

2022 Dobell Exhibition Grant

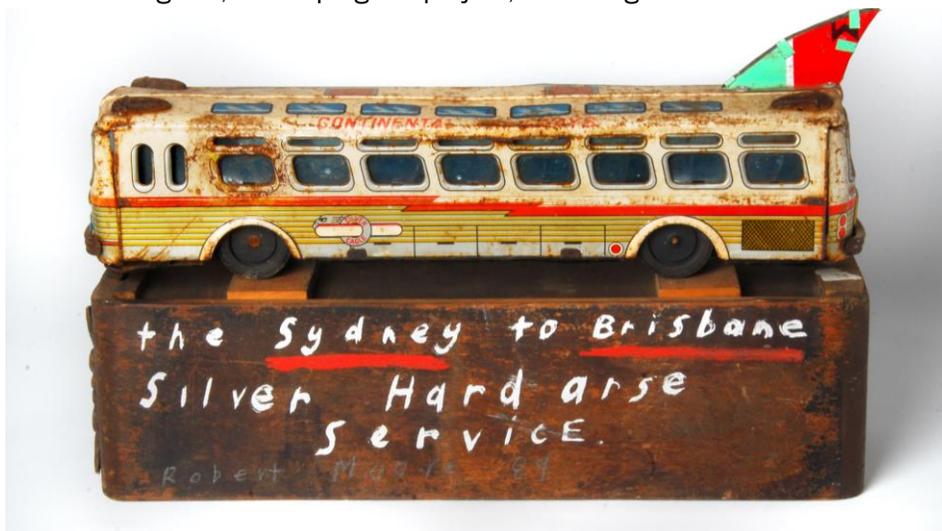
This year's round of the Dobell Exhibition Grant was assessed on Wednesday 20 October 2021 by a four-member panel consisting of:

- Brett Adlington, CEO Museums & Galleries of NSW
- Michelle Belgiorno, Trustee, Sir William Dobell Art Foundation
- Paul Howard, Curator and Collection Manager, Blacktown Arts
- Paula Latos-Valier, Art Director, Sir William Dobell Art Foundation

The panel assessed 10 applications from publicly funded and regional galleries across NSW. A diverse and very competitive round of high quality exhibition proposals was received. After significant discussion, the Panel unanimously awarded the Dobell Exhibition Grant of \$40,000 to Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery for their proposed exhibition *Halfway*.

The panel commented that the application had a strong curatorial premise appealing to a broad audience and that the theme of highway travel was a strong point of identity in regional communities, they also were impressed by the planned public programs offering opportunities for the local community to reflect and engage in reimagining Coffs Harbour's identity once the planned bypass of the city is complete.

Overall the panel was very impressed by all applications and commented all were extremely well considered and competitive. Although they addressed a wide arc of themes and ideas, all had a strong focus on relating and engaging with their local communities. The panel wished to remind applicants that it is important to contact M&G NSW staff prior to developing an application to receive advice and guidance on aligning the projects to the criteria of the grant, developing the project, and budget.



Robert Moore, *The Sydney to Brisbane silver hardarse service*, 1989, sculpture/found object
Collection of Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery.

2022 Dobell Exhibition Grant Recipient

Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery – *Halfway*

Halfway is a contemporary exhibition about Coffs Harbour as a highway town about to be by-passed. Opening in March 2023, it will be a signature exhibition in the opening year of Coffs Harbour's Cultural & Civic Space (CCS), including new gallery, museum and library.

The exhibition will be curated by Jo Besley and Chloe Waters, encompassing commissions, loans and items from the gallery and museum's collection to create an exhibition that engages local communities but also resonates with broader audiences. The commissioned work will include a large-scale installation created from trucking straps by Jane Skeer sourced from local trucking companies which have a significant presence in the town;



an investigation of car culture in Coffs Harbour by Yannick Blattner; and a commission for three local artists (Alyson Pearson, Alanna Shorter aka YOWA, and Peter Wade) to reimagine souvenirs for Coffs Harbour. These commissions will be exhibited alongside existing works by Blak Douglas, Margaret Dodd, Alana Hunt, Ronnie Grammatica and Robert Moore, among others.

Halfway explores the duality of Coffs Harbour as a place and non-place, where the built environment is dominated by motels, service stations, 'Big Things' and tourism objects like windmills and model villages. The highway dominates the city's rhythms and routines, cutting mercilessly through slower-moving pathways and community patterns. The city is often only experienced fleetingly, glimpsed through a windscreen, or at night in the confines of a motel room. The freedom of the open road is an underpinning value in Australia, in contrast to the quiet, more insular, life of the regional town. Yet, the freedom of the highway is transitory, even illusory, and works against a deeper engagement with place and environment. How do time, space, speed and distance shape our perceptions of a place; and how does an identity derived from being the 'halfway point on the highway' change when the highway is no longer there?

The gallery, library and museum will collaborate to present a wide variety of public programs including: storytelling by truckies of life on the road; a collaboration between locals, artists, Transport NSW and the Council Community Safety Officer to honour lives lost on the road (a sadly common shared experience for those living in regional highway towns); a 'Show & Shine' car enthusiasts meet; public debates on sustainability post bypass involving politicians, environmentalists and council; and various workshops for kids and families playing off the theme of 'Big Things' and road trips.

For more information about the Dobell Exhibition Grant please contact: **Susan Wachter, Funding & Programs Manager**, susanw@mgnsw.org.au

The Dobell Exhibition Grant is supported by the Sir William Dobell Art Foundation and managed by Museums & Galleries of NSW.

Image this page; Jane Skeer, *True Blue*, 2021, 300 x 1000cm used truck ratchet straps bought on Australian ebay, gumtree & grays online, steel, timber, acrylic. Photographer Grant Hancock.