

CASE Incubator

Tie Together:
A Resource
Harriet Body

The Cad Factory studios are on the ancient, unceded Wiradjuri lands of the Narrungderah people, and the ancient and unceded Eora lands of the Gadigal people, who have taken care of this country for over 60,000 years.

The Cad Factory is an artist-led organisation based in Sandigo, NSW. This regional hub serves as our administrative and creative home. We also operate a small satellite studio in the inner-city suburb of Rosebery, Sydney. From our rural and urban locations, we aim to reimagine the world through contemporary art practices, developing projects across Australia and internationally.



What is the CASE Incubator Studio?

The CASE (Contemporary Art Socially Engaged) Incubator Studio is a national hub for the development of cross-disciplinary, socially engaged art practices. With a focus on the creation of new artworks, professional development and resource creation. The CASE Incubator Studio is a significant commitment to the collective and individual development of a vibrant, safe and artistically adventurous, socially engaged ecosystem.

What is this resource?

In 2024, the Cad Factory launched the CASE Incubator Studio at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. At this event, CASE Incubator program alumna, Harriet Body, facilitated a socially engaged making experience with audience members. She turned the results of this experience into an embroidered wall hanging and this accompanying text. Together, these two elements form *Tie Together*.

Tie Together, outlines a journey taken by Harriet Body, supported by the artwork participants and Sarah and Vic McEwan. It communicates the journey through both the textile piece and this document—which shares the vulnerability, doubt, enthusiasm, perseverance, connection and care experienced by Harriet while creating this work.

YOU ARE INVITED

CASE Incubator Studio Launch

Wednesday 21 February
7pm - 8pm
Meers Hall, North Building
Art Gallery of NSW


Socially engaged art is an act of care, a type of practice where ethics and aesthetics converge to explore the social, cultural, political, environmental, and economic contexts that shape people and communities.

Join Dr Lindy Hume AO, Wesley Shaw (AGNSW Head of Learning and Participation) artist-led organisation the Cad Factory and nine socially engaged artists for the launch of the Cad Factory's CASE Incubator Studio – a new national hub for the development of socially engaged art practices.

ARTISTS: Sunita Bala, Harriet Body, Diane Busuttill, Sarah Penicka-Smith, And Then, Karenza Ebejer, Tom Isaacs, Rhae Kendrigan

6pm-7pm: Drop-in art making with Harriet Body
7pm-8pm: Launch
8pm-9pm: Drop-in art making with Harriet Body

The CASE Incubator Program and the Cad Factory are supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW. The CASE Incubator Studio has been assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body.



Biography

Harriet Body is a socially engaged artist based in Kamberri/Canberra on Ngunnawal and Ngambri Country whose practice is centred around community, education, and care. In her studio she works with textiles and ceramics, materials with a rich history in domestic, collaborative, and community settings. She received major project funding from Create NSW in 2015, 2018 and 2021 with which she explored collaboration and disability within the supported studio context, and embarked on a twelve-month community engagement project with Goulburn Regional Art Gallery.

Harriet's socially engaged practice extends to the work she does as an artist educator, a role she has been working in for over a decade, first at the Museum of Contemporary Art on Gadigal land, Sydney, and now at the National Gallery of Australia. Harriet views artist educator practice as a participatory, ephemeral and collaborative creative experience between artist educator, participant, artwork and environment.

harrietbody.com



Harriet Body
Photo courtesy of the artist

A text to Sarah McEwan

Saturday, Dec 16 • 4:04 PM

I just left a message that was a bit harried and not very clear. Was wondering if we could think about running some sort of connected making space as a part of the launch in Feb. I would be happy to run it, but would love to chat to you and Vic about what you think and nut out some ideas? Just in light of how drained and isolated and overwhelmed the art community is at the mo (as illustrated by the mother artist chat and other happenings online). Might not fit in with your ideas and maybe too late in terms of planning. But thought it might be a nice gesture and potentially allow some space to release some grief or unresolved feelings....?

A phone call with Vic McEwan

...
Maybe I get everyone to draw a line then I'll embroider those lines. I want to offer something that brings people together, and that documents that moment? Encouraging human connection in a time when disconnection seems rife.

I often think about the distribution of labour in making socially engaged work. What is the responsibility of artist and participant? Maybe contributing a line to a canvas by a group of people can be a fun and social moment of connection, and then my labour of stitching that line, stretching it to eternity, caring for it... is the work of being an artist.

...
Yes we'd love to support you in making this. It would make sense to have an example of socially engaged art in practice at the launch.

Would you say the work is symbolic of socially engaged art? Or IS IT socially engaged art?

