands On Weavers Inc (HOW Group), which is a collective of people who enjoy a revival of traditional weaving practices. The HOW Group encourages people interested in coming together to share each other's stories about their journey in the revival of fibre and basketry weaving in the Riverina.

Lorraine was a panel member at the recent Regional Arts Conference Artlands. The panels discussed creating successful programming partnerships that connect communities, schools and arts organisations. The project *Ngulagambilanha: to be returning home* brought together creativity, language and country. The second panel was a masterclass on *Activating the Lawful Relationships between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous People*.

Casey Ankers has a background in metalwork, community broadcasting and community cultural development. Casey now spends time designing gardens, raising her children, talking to her chicken, thinking about art and doing way too much housework.



*Yinaagalang Walambang (Women Very Strong)*, 2016-17, video, weaving, wooden branch

# EMMA PILTZ

**1981**

**Lives in Narrandera**

*Threadscapes* evoke the colours of my immediate landscape that overlooks the Murrumbidgee River. The gentle marks and soft bush dyed fabric remind me that nothing is permanent. The works are moments in my time-scape and an attempt to capture the energy of the river.

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Emma Piltz is an emerging artist who is interested in the collection of objects to suggest a greater and deeper meaning of the intangible. Her work involves installations created from these collections often made using natural materials or ephemeral in nature, making the work temporal and subject the change and decay over time.



*Threadscapes* (detail), 2016-17, fabric, stitching and found objects

# GAIL MANDERSON

1952

Lives in Wagga Wagga

*Lockie, Fleur and the Emu* are a series of dolls that mark a new direction for Aunty Gail's life-long passion for making art and sharing culture\* most notably through her generous hospitality. It makes perfect sense that her passion for preparing food and weaving baskets that carry many stories, would become story-doll-portraits of significant people in her life. After receiving a book published around 1970 on making generic 'Australian Aboriginal' dolls, Aunty Gail was inspired to make her own first dolls which were sold to an enthusiastic audience at the Blak Arts Markets, Carriageworks in Sydney last year. This new doll is Fleur (a yinna) and the dinawan (emu) she is hunting with her child (bali) includes a version of a Ngarrindjeri Scoop (a basket – form used by women for food gathering that has been recently adapted and adopted by Wiradjuri Elders to become a symbol of the local revival of lost, traditional Wiradjuri woven forms). Fleur is also wearing a possum skin cloak (buwurr) and carrying a dilly bag for collecting emu eggs (dinawan marrumg) and net once used to capture the fast moving dinawan that roamed the country around Wagga in large numbers until colonisation. Fleur is one of many dolls to follow that combine traditional stories of Wiradjuri culture and language with portraits of significant people in Aunty Gail's Wiradjuri community.

\*In 2016 Aunty Gail made a large series of baskets that carried Wiradjuri language stitched into the body of the baskets. Made as part of her study for the completion of the Graduate Certificate in Wiradjuri Language, Culture and Heritage, the baskets are used to teach language to children in local primary schools; a responsibility as Elder, Aunty Gail has undertaken for over a decade.

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Aunty Gail Manderson is a Wiradjuri Elder who has been a practicing artist her whole life. She teaches Wiradjuri cultural arts and weaving in local schools as well as being an Aboriginal support person with the Wagga Wagga Police. Aunty Gail began weaving in 2010, when the Wagga Wagga Art Gallery had an outreach program that helped revive traditional weaving practices within the Wagga community for local Aboriginal Elders and young women. Since then, Aunty Gail has exhibited in five major exhibitions at the Wagga Wagga Art Gallery. Her works are included in the collections of the Australian Museum, Sydney and Bunjilaka, Museum of Victoria as well as weavings in private collections in Australia, New York and Seattle, USA. Aunty Gail has recently completed a Graduate Certificate in Wiradjuri Language, Culture and Heritage at Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga.



