

2024 Dobell Exhibition Grants

This year's round of the Dobell Exhibition Grants program was assessed on Friday, 20 October 2023 by a three-member panel consisting of: Michelle Belgiorno-Nettis, Chair, Sir William Dobell Art Foundation; Laretta Morton OAM, Director Art Gallery, City of Newcastle and Olivia Welch, Exhibitions Manager, M&G NSW.

The panel assessed 8 applications from public and regional galleries across NSW, offering two categories of support, \$10,000 and \$30,000. Very strong exhibition proposals were received for a wide range of exhibition projects.

After robust discussion, the panel unanimously awarded the \$30,000 grant to **Grafton Regional Gallery** for their proposed exhibition ***Bundjalung Weavers: Bulaan Buruugaa Ngali... we weave together***, and the \$10,000 category was awarded to **Maitland Regional Art Gallery** for ***Small Museum***.



The panel commended *Bundjalung Weavers: Bulaan Buruugaa Ngali... we weave together* for its partnership across three Northern Rivers venues and demonstrated community buy-in. The panel acknowledged the significance of the access to important cultural artefacts after 144 years, and the opportunity to share historic pieces from Australian Museum collection with regional audiences.

Small Museum was praised for strong engagement ideas and programming accompanying the exhibition that will connect with the many local museums in the Maitland area. The panel also commended the engagement of local and emerging artists to make new work as part of the project.

Overall the panel was impressed by the quality of all applications commenting that it was a very competitive round. Assessors encouraged applicants to ensure that all other funding is listed, even if not yet confirmed, and to include indicative visual support material where possible.

2024 Dobell Exhibition Grants Recipients

Grafton Regional Gallery

***Bundjalung Weavers: Bulaan Buruugaa Ngali... we weave together* - \$30,000**

Bundjalung Weavers: Bulaan Buruugaa Ngali presents new work by contemporary Bundjalung First Nations artists responding to their great grandmothers' artistry of weaving alongside historic woven objects from the collection of the Australian Museum. In collaboration with Arts Northern Rivers, the exhibition will launch in late 2024 at Grafton Regional Gallery, travelling on to Lismore Regional Gallery and Tweed Regional Gallery on Bundjalung Country in the Northern Rivers region of NSW.

Twenty-one meticulously coiled and twined bags by Bundjalung women have been held by the Australian Museum since 1879, collected from the banks of the Richmond and Clarence Rivers between 1875 and 1895 - *Bulaan Buruugaa Ngali* is an opportunity to return these rarely seen bags to Country and exhibit them alongside contemporary works, bringing together generations of weavers and reclaiming and strengthening knowledge of traditional weaving practices. Some of the contemporary weavers featured in this exhibition are descendants of the original makers, representing generational reconnection across time and place.



The exhibition builds on the research and writings of *Bundjalung Weavers: Bulaan Buruugaa Ngali... we weave together* publication by Arts Northern Rivers launched at the 2023 Byron Bay Writers Festival. This comprehensive publication captures the life stories of revered Elders and weavers; documents the history of ancestral collections in museums across Australia and internationally; and explores knowledge of traditional plant species and harvesting techniques practiced for generations. The rich research and writings of its contributors Melissa Lukashenko, Rhoda Roberts AM, Sita McAlpine, and Kylie Caldwell will form the basis of the exhibition featuring new work by local weavers

Maitland Regional Art Gallery
Small Museum – \$10,000

Small Museum is an exhibition featuring photographs and interviews of 41 small museums and their caretakers across rural Australia, created by Hunter-based photographer Simone Rosenbauer. To coincide with this exhibition, Maitland Regional Art Gallery will commission four contemporary artists to develop artistic interventions that respond to surrounding historical collections. These commissions will become a catalyst for dialogue, understanding, and appreciation of the invaluable role that small museums play in shaping the nation's identity, and how they can be re-examined and reinterpreted through a contemporary visual lens.

Small Museum will include a participatory activation, allowing audiences to 'curate' their own historical collection using objects found by Simone Rosenbauer. The exhibition will be accompanied by a series of multidisciplinary interventions in the Gallery space by the four responding artists as well as a suite of programs including youth focused workshops, arts and health programs, and digital video engagement tools.



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

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

Images

Page 1: Small woven basket made from buchie rush by Aunty Janelle Duncan. Photo: Kate Holmes.

Page 2: Small woven basket made from lomandra by Krystal Randall. Kate Holmes.

Page 3: Simone Rosenbauer, *Small Museum*, various dates, archival pigment prints, (left) SM09.03.070 Land of the Beardies - House of History, Glen Innes NSW; (right) SM05.02.067 Tamworth Historical Society, Tamworth NSW.