...
I'm not actually sure. Perhaps it's symbolic. Is symbolic ok?

...
I think there is a space for both... but maybe it's important to contextualise that from the outset. So that participants know what is expected from them. This might be a good topic for discussion with the group at our next meeting?



The event

Little mounds of small disc-shaped ceramic beads on a trestle table.
I made them by pressing my thumb against clay.

Each bead is threaded with a length of embroidery floss: pinks, greens, yellows, and blues.

A 12-seater round table is covered with linen canvas.
There are also markers.

Simon, an employee of the Art Gallery of NSW, is there to help sew.

People arrive.

I say to each visitor:

“Take two beads. Sign them both: you could do this by writing your name, or initials, or by drawing a picture, anything that allows you to claim the two beads as your own.”

“You can contribute one of the beads to this canvas, and give the other bead to someone here in the room tonight.”

“Now, using a marker, draw a line on the canvas. Look at the lines that others have already contributed, and think about how your line might exist alongside those other lines. Does it intersect through other lines? Does it embrace or contribute to the line of another? Does it exist in its own personal space? Draw your line, then Simon will help you to thread and tie your bead to the end of your line, like a signature.”

“After this event, I’ll take this canvas back to my studio and, using the coloured thread that you’ve chosen, embroider a shadow right next to the line that you’ve drawn.”



Making Tie Together at the launch of the CASE Incubator Studio at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, 21 February 2024.
Photos: Kimberley Beattie and Martin Fox

An email to contributors

Hi there,

I'm emailing to thank you for contributing to the artwork, *Tie Together*, that I was facilitating as a part of the CASE Incubator Studio launch at the AGNSW two weeks ago.

As some of you will know, I am one of the alumni CASE Incubator Program artists (2021/22). As a part of my involvement, I'm developing a resource that represents my understanding of Socially Engaged Art. *Tie Together* is that resource.

My intention for this resource/artwork is to explore connection between the people who found themselves in the room that night. The vast majority of you were there to attend the CASE Incubator Studio launch with a professional interest. There were also friends and family in attendance and curious passers-by. I am very curious about every one of you.

Your drawing on the canvas was a symbolic means of exploring this connection - observing how your individual lines relate to one another and the choices you each made in contributing to the canvas. The gifting of the beads was another method of encouraging connection between two people in the one space.

Given the success of the process that we undertook at the AGNSW, I am hoping to expand a little on my original intention and would like to invite you to a one off, informal, group Zoom session on Wednesday 20 March at 11:30am.

The aim of this session is to connect in conversation around our shared curiosity in socially engaged art. I am anticipating that I'll contribute quotes from this meeting as embroidered text on the *Tie Together* artwork.

Tie Together is being made with and for people who have a hand in the creation, development, administration and participation of socially-engaged art. I'm hoping the artwork/resource will offer an insight into us as a collective and that the zoom call will be a place where we can connect.

Details of the zoom call:

When: Wednesday 20 March 11:30am (AEDT)

Where: On Zoom

What: I'll be facilitating a conversation about socially engaged art. Come prepared with an answer to the question "how did you come to be at the launch of the CASE Incubator Studio?"

RSVP via reply email.

With very best wishes,
Harriet.

Only three people respond. None were available to meet.



Tie Together in the studio. Photo: Harriet Body

A phone call to Sarah McEwan

...
I get why people didn't respond. I think it goes back to that idea of labour and expectation. There was never an expectation of a zoom meeting to begin with, and these are busy people! I think the work is quite beautiful, but I worry that it isn't meaningful. Maybe the action on the night was enjoyable, or an ice breaker, or just something for people to participate in... but then what? How does this work exist as something bigger than that?

...
Vic and I talk about this stuff all the time. I think we should remember the value of a work of art. How much meaning is held within the resulting work. This work lives on as a document of each individual who attended that launch. And maybe, as an exhibited work, it speaks to a deeper understanding of connection.

...
Have I become so intimate with the work through the many hours I've spent stitching, that it's become too entwined with my own individual experience? I'm worried that the work is becoming too separate from the community who created it.



Tie Together, detail. Photo: Vic McEwan

An email to Sarah and Vic McEwan

Hello there!

I've been writing a supplementary document for *Tie Together*. The intention for it is to make transparent the process, ponderings, anxieties, and relationships that went into making the work.

It's in its draft stage.

I've included remembered conversations with the both of you in the document. They are heavily paraphrased from my own memory of those conversations.

Let me know what you think and if you are OK with me doing this? Very happy to go another route if you aren't comfortable.

