

2026 Dobell Exhibition Grant

This year's round of the Dobell Exhibition Grant program was assessed on Friday, 17 October 2025 by a four-member panel comprising: Michelle Belgiorio-Nettis, Chair, Sir William Dobell Art Foundation; Matteo Salval, Trustee, Sir William Dobell Art Foundation; Lee-Anne Hall, Art Gallery Director, Wagga Wagga Art Gallery; and Sarah Gurich, Manager Arts & Cultural Development, Blacktown City Council and M&G NSW Board Member.

The panel assessed 12 applications from public and regional galleries across NSW, offering \$40,000 to support one exhibition project. Very strong proposals were received for a wide range of exhibition projects. After robust discussion, the panel unanimously awarded the \$40,000 grant to **Lewers: Penrith Regional Gallery** for their proposed exhibition ***Piece by Piece***.



Margo Lewers (1908-1978) *Untitled (detail)* c.1955. Glazed ceramic tiles, concrete. Lewers: Penrith Regional Gallery

The panel commended *Piece by Piece* for its curatorial coherence, detailed project plan and supporting material, innovative public programming, strong links with the history of the gallery site, and high potential for community engagement.

Overall, the panel was impressed by the high quality of all applications. Assessors encourage future applicants to ensure that budgets are balanced and realistic, demonstrate value for money and make any confirmed funding clear. Where relevant, First Nations communities and artists should be consulted in developing exhibition projects and letters of confirmation must be provided by participating artists.

High scoring applications demonstrated comprehensive project planning, innovative curatorial concepts, collaboration with local communities, partnerships with relevant organisations, engaging public programming, skills development and alignment with organisational strategic objectives.

2026 Dobell Exhibition Grant Recipient

Lewers: Penrith Regional Gallery – *Piece by Piece* - \$40,000

Piece by Piece celebrates the meticulously-repeated gesture, demonstrating how the practice of creating something line by line, stitch by stitch, or piece by piece, transcends distinctions between figurative and abstract, hobbyist and professional, historic and contemporary, and connects practitioners across temporal, cultural and geographical boundaries.

Piece by Piece is part of a series of exhibitions developed by Penrith Regional Gallery (PRG) in partnership with the Art Gallery of NSW (AGNSW) and will be co-curated by PRG's curatorial team comprising Toby Chapman, Joanna Gilmour and Tia Madden. The exhibition takes as its starting point the mosaics Margo Lewers made at Emu Plains between 1951 and 1964. Dotted in and around the buildings on the property, Margo's mosaics are among the most unique artworks in the PRG collection, exemplifying her experimentation and intuition; her embrace of readily accessible materials; and her gift for making an archaic practice thrum with modern resonance.

Piece by Piece, consequently, is an exhibition which seeks to expand understandings of the term 'mosaic', presenting a selection of works which illustrate multiple interpretations of the concept across eras and cultures. The exhibition will feature the work of up to 25 artists and incorporate new commissions alongside loaned works executed in materials as disparate as marble, silk, ceramic, cardboard and plastic.

The exhibition design in the Main Gallery will foreground the language shared by paintings by Grace Cossington Smith, Lesley Dumbrell and Richard Larter; assemblages by artists including Rosalie Gascoigne; and installations by Sean Rafferty and Jumaadi. A focus on textiles in Lewers House will highlight connections between unidentified 19th century weavers and contemporary practitioners of beading and embroidery including Liam Benson, Narelle Jubelin and Sione Monū. The concepts of time, multiplicity and cultural knowledge inherent in the work of leading First Nations artists will be explored through the work of artists including Julie Gough and Esme Timbery. Featured artists will also include: Khadim Ali, Vivienne Binns, Adrienne Doig, Ilana Lapid, Tia Madden, David McDiarmid, Khaled Sabsabi, Vipoo Srivilasa, what, and Women's Domestic Needlework Group, Sydney.



Esme Timbery (1931-2023), *Untitled (Sydney Opera House)* (detail), 2022. Shellwork, mixed media. Image courtesy of the Sydney Opera House Trust.

Associated learning and experiential public programs will engage with the process-based and meditative nature of the works featured in the exhibition, connecting audiences with the themes of materiality, cultural storytelling, repetition, and abstraction. These will include a commissioned piece by an emerging Western Sydney composer in collaboration with the Penrith Conservatorium, panel discussions, artist talks, and hands-on workshops. These programs will deepen PRG's existing connections to local audiences and seek to extend the Gallery's reach to new communities within the culturally diverse Penrith area. With additional support of Penrith City Council, PRG is also seeking to achieve a long-term, community-based outcome from the exhibition in the form of a public mosaic artwork for a park within the Penrith LGA.

For more information about the Dobell Exhibition Grant program please contact: Susan Wachter, Exhibitions & Programs Manager, susanw@mgnsw.org.au or Vanessa James, Exhibitions & Programs Coordinator, vanessaj@mgnsw.org.au

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