*Lockie, Fleur and the Emu*, 2016-17, fabric, wool, threads, vinyl, metal armatures, possum skin, jute, raffia, dirt, leaf litter

# HAYLEY WHEATON

**1986**

**Lives in Wagga Wagga**

In the series *feed*, I am exploring the image dense, media space that we are constantly connected to via our smart phones. To reflect this, I have taken images on my smart phone and presented them out of context, on a gallery wall, in a scrolling social media style news feed.

We live in a time of having an option, via social media, to tailor our media intake. In a space full of imagery, we can choose to view what we find fun, engaging, informative or motivating. We have the option to control our imagery and choose not to follow anything that does not nourish us.

In *feed*, the beautiful, small, modest, everyday imagery becomes my focus; the overlooked frame that would not even be considered for the social media space.

After all, beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

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Hayley Wheaton is an artist fascinated by external and internal environments. She is intrigued by how they interact, blend and infuse with each other to create intense emotions and thoughts, that ultimately lead to who we become. Creating art becomes a continual exploration and visual navigation of shifting identity, dependent on social and psychological factors.



*feed*, 2016-2017, photograph

# JACKO MEYERS

**1982**

**Lives in Wagga Wagga**

I drew pictures of Blue Heelers because I love Inspector Monica Draper. She's a tough girl, and I like that.

I drew pictures of Home and Away because I love Pippa Fletcher. She reminds me of my supervisor at work Cathy Boydton.

I drew pictures of Neighbours because I love the Robinson family. I like that they talk together as a family.

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Jacko Meyers is an artist who is interested in painting, drawing and performing. Jacko has played leading roles in the All Ability Theatre Company productions. She has featured in the film *Love Ability* created by Zeb Shulz and in the SBS 2 story *Living With Down Syndrome*. In 2013 Jacko was part of the *8 Artists* exhibition at Wagga Wagga Art Gallery and was an ambassador for Don't Dis My Ability. In 2015 she was a performer and contributing artist in *Nothing Is Useless*, run by Real Art Works at the Wagga Wagga Art Gallery. Jacko is part of the supported studio the Art Factory, where she has held exhibitions in Dubbo for the Regional Arts Australia Conference, Artlands and at the Wagga Wagga Art Gallery.



*Pippa Fletcher*, 2016, pencil on paper

# JORDY BOS

**1995**

**Lives in Coolamon**

This canvas is an extension of my first solo exhibition *Into the Fold*. The exhibition consisted of solely black and white sculptures and canvases incorporating paper in uniformed geometric patterns and shapes. This work marks a slightly different direction in my practice, as the conical shapes give a certain softness and flow as they rotate around the form.

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Jordy Bos is an emerging artist based on a farm, outside the small rural town of Coolamon, NSW. Jordy is a sculptor who uses the medium of paper to explore the structural components of repetition and geometric patterns. Her experimental approach aims to push the capabilities and limits of paper in varying scales and directions across two and three dimensional objects.

Jordy has exhibited regularly in local art exhibitions within the Riverina. She has won the Coolamon Up-to-Date art exhibition twice and has been part of multiple group exhibitions. In 2016, Jordy held her first solo exhibition, *Into the Fold*, after receiving an Arts NSW Young Regional Artist Scholarship.



*Disassociate*, 2016, paper on canvas

# JULIE MONTGARRETT + SARAH MCEWAN

**1955 & 1979**

**Lives in Wagga Wagga & Sandigo**

*The Daily Diminish* is exploring the everyday sexist comments that often pass unrecorded and unremarked in the lives of women. This artwork is placing a spotlight on how ubiquitous comments, however seemingly mild, work to undermine women and are often used as a social reprimand if someone believes you are not performing your gender ‘correctly.’

These comments have been bleached onto black cloth; as cloth and bleach are intimately bound to the domestic female experience. Stitched or painted in red is how these comments make women feel.

To make this artwork, Julie and Sarah sought the collective help of women to share their lived experience, in order to create a full and broad range of voices coming across in the artwork. This approach to making is bound in the philosophy of art for social change and artists energised by the involvement of the collective community. What you see presented are a small selection of the 168 comments collected over June and July in 2016.

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Julie Montgarrett and Sarah McEwan collaborate as artists or artist-curators to highlight the common place issues around gender and lived experience. With nuanced consideration, they challenge the subliminal through to the overt ways Western philosophy and history has shaped our collective consciousness to place hierarchies and binaries on people, places and objects.

Julie Montgarrett is a lecturer in Creative Arts and Design at Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga. She has exhibited in over 70 solo and group exhibitions, public art commissions, site-specific installations, costume design and production and community-based arts projects in Australia and internationally since 1977.

Sarah McEwan is the Creative Producer of the Cad Factory. She creates solo work, as well as collaborating with artists, community members and young people in gallery spaces or site-specific locations. She recently received an Arts NSW Regional Fellowship to examine the historical position of women and the way women have been presented through Western visual culture.



*The Daily Diminish* (detail), 2016, cloth, bleach, paint, thread

# KATH WITHERS

**1949**

## Lives in Wagga Wagga

This larger than life brush, measuring 2.4 metres in length, is the newest member of a growing family of far smaller, 'wild brushes' produced in recent years as tools to create an unpredictable repertoire of marks to trace and echo the lines, marks and textures of country to paper and cloth. The materials include branches, twigs, grasses, reeds, feathers, charcoal and hand-made string gathered on country and carefully wrapped and tied to create hand-held brushes or dabbers and as beautiful objects with a life of their own.

This giant brush was imagined after Aunty Kath saw the 'perfect' wild brush handle in her garden. After asking the gardener to leave the plant alone, the gardener replied, 'Lady, I've been gardening for 20 years and that plant is dead. It ain't coming back to life!' To which Aunty Kath replied, 'I can make all kinds of things come alive again...'.

This brush and all of Aunty Kath's paintings, prints, weavings and drawings are evidence of the depth of her imagination and creative capacity for making her culture, memory and stories resonate through all her artworks to enrich everyone's lives.

Dhalang, yalmambirra, yalbilinya, bundyi (today, teach, learn, share).

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Kath Withers known to many as Aunty Kath is a Wiradjuri Elder. An accomplished artist, Kath often creates through painting, printmaking and weaving to tell the stories of her life and dreaming. She has been a finalist in the prestigious Telstra Awards in Darwin, the Alice Prize and the NSW Parliament Aboriginal Art Prize. She has work held in numerous collections internationally and nationally including the Melbourne Museum, Australia Museum and Museum Victoria.

Kath is passionate about sharing her culture and helping her community. She is currently in her seventh year of the *Colourful Dreaming Program* at Junee Correctional Centre to ensure inmates continue to build meaningful relationships with their children through art making.

Kath has been a foster carer for over 100 children since her early twenties. Her tireless community work has been recognised through the Lifetime Achievement Award at the NAIDOC awards in Wagga Wagga in 2016.



*Wild Brush Breaming*, 2016-17, assorted found materials from on country, bush string, wool, emu feathers, assorted scarves

# LINDIE MANNION

**1962**

## **Lives in Wagga Wagga**

*Noughts & Crosses* is based on the collective memories of my family. My mother, now aged 94, and my siblings hand wrote out snippets of their memories while growing up on our family farm, "Munsterfield". My late father's written note, based on farm budget figures, is also included. From this I enlarged the text and made nine large photographs. One of the photographs contains a mix-up of noughts and crosses, which shows that memories can be random, varied, layered and intertwining.

I investigated three main types of memories. Firstly, mind or patina memories that have aged, being embellished over time - layered. Secondly, the random or unexpected memories – beautiful moments of reflection that come to you "out of the blue". Lastly, memories that are triggered by tangible physical objects, especially by their associated tactile feel.

The organza hanging in front of the text photographs creates a veil or layer, demonstrating that sometimes our memories are hazy - not crystal clear. Noughts and crosses are placed on the organza by piercing the fabric with rusty safety pins, symbolising that we try to hold onto our memories- some memories maybe be jagged like the cross formation, or safe and continuous like the circle formation.

The old tin suitcase holds the original letters from my mother, late father and siblings; emphasising that memories can be original in format and can later be copied or embellished. The suitcase itself represents travel and time passing, a container or vessel holding documented memories.

Shadows and light also are important factors in this piece, with the shadows from the safety pin noughts and crosses, falling over the photograph game; symbolising that we have numerous memories - far too many and varied to pigeon hole - unlike the noughts and cross game, where the crosses line up and form a complete line of memories. The rust on the safety pins represents how time moves on, corroding, eating away.... We try to hold onto our special memories for as long as possible; sharing with others and especially those of the next generation in the family.

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Lindie Mannion is a textile artist whose arts practice revolves around rural life, being heavily influenced by growing up on her family farm called "Munsterfield", located in the district of Methul, half way between Coolamon and Ariah Park. Her work explores the deep relationships rural people have with the land; investigating and probing the issues of physical, spiritual and emotional connections.



*Noughts & Crosses* (detail of photograph), 2016-17, photographs, hand written letters, old tin suitcase, organza, safety pins, hanging header

# MELINDA SCHILLER

**1971**

**Lives in Wagga Wagga**

This year I have decided to continue with the theme of Scar Trees. I met with local Wiradjuri man, James Ingram, and together we drove to different sites, where he shared his knowledge in regards to 11 Scar Trees. At each location, I photographed the trees and documented my feelings. The work in this exhibition presents my initial research into three trees; as I have discovered that this is a much longer and bigger project that I will slowly work through.

My approach to documenting the trees has been to photograph, sketch and take rubbings using paint, charcoal, pastels or graphite onto rice paper or canvas. I have also document the exact location, recorded sounds and my feelings about the trees.

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Melinda Schiller is an Aboriginal artist who grew up in Wiradjuri country on a farm near Temora and relocated to Wagga in 1993. She is a self-taught artist who began painting in 2012 and has since participated in exhibitions in NSW and Victoria. Melinda's work is looking at social themes in society such as care, community and treatment of the natural world. Her art stands for fairness, empowerment, acceptance, respect and family.



*Scar Trees 1, 2, 10*, 2016-17, photographs, rice paper, canvas, graphite, charcoal

# NATALIE LOUISE POWER

**1974**

**Lives in Wagga Wagga**

Natalie Louise Power's art making practice is always evolving and revolving old and new elements from previous works and found objects. The central images, motifs and narratives in her work, circle around life/death/life cycles. Her work is process driven; constantly experimenting using paper and fabric to cut, incise, print, stitch and burn. What might seem soft and delicate can also be strong and powerful. Natalie's work is often ephemeral, emerging over periods of time and then submerging only to resurface and recreate a new cycle of emerging and submerging; Life, Death, Life.

This is the third and final install of *Tellus*, completing a 20 year life cycle. Natalie's first solo exhibition *Names Will Never Hurt Me* was in 1997 at the HR Gallop Gallery, Yirayin, followed another ten years later in 2007. Some of the remains of those installations are tangible in *Tellus III*, where Natalie has been digging up fragments and remains of previous work and embedding them into a new construct of cycles based on the number three.

This life cycle of imagery will come to an end in December 2017 with a final closure of the work, another solo exhibition, *Vigil*, held at the HR Gallop Gallery.

---

Natalie Louise Power is a conceptual visual and performing artist and educator. She has lived and worked all over Australia and overseas, but continues to always find her way back to the Riverina area where she grew up and studied. Natalie graduated from CSU with a Bachelor of Visual Arts in 1998 and a Graduate Diploma in Secondary Education in 2006. In 2009 she opened her own business "Eilatan Enterprises" Empower Emerge Emancipate, that combined her passion of the Arts and Education.



*Tellus III* (detail), 2017, deconstructing works *Names Will Never Hurt Me* from 1997 and *Yirayin* from 2007. Reconstructing the series of work *Tellus I*, *Tellus II*, from 2015 - 16, paper, thread, print, fabric, stones, mirrors

# SARAH MIFSUD

**1986**

**Lives in Wagga Wagga**

My photographs explore the complex relationship between self, self-concept and identity and highlight how exposure, vulnerability, grotesqueness, and intimacy within my work serve as a means to expand our cultural ideals for the human body. I investigate a multitude of dualities in two-dimensional form by using photography and digital manipulation. Utilising the ‘imperfections’ within my own body to create dramatic imagery, anomalous shapes frequently appearing reminiscent of landscape or animals, than human form.

Looking beyond the details of the image, this body of work explores the nature of the creative process in art, reality, appearance and creative disposition; to highlight the relationship between art and psychology in relation to promoting or impeding the creative process to identify art as a universal experience.

Through the art-making process and exploration of the artwork, unconscious and conscious thoughts, feelings and fantasies can be expressed. Thus, a unique relationship between art and psychology presented itself, as an alternative medium for expression and communication. When reflecting upon the photographic self-portraits created I find myself questioning and analysing the philosophical and psychological considerations of art, both as author and audience; as a way of exploring new ways to communicate an emotional state.

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Sarah Mifsud currently holds a Bachelor of Arts (Graphic Design/Photography) and Master of Arts Practice with specialisation (Photo-media) while also working as a freelance designer and photographer for over seven years with a focus on design for not-for-profit organisations as well as a practicing artist exhibiting work in Sydney, Melbourne and Wagga Wagga.



*Portrayal and Paradigm*, 2017, photograph

# VICKY OKOT

1995

**Lives in Wagga Wagga**

To be black is to be proud, strong and beautiful. However, when it comes to media and the cosmetics industry, mainstream beauty is aimed at women with fair skin. Most make up companies do not cater for dark skinned women; which I see as a failure of the industry, and sends a message that fair skin is more desirable. This is also articulated through the lack of representation of dark skinned people in the media.

There are many issues that can arise from this stereotype; such as self-hate or low self-esteem, and to some degree, a rejection of culture, which can lead women and girls of colour to alter the way they look. This can lead to skin bleaching.

Skin bleaching, the use of chemical substances to try to lighten skin tone by reducing the amount of melanin in the skin, is a taboo topic within the African community, and is not openly talked about. Perhaps there is a feeling of embarrassment or guilt?

To bleach one's self is a personal experience, however when children are bleached by their parents or teenage girls are pressured to use bleaching product on their skin, this raises concern, in terms of the physical and psychological affect it can have on the individual. Most people alter their appearance as a means of getting validation from society, but beauty is something that radiates from the inside. Natural beauty is based on how you feel and see yourself, not how others see you.

The history of Africa, in relation to colonisation, has distorted the way many Africans perceive themselves and beauty. These perceptions have been passed down from generation to generation.

This artwork is dedicated to all the dark skinned women and girls. We need to embrace our blackness and not be ashamed of our natural colour. We must stand together against racism and sexism and know our melanin is something with no price tag.

---

Vicky Okot is originally from South Sudan and arrived in Australia in 2005. Vicky began learning photographic techniques during workshops run by dLux Media over 2013 -15. These workshops allowed Vicky to produce her first series of artworks in 2014 called *Traditional African Portraits: Remixed*. Her artworks focus on representation of black women and girls, to empower them to be fearless and embrace their individuality and self-worth.



*Melaninated*, 2017, photograph

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The three exhibitions have been a partnership between the Cad Factory and Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga Campus.



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THE CAD FACTORY AND WESTERN RIVERINA ARTS ARE SUPPORTED BY THE NSW GOVERNMENT THROUGH ARTS NSW:



We'd like to acknowledge the artists Corrie Furner and Jo Roberts, who were part of the 2015 and 2016 exhibitions.

RE//CREATING is presented at the Narrandera Arts Centre as part of the project *Activating Narrandera Arts*, produced by Western Riverina Arts. Narrandera Arts Centre is a facility of Narrandera Council.

A special thank you to the many people who have supported the project and the artists over the three years to help create such a wonderful series of events.

Thank you to our guest speakers Jan Roberts OAM (2015), Jacqueline Millner (2016) and Elvis Richardson (2017) who have placed the exhibitions within a larger social and visual arts context.