If you are cool with it all, then please take a look and if you remember our conversation in another way, then I thought you could include your edits as a 'comment' in the document? Just click view>comments>show all comments. Then highlight what you want to edit, and click 'add comment'.

I'm thinking of this document as the innards of *Tie Together*.

Hope it's ok to ask you to do this! Just when you have a spare moment? (Ha!)

The final email to participants in the document is a draft and I haven't sent it yet. Wondering your thoughts?

Here it is!

Let me know what you think!

Also, Sarah, was Martin able to salvage any of the video footage of the work being made? I wonder if it's been scrubbed....

Was so nice to see your faces on Monday! Looking forward to the next one.

:)
Harriet. xooo



Tie Together, detail. Photo: Vic McEwan



Documenting *Tie Together*, at the CASE Incubator Studio. Photo: Harriet Body

A conversation with Vic and Sarah

...
I still worry about this work. I want more from it. Is it maybe a little vapid? I think it's quite beautiful, but I wish I had more time with the contributors.

...
Well Harriet, you're used to making work with people over long periods of time. This is very different to that.

...
Yeah, and you have done what you said you were going to do, which was to capture a moment by making work with attendees at the CASE Incubator launch.

...
That's true. I wanted to create something in a very specific moment with the people who were in that moment. So I did achieve what I wanted. But I wish that I was able to get to know all the different people. All I know of most of them is through a line and a signature. But I suppose, yes, that was the intention all along.

...
I don't think the work is a failure at all, Harriet. It's maybe more of a discovery than you think.

...
I don't see it as vapid. But perhaps it's work that has allowed you to come to an important realisation about your practice.

...
I want to get to know people. I want my work to be about relationships and community. I was curious about what can be achieved in a moment with a group of people, and I see how this work has been successful in observing that, but it has also made me realise something important about the work that I want to be making.

Tie Together: the finished artwork



Tie Together, texta, cotton thread and ceramic beads on linen canvas.
Contributed to by attendees of the launch of the CASE Incubator Studio
at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, 21 February 2024, 180cm diameter.
Photo: Vic McEwan



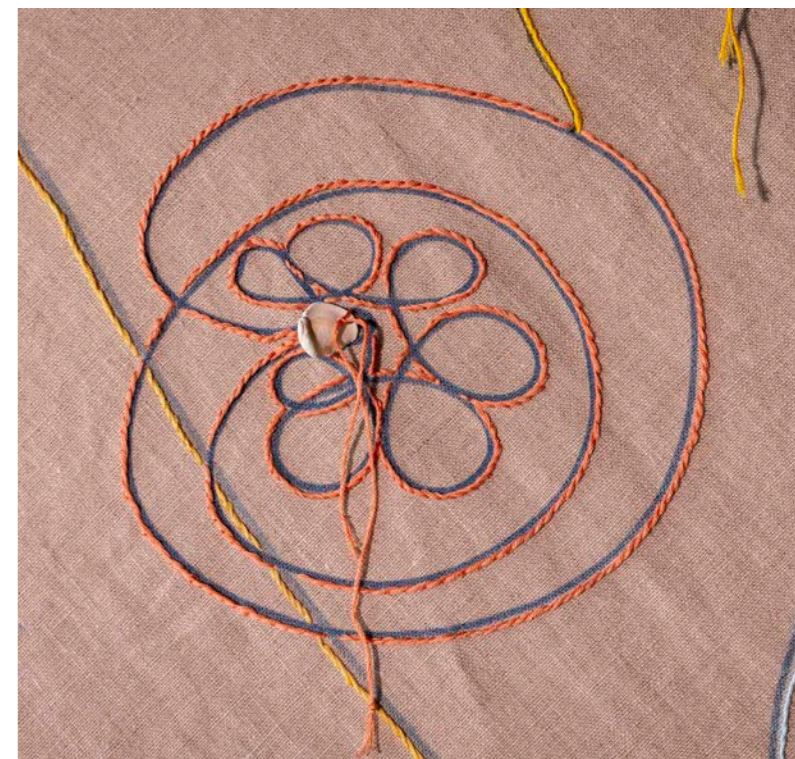
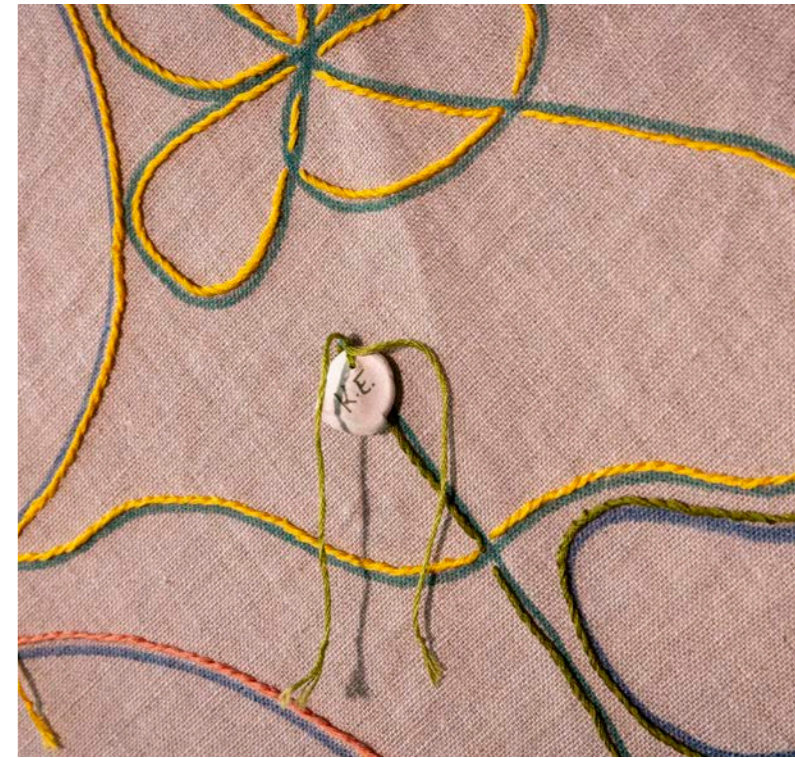
Detail of ceramic beads tied onto the artwork.
Photos: Harriet Body

A reflection

At the very beginning of this project, Vic asked me if my proposal was to create something socially engaged, or something symbolic of socially engaged practice. I said that I thought it was symbolic. I do believe the work is successful in its intended purpose. It documents a meeting of strangers. It speaks to the ways that people might move around and interact with one another. It is an artefact that examines collective action; people meeting in a moment; working together towards a common goal.

However, the action of slowly embroidering each individual's mark over months caused me to feel further estranged from them. The longer I spent on their lines, the more I longed for their continued input. I wanted more of that energy of connection that I felt on the night of the work's genesis.

It was interesting to find that very first text message I wrote to Sarah McEwan proposing this project. The message referred to my realisation that human connection on social media, a lonely and cruel place responsible for the mental anguish of so many, is fraught. Reflecting on that first text message, I was reminded of the seed of this project: wanting to offer the experience of human connection to the artists and arts workers that attended an event about Socially Engaged Art. To facilitate this thing that allowed people to create something beautiful together.



Tie Together, details. Photos: Vic McEwan

An email to contributors

Hi there,

Way back in February this year you contributed to the artwork, Tie Together, that I was facilitating as a part of the Cad Factory CASE Incubator Studio launch at the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

I have finally completed the work! I have attached an image to this email.

I was commissioned by the Cad Factory to create this artwork as a resource for the sector that demonstrates one idea around socially engaged art. I'm also working on a document that is an artwork in itself, and is meant to be presented in tandem with the embroidery piece.

You can find this part of the artwork, here.

I've been very curious about all of you as I've spent many hours with the lines that you drew. The majority of you are strangers to me. I hoped I could get a little more information about you to perhaps gain a more indepth context to the work.

I would be so grateful if you could reply to this email with a response to the question:

'How did you come to be at the launch of the CASE Incubator studio?'

Maybe you were there for a professional interest? Maybe you are a friend or family member? Maybe you just happened to come by?

Please be as detailed or as brief as you like. I will include your responses in the table at the bottom of the supplementary document that I linked to above. You may see that I've already begun to populate the table with responses.

This document will become a downloadable PDF on the Cad Factory website as a part of the CASE Incubator suite of resources.

Once again, thank you so much for contributing to the work and for passing on your email address for future updates.

I will be in touch with where you can see this work exhibited, in time.

With the very best of wishes,

Harriet.



Name	<u>How did you come to be at the launch of the CASE Incubator Studio?</u>
Harriet Body	<p>I am one of the alumni CASE Incubator Program artists (2021/22). As a part of my involvement I'm developing a resource, in the form of an artwork, that represents my understanding of socially engaged art. Part of this was facilitating an artmaking activity at the launch. This document is another part of that resource.</p> <p>I also work as the Creative Learning Convener at the National Gallery of Australia and was interested in hearing from Panel contributor, Wesley Shaw about the AGNSW Djamu Youth Justice, Barkandji Canoe Project.</p>
Sarah McEwan	<p>I am the Creative Producer of the Cad Factory. We developed the idea of a CASE Incubator Studio after the first year of running the CASE Incubator program that Harriet was a part of. It was an unexpected outcome of the program! The CASE alumni are incredible artists. Through many long conversations with them, and our experience of making socially engaged work and understanding the sector, we decided that a studio, or hub, is a way to push the development of this kind of art making. Vic McEwan, Lachlan Herd and I dreamed of having a final event at a significant Sydney institution in early 2022 as a celebration and recognition of the work people are achieving within socially engaged practices and to conclude the CASE Incubator program. It felt so wonderful to achieve an outcome like this within the AGNSW.</p>
Sarah Penicka-Smith	<p>I applied for the first CASE Incubator Residency run by the Cad Factory, when I realised the art they were talking about was the same kind of art I made. That application led me to the launch of the Studio - and hopefully to much more.</p>
Di Busuttil	<p>I am one of the alumni CASE Incubator Program artists (2021/22). It was a big event where we all met (first and second-year alumni) and it was a special event to launch The CASE studio and the resource booklet.</p> <p>On the day, I was aware of Vic and the MC but had no previous knowledge of Wesley Shaw or the work he does and was awe-struck to hear about the work he is doing. It made me very happy to know that he is in this position (at the Art Gallery) and has the power to initiate such programs to better the conditions of young Indigenous people.</p>

Inara Molinari	<p>I saw the "ad" for the CASE Incubator Program and immediately thought of my colleague and co-worker Sarah Penicka-Smith, Artistic Director of River City Voices.</p> <p>Sarah epitomises an artist/musician who has social awareness at the core of her practice. So I flicked it to her and the rest is history!</p> <p>Sarah then invited me and my husband to come to the launch - I was keen to support her and curious to see a presentation of what all the artists had been up to during the course of that residency.</p>
Julia Sideris	<p>I came with my partner who was very interested in the Cad Factory and is now part of the mini mentorship program.</p>
Rochelle Summerfield	<p>I am an artist from Northern NSW. I live SW of Grafton on the Clarence River. My arts practice is deeply influenced by my experiences and connections to the river and streams where I live. I was in Sydney for an artist residency that was located on the Georges River. The CAD discussion interested me as I am part of an artist group Hopeful Disruptions, and we work with cross currents of culture and country.</p>
Susannah Thorne	<p>My interest in attending the launch was a combination of both personal and professional enquiry. I was keen to hear more about socially engaged art practice in Sydney. My primary goal was to further connect with the artist and engage directly with the work having previously worked with Harriet over a number of years. It was a very positive and inspiring experience!</p>
Michelle Jersky	<p>I am a program manager (Arts in Health & Community Development) at Sydney Children's Hospital Network in Randwick. I work with a team to deliver the Ngala Nanga Mai pARenT Group Program in La Perouse. I was keen to support the work being delivered by the Cad Factory and celebrate the Case Incubator Program graduates!</p>
Mel Penicka-Smith	<p>I was at the CASE Incubator launch as the Launch Producer. I met Vic and Sarah McEwan through my wife, Sarah Penicka-Smith, an alumni of the first CASE Incubator Residency. I'd been fortunate previously to be invited by Vic and Sarah to work on a couple of other Cad Factory projects at Pinnaroo and Narrandera.</p>
Kate Beckingham	<p>I came to be at the event at AGNSW as I work there and it has been a long time since I have gotten to see your work in person. I was one of the first people to add my line to the fabric. It was funny, at the time, watching other people do their lines, I thought it was a big mess but now seeing the actual embroidered piece, it is really beautiful!</p>

Fourteen months after the event

I'm chatting with a friend who was at the launch with her partner. She tells me about an argument that she and her partner had prior to arriving at the launch. She tells me that contributing to *Tie Together* helped them to make amends.

I remember this:

She drew her line first: A spiral. He was elsewhere: getting a drink, chatting with friends. She left and he arrived ready for his turn. He drew his line second: a slowly drawn adjoining line inside of his partner's spiral, lines hugging, tracing, following one another.

"That's sweet" I had said. "Did you know that was her line?"

"I didn't," he had said. And he smiled.

Sixteen months after the event

The Cad Factory invites me to contribute *Tie Together* to their exhibition at Murray Art Museum Albury called, *The View from Everywhere: 20 Years and Beyond*, that's open from 30 May to 17 August 2025.



The View from Everywhere: 20 Years and Beyond at Murray Art Museum Albury.
Photo: Kimberley Beattie

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Tie Together: A Resource
Artist and Author: Harriet Body
Design and Edit: Sarah McEwan
Support: Vic McEwan,
Kimberley Beattie



The Cad Factory is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW.