Museums & Galleries of NSW

# IMAGinE AWARDS 2026

inspiring museums and galleries in excellence

## Acknowledgement of Country

Museums & Galleries of NSW acknowledges the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation and all the other Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we live and work.

We pay respect to them as First Nations people with continuing connection to land, place, waters and community.



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# Foreword

Welcome to the 2026 Museums & Galleries of NSW IMAGinE Awards!

Once again, these Awards celebrate so much that makes this sector vital to many aspects of community life.

The NSW Government's recently tabled Creative Statement to Parliament, identified that in 2024/25 the economic and employment impact of the creative industries contributed $59.7 billion to NSW's economy. It also found that 77% of people in NSW attend live arts and cultural events.

While it is easy to think of these figures as being attributed primarily to large scale events and cultural institutions, every single cultural organisation, no matter the scale, is part of this story.

The 118 nominations received for this year's Awards exemplify this – and provide us with an opportunity to celebrate this extraordinary contribution to community life. This publication offers a broad collection of case studies of what makes this sector so special. We see the crucial place of museums, galleries and Aboriginal cultural organisations in local storytelling, preserving local histories, being important career pathways for artists and cultural workers, of being places of shared connection and enhancing the liveability in our communities.

The 2026 Museums & Galleries of NSW Sector Census also highlights the deep connections these organisations have with their local communities. Our research found that 70% of organisations have worked with their local First Nations people/communities in some capacity in the previous 4 years; while 80% offer school and educational programs.

The IMAGinE Awards have long recognised the role of individual volunteers working in the sector, however, to honour the 74% of organisations with less than 1 full time equivalent staff (2026 M&G NSW Sector Census), this year we will be announcing the inaugural Volunteer Museum of the Year Award. This Award specifically acknowledges activities in the previous 12 months such as key governance or policy work; significant contributions to community heritage or histories; navigating particular challenges using creativity or insight; major collection projects or new audience focussed initiatives, community partnerships or significant events. It is timely to honour these organisations who are the backbone of our sector and who do this work with minimal resources available.

We are again partnering with Accessible Arts NSW to announce an award for Access and Inclusion programs, and of course supporting an important part of the Awards, the Aboriginal Culture, Heritage & Arts Association (ACHAA) Award for Excellence by an Aboriginal Curator, which highlights exceptional curatorial practice from First Nations curators in New South Wales.

On behalf of Museums & Galleries of NSW, we congratulate all the outstanding nominees for the 2026 IMAGinE Awards and thank you all for your dedication to the sector.

**Judy Jaeger**
**Chair, Museums & Galleries of NSW**

**Brett Adlington**
**CEO, Museums & Galleries of NSW**







# Exhibition Projects Award

Nominations in the Exhibition Projects Award demonstrate excellence and innovation in permanent and temporary exhibitions, exhibition practice, design, publications and resources, and exhibition partnerships.

# Exhibition Projects: Galleries / Visual Arts

## Small or Volunteer Organisations



**Airspace Projects Inc.**
*loss:non:loss*

Co-curated by Arianne Bulanos and Soomin Jeong, *loss:non:loss* was a collaborative exhibition bringing together Filipino-Australian artist Kristone Capistrano and Korean-Australian artist Eric Kang to explore memory, grief, material gesture, and the space between loss and continuation through drawing, installation and correspondence. Material experimentation connected with personal experience to transform the space into a site of conversation, reflection and participation.

**Bondi Pavilion Art Gallery**
*Holding Light*

*Holding Light* as a response the Bondi Beach terror attack and brought together a diverse range of artistic voices and perspectives, including First Nations, Iranian, Polish, Jewish, and non-Jewish artists of various ages and at different stages of practice. The works explored grief, resilience, memory and solidarity through visual art, installation and digital media. Curated by Shalom Collective and supported by Waverley Council, it created space for reflection, connection and healing.





**Cowra Regional Art Gallery**
*Rewritten Ground*

*Rewritten Ground* was an inaugural exhibition of the *Forming Futures* program at Cowra Regional Gallery, showcasing the work of Central West artists under 40. It was created in consultation with one of the artists, who assisted with thematic development and artist selection.





**Fairfield City Museum & Gallery**
*SÔNG - SỐNG – SONG*

James Nguyen's *SÔNG SỐNG SONG* examined the lingering effects of Agent Orange and its presence in the Parramatta River. The project featured works created in collaboration with Nguyen's family, including a large-scale installation of shirts washed in the Parramatta River and a video featuring family members singing survival songs by the river's banks.

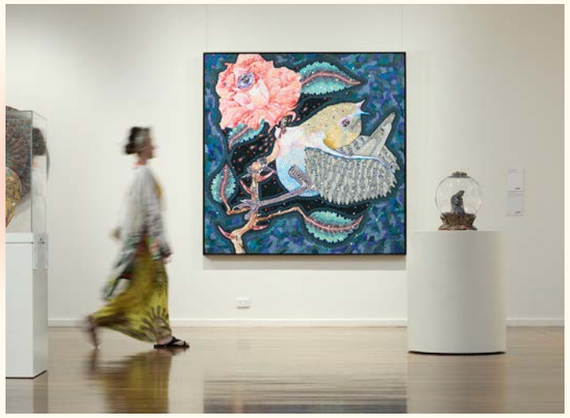


**Hawkesbury Regional Gallery**
*HOME | a place we call*

*Home | a place we call* brought 15 Hawkesbury artists together to explore belonging, memory, identity and place. The exhibition marked a meaningful reconnection between the gallery and its creative community after a period of limited engagement, signalling renewed commitment to supporting local artists, stories and opportunities.

**Manning Regional Art Gallery**
*Feathered: Birds in Myth and Memory*

Curated by Ali Haigh and Jane Hosking, *Feathered: Birds in Myth and Memory* brought together leading Australian, regional, and First Nations artists to explore the deep connection between birds, memory and meaning. Through painting, sculpture, printmaking and installation, audiences were invited to reflect on personal memories, relationships to Country and the symbolic role of birds across cultures.





**Mudgee Arts Precinct**
*A Nest in the Hills*

*A Nest in the Hills* explored the enduring relationship between women and birds through the work of leading Australian artists. Encompassing painting, photography, sculpture, ceramics, sound and installation, the exhibition examined motherhood, memory, care, ecology, identity and First Nations knowledge, celebrating birds as companions, messengers, muses and symbols of connection.





**Mudgee Arts Precinct**
*Royston Harpur: A Painter's Painter*

*Royston Harpur: A Painter's Painter* was the first major survey exhibition of the late Australian abstract painter and poet, bringing together five decades of paintings, archival material and key cultural objects to reveal the profound influence of Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism on his practice, and reassert Harpur's significance in post-war Australian abstract painting.



**Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre**
*Muscle: Simon Reece*

Developed through an artist residency at Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre, Simon Reece's *Muscle* explored landscape, industry and place through ceramics, photography and found materials. Using clay sourced from local mine sites and references to Muswellbrook's waterways and industrial history, the exhibition invited audiences to reconsider their relationship with the local landscape.

**Newcastle Art Space**
*Freshwater to Fatbergs*

*Freshwater to Fatbergs* was an innovative temporary exhibition that featured artists responding to local heritage, research, collaboration and contemporary art addressing themes of water use and water conservation. This was an inaugural arts and science education initiative by Newcastle Art Space in partnership with Hunter Water and provided the opportunity to preserve the cultural history of a critical water asset whilst inviting critical thinking and harnessing a conceptual approach.





**Northern Rivers Community Gallery**
*Nanang Wabang – Big Sister Little Sister*

*Nanang Wabang – Big Sister Little Sister* showcased emerging Nyangbal/Bundjalung artists Sonya Breckenridge and Maurita Moran, celebrating the resilience, cultural significance and enduring connection to Cabbage Tree Island. Through paintings and woven works exploring family, country and community, the exhibition strengthened cultural awareness and increased visitation to the Northern Rivers Community Gallery by 37%.





**Verge Gallery**
*Dismantle / Assemble*

*Dismantle / Assemble* by Cindy Yuen-Zhe Chen presented a series of tactile sonic sculptures, drawings, and video work to engage with historical and personal narratives of European colonisation in Southeast Asia, creating space for Southeast Asian perspectives within conversations about Australian identity, history and belonging. The exhibition explored how histories are inherited, interpreted, and transformed through family memory, keepsakes, and migration.

# Exhibition Projects: Galleries / Visual Arts

## Medium Organisations



**Bankstown Arts Centre**
*Gut Waters*

Through a convergence of art and science, *Gut Waters* explored the role of the human gut in reimagining our health and place in the world. Based on lead curator Dr Vanessa Barlett's research into digestion as a curatorial method, it featured new commissions by Helen Pynor and Eugenia Lim.

**Bathurst Regional Art Gallery**
*Acts of Inheritance: curated by We are Studios*

*Acts of Inheritance*, curated by We Are Studios (100% Disabled artist-run initiative), presented new work from 17 Disabled artists. The exhibition reflected on family stories, Disability, mental health and shifting perceptions of self, presenting identity as a dialogue between who we've been, who we are becoming and the worlds that shape us.







**Blue Mountains Cultural Centre**
*PLAY!*

*PLAY!* examined the facilitative role of art institutions in encouraging play, community connection and self-expression. This exhibition emboldened audiences to follow their curiosity and physically respond to the artworks, generating engagement atypical of institutional settings.
In this space, audiences were encouraged to question and explore ideas of self and community through playful, dynamic processes.

**Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative**
*I am Gurgun: A retrospective of work by Dr Bronwyn Bancroft AM*

Curated by Kyra Kum-Sing, *I am Gurgun* was a major retrospective celebrating five decades of practice by renowned Bundjalung artist, designer, author and community advocate Dr Bronwyn Bancroft. The exhibition invited audiences to experience the evolution of Bancroft's visionary career, from wearable art to awe-inspiring paintings. The exhibition included loans from the National Gallery of Australia, Powerhouse Museum, and Art Gallery of NSW.



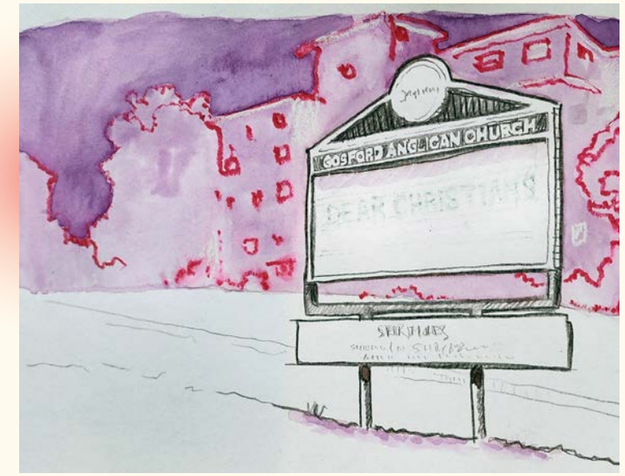



**Customs House**
*Barani / Barrabugu (Yesterday / Tomorrow)*

*Barani / Barrabugu (Yesterday / Tomorrow)* explored Sydney Aboriginal histories, places, people and activism through 31 stories drawn from the City of Sydney's Barani website and community archives. Curated by Kyra Kum-Sing, the exhibition celebrated continuing connections to Country, highlighting Sydney's central role in the Aboriginal civil rights movement and the enduring strength of Aboriginal culture in Sydney.

**Gosford Regional Gallery**
*Dear Christians*

The exhibition *Dear Christians* by artist Todd Fuller told the story of Father Rod Bower and the impact of his signs in front of the Gosford Anglican church. The signs, with messages of tolerance, gained worldwide attention. Commissioned by Gosford Regional Gallery, the centrepiece is a 6:33 minute video work which combined hand drawn animation and live action video from an oral history interview Fuller conducted with Father Bower.








**Gosford Regional Gallery**
*dhiyang gayung-ba (I am Here)*

Commissioned by Gosford Regional Gallery, *dhiyang gayung-ba (I am Here)* was a unique collaboration between NAISDA and Box of Birds. Pushing the boundaries of contemporary First Nations dance and immersive digital technologies, the interactive exhibition transported the audience onto Country.

**Goulburn Regional Art Gallery**
*Moving*

*Moving* brought together the work of eight Australian contemporary artists, each exploring the intersection of water, performance and the moving image. Curated by Yvette Dal Pozzo, the exhibition reflected on water as subject, medium and metaphor, celebrating durational works that carry emotion, hold memory and reflect lived experience.





## Goulburn Regional Art Gallery
*Brenda L Croft: after/image*

The ambitious new work by celebrated artist Brenda L Croft, *after/image* commissioned by Goulburn Regional Art Gallery, was presented alongside artist Prue Hazelgrove's new series *Re:Generation*. Both artists drew on deep familial connections to the Goulburn region, presenting nationally significant work grounded in place, supported by an innovative public program and scholarly catalogue.

## Lismore Regional Gallery
*Clare Milledge: complex notophyll vine forest: ground proof*



*complex notophyll vine forest: ground proof* was a significant survey of Clare Milledge's practice across the last two decades and was her first major exhibition on Bundjalung Country, the region where she grew up. Curated by Ineke Dane in close dialogue with Milledge, the exhibition spanned three large galleries, occupying the connecting walkways and spaces in between.

## Lewers: Penrith Regional Gallery
*Jagath Dheerasekara: a river is a witness*

*a river is a witness* was a solo exhibition by multi-disciplinary artist Jagath Dheerasekara, who was born in Sri Lanka but forced to flee in the early 1990s to escape political persecution. The artist constructed an 'archive of traces': installations of poetry, sculpture and video fragments that preserve memories disregarded by official record.






## Manly Art Gallery & Museum
*The Art of Adaptation: Culture Changes Everywhere*

Marking ten years of the Kandos School of Cultural Adaptation, *The Art of Adaptation: Culture Changes Everywhere* was the collective's first major institutional survey. Through artworks, participatory projects and documentation, the exhibition explored how collaboration between artists, communities, scientists and environmental practitioners can foster cultural adaptation and meaningful environmental change.



## Museum of Art and Culture, yapang
*Salote Tawale: The Tide Continues*

The Museum of Art and Culture, yapang commissioned leading contemporary Australian-Fijian artist Salote Tawale to create *The Tide Continues*. Reflecting on Lake Macquarie's waterways and Tawale's long-standing exploration of what it means to live between cultures, the engaging installation encouraged its viewers to understand the work in relation to both Awaba (Lake Macquarie) and the Tasman Sea beyond.

## National Art School Gallery
*The Neighbour at the Gate*

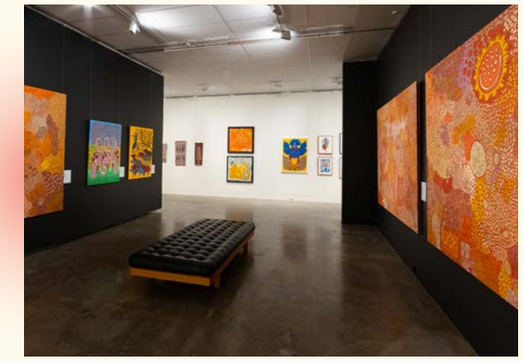
The exhibition centred the long-standing connections between First Nations and Asian Australian cultural groups, through new commissions by Jacky Cheng, Dennis Golding, Elham Eshraghian-Haakansson, Jenna Mayilema Lee, James Nguyen, and James Tylor. It focused on Australian immigration policies and colonial legacies, unravelling their impact on First Nations and Asian Australian experiences. The reference to the gate is both literal and symbolic, offering ideas around transitions, barriers, and community building.





## New England Regional Art Museum
*Echoes of the Earth: Tribal and Desert Art*

*Echoes of the Earth: Tribal and Desert Art* brought together contemporary Indigenous art from Australia and India, connecting Western Desert and Utopia artists with India's Gond and other tribal art traditions. Developed through an international partnership, the exhibition created a significant cross-cultural dialogue and brought exceptional Indigenous art and cultural perspectives to regional NSW audiences.





## New England Regional Art Museum
*Drawn from Pain, Written from Truth*

*Drawn from Pain, Written from Truth* brought together the writing of Yezidi genocide survivor Amera Ali and artwork by her cousin, Suad Smo. Combining intimate testimony, original handwritten notes, artworks and immersive VR, the exhibition explored survival, memory, cultural identity and justice, amplifying survivor voices and challenging silence.



**Orange Regional Gallery**
*Harrie Fasher: Before Dawn*

*Before Dawn* was a major exhibition featuring monumental bronze, steel, and concrete sculptures by leading sculptor Harrie Fasher. Pushing the boundaries of material exploration through experimental casting and fabrication, the exhibition represented a pivotal moment in Fasher's career, consolidating a decade of artistic and technical research at an ambitious scale.

**Parramatta Artists Studios and Fairfield City Museum & Art Gallery**
*RELIC*

*RELIC* featured newly commissioned and reconfigured works by five Parramatta Artists Studios artists and alumni in partnership with Fairfield City Museum & Gallery. Developed through a collaborative curatorial process, the exhibition explored memory, accumulation and material culture while creating new opportunities for artistic development and audience participation.





**Singleton Arts + Cultural Centre**
*Lost Landscapes: Gordon Rintoul*

*Lost Landscapes* was a significant retrospective celebrating the 60-year career of the late Gordon Rintoul, which explored the changing landscapes of the Hunter Valley through painting. Presented at Singleton Arts + Cultural Centre, the exhibition invited audiences to reflect on the region's environmental and industrial history and consider how our relationship with place changes as Singleton moves towards its post-industrial future.





**Tamworth Regional Gallery**
*Bush Lines*

*Bush Lines*, curated by First Nations curator Liam Keenan, brought together works from the Art Gallery of New South Wales and Tamworth Regional Gallery. This significant partnership between a state and regional institution explored diverse connections to Country, landscape and community through historical and contemporary Australian art, fostering dialogue and shared cultural understanding.

# Exhibition Projects: Galleries / Visual Arts

## Large Organisations



### Campbelltown Arts Centre
*Lynda Draper | Glimmer*

*Lynda Draper | Glimmer* was a landmark survey exhibition of one of Australia's most influential contemporary ceramic artists. Spanning four decades of practice, the exhibition brought together key works from major public and private collections alongside new commissions and transformed Campbelltown Arts Centre into an immersive exploration of imagination, materiality and wonder.

### Liverpool Powerhouse
*Revealing Dress: Fashion as Portraiture*

*Revealing Dress: Fashion as Portraiture* brought together more than 20 artists and fashion designers to examine fashion as an embodied language through which identity, culture, memory and emotion are carried through the body. Occupying all gallery spaces, the exhibition also debuted Liverpool Powerhouse's expanded Kids & Families Gallery, creating new opportunities for intergenerational engagement.





### Maitland Regional Art Gallery
*Mud to Masterpiece*

*Mud to Masterpiece* was an ambitious celebration of contemporary ceramics, bringing together thirteen artists whose practices challenge conventional expectations of clay through sculpture, installation, sound and moving image. The exhibition featured new work, collection work and loaned work.



### Mosman Art Gallery
*Foreshore*

*Foreshore* was an exhibition focused on where the land and harbour meet in Mosman and featured elements from its history, including its Indigenous life, military, industrial and leisure of the past. This exhibition drew together the work of contemporary artists, with historic works from the Mosman Art Collection.



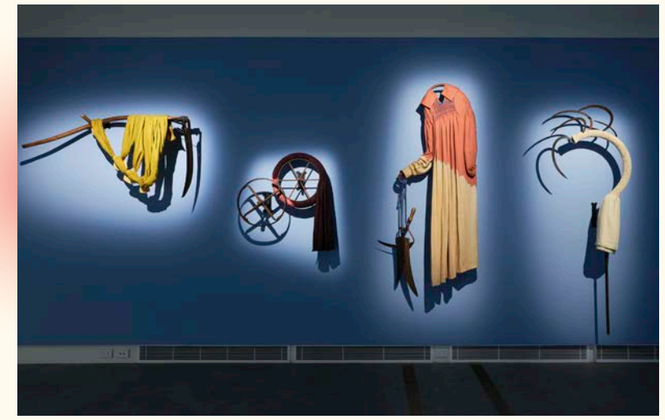


### Murray Arts Museum Albury (MAMA)
*nginha: Atrium commissions*

The *nginha Atrium commissions* formed the heart of the nginha program – an 18 month long celebration of art and ideas marking the ten year anniversary of MAMA. The commissions were a supportive new work project with three distinct artworks cumulatively coming into conversation over three six-month seasons. As the works came together, a conversation emerged around Language sovereignty, community connection to Country and the depth of time for which these concerns have been central to First Nations thinking.

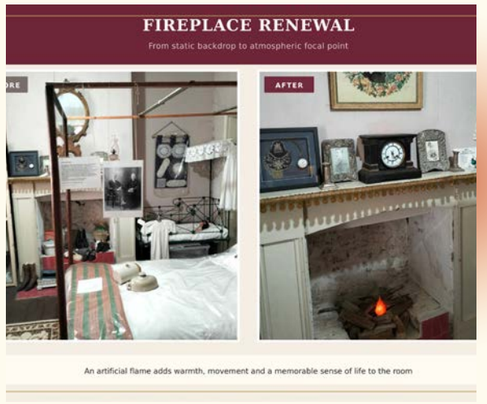
### Ngununggula | Southern Highlands Regional Gallery
*New Religion*

*New Religion* was a group exhibition bringing contemporary Australian commissions into dialogue with historic works from major public collections. This exhibition proposed that while the forms of worship surrounding us may continually evolve, the human impulse toward symbolism, ritual and transcendence remains remarkably persistent.



# Exhibition Projects: Museums & Heritage

## Volunteer Organisations

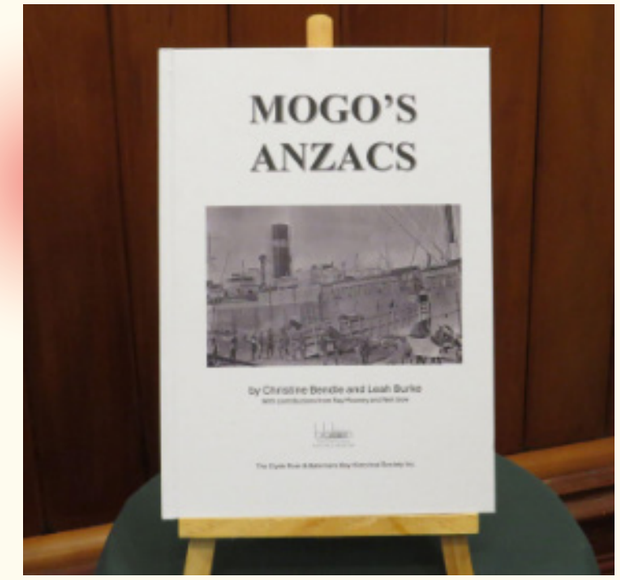



**Centenary Cottage Museum, Tenterfield**
*Cottage Bedroom Renewal Project*

A five-month project transformed a cluttered Victorian bedroom in the house museum into a visitor-friendly space exploring personal care and grooming in Victorian times. With two volunteers and a budget under $1,000, the team refurbished furnishings, highlighted key artefacts and produced educational signage. Research informed the display, while a heritage quilt donated by the local Quilt Group enhanced the room. The project has improved the visitor experience and established a model for future museum renewals.

**Clyde River & Batemans Bay Heritage Museum**
*Mogo to the Battlefield*

*Mogo to the Battlefield* and its companion book, Mogo's ANZACs, brought to life the First World War service of local veterans. Through original research, scale models, interactive touchscreens, and authentic artefacts, the volunteer-led project preserves vital local history, connecting descendants and visitors with Mogo's wartime legacy.








**Greens Gunyah Museum Lockhart**
*Women and Wool*

*Women and Wool* tells the story of three women who earned a unique place in the history of wool in the Lockhart district. Two of the women used their talents to create garments showcasing the versatility of wool, and the third carved a place for herself in the male dominated competitive shearing space.

**Port Macquarie Museum**
*Reflections - Life at the Lake House*

*Reflections – Life at the Lake House* brought to life Annabella Boswell's experiences at Port Macquarie during the 1840s, exploring her connection to water and landscape. Narratives were brought to life through a unique blend of personal archives, historical objects and artworks, inviting reflection on the enduring relationship between people, place, and water.



## Snowy Scheme Museum Adaminaby

*Snowy Cottage restoration and exhibit project*

*The Snowy Cottage project* involved transporting and restoring an historic two-bedroom transportable cottage used to house workers and their families during the Snowy Mountains Scheme. After three years of restoration, the cottage has been established as a real-life exhibit, offering visitors an insight into the accommodation and living conditions experienced by Snowy Scheme workers and their families during the 1950s and 1960s.

## Sulphide Street Railway & Historical Museum

*Restoration of Argent Street Tram Carriage*

This project preserved the surviving remnants of a NSW tram that provided passenger services on the streets of Broken Hill from 1902 to 1926. After years exposed to the elements in the Council Works Yard, the deteriorating carriage was relocated to the museum in 2025. One volunteer spent several months restoring half the carriage, maintaining the integrity of its original condition. The exhibit attracted local and visitor interest, media coverage and recognition through a Broken Hill City Council award.



# Exhibition Projects: Museums & Heritage

## Small Organisations



### Fairfield City Museum & Gallery

*We Are Here*

*We Are Here* was a multigenerational storytelling project bringing together First Nations Elders, artists, and local school students to celebrate the living traditions, stories, and artistic practices of First Nations culture in Western Sydney. The exhibition spoke to the often-unseen Aboriginal presence in Fairfield, affirming visibility, connection, and continuity.

### Orange Regional Museum

*Bloomfield: 1925–2025*



*Bloomfield: 1925–2025* marked the centenary of Orange Mental Hospital, exploring its regional significance and the changing approaches to mental healthcare. The exhibition was developed with Western NSW Local Health District in collaboration with more than 50 community participants, bringing a largely hidden history into public view, revealing stories with powerful contemporary and community resonance.



### Saumarez Homestead

*Sustainable Saumarez*

The *Sustainable Saumarez* project expanded the visitor experience through a new gallery fitout, signage, dual language interpretation, audio-visual material and the *Nature / Nurture* exhibition featuring more than 80 digitised historic photographs exploring changes to the Saumarez landscape over time. Developed over four years working closely with volunteers and First Nations community representatives, the project placed Anaiwan voices at the centre, connecting Country, pastoral history and the museum collection.



### The Gale History Museum at Macquarie University

*Ancient Glass*

This permanent exhibition reimagines the Museum's internationally significant ancient glass collection through new research into the science, technology, manufacture and use of ancient glass. Combining scholarship, innovative display design and accessible interpretation, it connects ancient material culture with contemporary scientific research for academic, student, youth and global audiences.





### Tweed Regional Museum

*The Wiiyaan*

*The Wiiyaan* was an innovative exhibition empowering Bundjalung youth to preserve and share the ancient story of the Three Brothers through contemporary digital animation. Developed by Gudjingburra Bundjalung men Kyle and Bijang Slabb with support from Ludo Studio, the project fostered intergenerational knowledge transfer, cultural custodianship, and creative digital skills.

### UNSW Library

*Materials Revolution*

Led by Professor Veena Sahajwalla, *Materials Revolution* showcased transformative Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) research by UNSW's SMaRT Centre. By integrating circular economy principles into the exhibition design, traditional materials were replaced with eco-friendly alternatives, turning the gallery into a testing ground for sustainable production and a demonstrable, real-world application of recycling science.



# Exhibition Projects: Museums & Heritage

## Medium Organisations



### Hurstville Museum and Gallery

*Georges River Reflections*

*Georges River Reflections* transformed Hurstville Museum & Gallery's decade-old permanent exhibition into a contemporary, community-led experience reflecting the region's diversity, history and identity. Shaped through consultation with Bidjigal Elders, Aboriginal knowledge holders, multicultural communities and advisory committees, local stories were presented through objects, artworks, multimedia and interactive displays. Films featuring Aboriginal and multicultural storytellers, alongside translated content in multiple languages, enriched cultural representation and improved accessibility.

### Jervis Bay Maritime Museum & Gallery

*The Antarctic: Scott, Mawson, Shackleton*

The Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration centred on the expeditions of Robert Falcon Scott, Douglas Mawson and Ernest Shackleton, highlighting the work of Australian scientist Mawson and photographer Frank Hurley. Combining historic objects, iconic photographs, public programs and the Museum's first virtual reality experience, it captured both the stark beauty of Antarctica and the indomitable human spirit of those who ventured into its icy wilderness. The VR experience, narrated by Tim Jarvis, followed Shackleton's journey to save his men.







### Museum of the Riverina

*STUFF: 100 Wild, weird, and wonderful objects from the Museum of the Riverina Collection*

This playful and thought-provoking exhibition brought together 100 objects that highlight the everyday things that have shaped life in the region. From treasured wedding dresses and old photographs to repurposed household items, each object tells a unique story about Wagga Wagga, its history and its people.

### Newcastle Museum

*Model Newcastle: Big Stories Little Things*

*Model Newcastle: Big Stories, Little Things* was a captivating exhibition of models and miniatures that celebrate Newcastle's history, creativity and community. From intricate railways and maritime marvels to dollhouses, puppetry and cinematic cityscapes, this exhibition brought together treasures from Newcastle Museum's collection alongside contributions from local makers and storytellers.






### Tamworth Regional Museums

*Nundle's precious gems and mineral collection*

The Gil Bennet Rocks, Gems and Minerals Collection, comprising more than 1,550 specimens and the Visitor Information Outlet were relocated to the Nundle Library, creating a multi-purpose cultural and tourism hub that maximised community benefit while minimising operational costs. This sustainable approach improved collection conservation and increased public access from limited opening hours to at least six days per week. The project strengthened Nundle's cultural tourism, attracting new audiences and supporting the preservation of this significant regional collection.


The Mechanical Fis
In 2013, Peter Lewis, former editorial
Herald, had an appointment with
Peter was captivated by a colourf
room, but at his next appointment
had failed and everything in the to
catastrophe sparked an idea in Pe
needs a Mechanical Fish Tank.'
This inspired the MFT, a combinatio
railway. The first version was destro
onto Peter's garage. Peter made th
The drive system was upgraded fro
G gauge setup. Peter learnt new sk
marvel that complements his artisti
3D modelling and printing, finishing
hand-painting techniques.
MFT Timetable
The Mechanical Fishtank operates

# Exhibition Projects: Museums / Heritage & Galleries / Visual Arts

## Major Metropolitan Institutions



**Art Gallery of New South Wales**
*Mike Hewson: The Key's Under the Mat*

Artist Mike Hewson transformed the Art Gallery of NSW's Tank into a free, all-ages sculptural neighbourhood combining park, playground, construction site and communal space. Built from salvaged materials, this immersive project invited participation, creativity and connection while reimagining sculpture, regeneration and what a truly welcoming art museum can be.

**Australian National Maritime Museum**
*Croc! Lost Giants to Living Legends*

*Croc! Lost Giants to Living Legends* was the first exhibition of its kind to explore crocodiles through the combined lenses of science, culture, history and art. The exhibition was designed as a journey that moves audiences beyond fear to understanding, challenging perceptions of crocodiles while highlighting their ecological importance and remarkable evolutionary history.





**Chau Chak Wing Museum**
*The Place of Truth*

*The Place of Truth* was the outcome of the Human Remains Research Project, a collaboration between the Chau Chak Wing Museum, Macquarie University and University College London. Informed by pioneering research with Egyptian communities, it challenged entrenched approaches to Egyptian mummified human remains, opening museum decision-making to scrutiny and participation.






**Museum of Sydney, Museums of History NSW**
*Unearthed and Dig It*

Even the most ordinary objects have many stories to tell, depending on how you look at them. *Unearthed and Dig It!* revealed Sydney's colonial past through the display of artefacts excavated at the first Government House. First Nations perspectives, personal accounts, and interactive technology invited visitors to uncover these layered histories.




**State Library of New South Wales**
*Paper Universe: the book as art*

*Paper Universe* explored the creative impulse behind artists' books and their power as a medium for expressing ideas, stories and perspectives. Bringing the State Library's little-known collection into public view, the exhibition challenged our assumptions about a familiar object and invited audiences to look, think and see it differently.

**State Library of New South Wales**
*Mervyn Bishop: Close Up*

Drawing on Bishop's extraordinary archive of more than 200,000 images in the State Library of NSW's collection *Mervyn Bishop: Close Up* celebrated one of Australia's most significant photographers. This exhibition delved into the historic moments and pivotal people he captured, while exploring the private influences that shaped his groundbreaking career.






# Engagement Programs Award

The Engagement Programs Award is assessed across the museum and gallery sector. It celebrates best practice in public programs, education resources, audience building, and, community engagement and participation.



# Engagement Programs

## Small and Volunteer Organisations



**Braemar Gallery**
*Moz Azimitibar: Freedom is Beautiful*

Developed to accompany the exhibition of Kurdish refugee artist Moz Azimitibar at Braemar Gallery, featuring a public screening of *Freedom is Beautiful* in collaboration with Blue Mountains Refugee Centre, followed by an artist talk. A separate children's art workshop was held with local school students during Refugee Week.

**Cowra Regional Art Gallery**
*Show Us Your Olives!*

*Show Us Your Olives!* was a community callout for personal photographs taken by Olive Cotton, culminating in a community event and presentation at Cowra Regional Art Gallery on the 8th of May 2026. It was delivered by Cowra Regional Art Gallery in partnership with The National Gallery and their *Olive Cotton and her contemporaries* exhibition.





**Fairfield City Museum & Gallery**
*Where Shadows Sleep*

*Where Shadows Sleep* was an evening event focused on storytelling, folklore, and fairy tales, featuring interactive workshops, performances, and activities. The event explored folktales that aren't commonly heard from various cultures that make up Fairfield City, and how these stories shaped how our imagination and sense of self.





**Griffith Regional Art Gallery**
*From Page to Gallery*

From *Page to Gallery* encouraged young people across the Griffith LGA to turn journal ideas into exhibition-ready artworks. Through artist-led workshops, access to professional materials and a public exhibition, participants built artistic skills, confidence and a sense of belonging within their local cultural community.

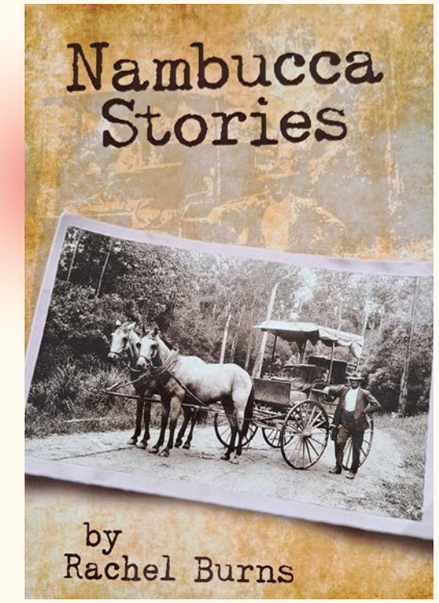


**Grossmann & Brough Houses, National Trust of Australia NSW**
*Artist in Residence, Jane Richens*

As Artist in Residence 2026, Jane Richens explored connections between the Grossmann House Collection, the property, the local environment, and past and present through this compelling engagement program.

**Nambucca Headland Museum**
*Nambucca Stories*

*Nambucca Stories* is a compilation of local stories drawn from research in the Nambucca Headland Museum archives and oral histories recorded by the Headland Museum's Research Officer, Rachel Burns. The stories were originally written as newspaper articles and/or broadcast during Rachel's history-based radio program from 2014.






**Shoalhaven Regional Gallery**
*Koori Kids Art After School*

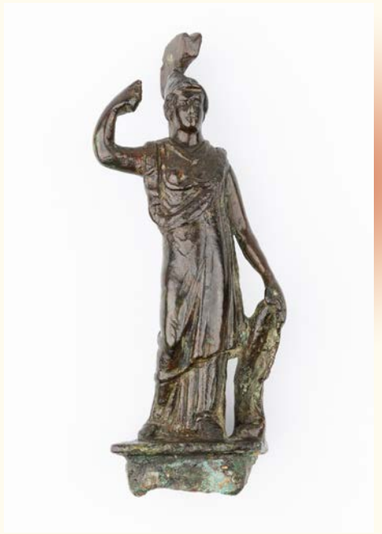
*Koori Kids Art After School* is an annual First Nations-led programming initiative for First Nations high school students from Nowra, Shoalhaven, Vincentia, Bomaderry and Ulladulla High to inspire participation in, and engagement with, the arts. Participants make art, share food and socialise in a culturally safe space. Led by an established First Nations artist, they prepare an artwork for exhibition. This project was initiated by an Audience Development grant from Museums & Galleries of NSW in 2025.






**South East Centre for Contemporary Art (SECCA)**
*Expanded Portraiture | SECCA × FLING × David Rosetzky*

SECCA partnered with FLING Physical Theatre to present a free cross-artform keynote event with acclaimed Australian artist David Rosetzky. Connected to the exhibition Interfacial Intimacies at SECCA, the program gave regional young people direct access to contemporary artistic practice, creative learning, and pathways into the arts and cultural sector.



**The Gale History Museum at Macquarie University**
*Cities of Vesuvius – School Excursion Program*

*Cities of Vesuvius* is a 4-hour program aligned with NSW's Ancient History Syllabus core HSC topic "Cities of Vesuvius". The program incorporates three modes of delivery: seminar, gallery-based learning, and object-based learning. The program was designed by an archaeologist who excavated at Pompeii with the Anglo American Project in Pompeii.

**UNSW Library**
*Ideas Exchange: Circular Economy*

*Ideas Exchange: Circular Economy* was a panel discussion at UNSW Library exploring how diverse disciplines challenge traditional notions of material design, production, and waste. Part of the *Materials Revolution* exhibition, the event brought together experts to share cross-disciplinary contributions towards advancing a circular economy and minimising landfill.



# Engagement Programs
## Medium Organisations



**4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art**
*Lunar New Year Festival: Year of the Fire Horse (An Offering, A Burning, A Prayer)*

For Lunar New Year 2026, 4A transformed its annual exhibition into a dynamic, precinct-wide festival across Haymarket. Encompassing contemporary art, performance, public art, food and community-led activities, the program engaged audiences as viewers, participants and cultural contributors, reaching new audiences and creating new opportunities for participation, connection and cultural exchange.

**Albury LibraryMuseum**
*Wiradjuri Family Language Trail*

The *Wiradjuri Family Language Trail* is a digital tour of Albury LibraryMuseum, allowing visitors to access content about Wiradjuri language, objects and stories using their own devices via QR codes located throughout the building. Showcasing museum artefacts, audio descriptions, and cultural stories the tour is accessible, engaging, and culturally respectful.






**Blue Mountains Cultural Centre**
*PLAY! Engagement Programs*

The PLAYSHOPS, interactive PLAYLAB space and PLAYMAP children's gallery trail transformed the gallery experience of *PLAY!* into active participation both within and beyond the exhibition. Designed to encourage creativity, exploration and connection, these accessible experiences welcomed diverse audiences, supported intergenerational learning, and fostered meaningful engagement with contemporary art through play.






**Chifley Home and Education Centre and Arts OutWest**
*MILLTOWN*

Produced by Chifley Home and Education Centre and Arts OutWest, the film *MILLTOWN* was an innovative community-led engagement project. Through oral histories, archival material and personal storytelling, former residents of Bathurst's historic Milltown area co-created the film that preserves local heritage and strengthens community connections while engaging new audiences with the region's social history.



## Gosford Regional Gallery
*Who are You?*

*Who are You?* was a First Nations Student Residency project facilitated by Gosford Regional Gallery with the artist Garry Purchase. The program centred on prioritising Indigenous narratives, ways of knowing and cultural practice and included artmaking & cultural workshops for local First Nations students to design a series of street banners. The residency ran alongside Purchase's exhibition *Who Are You?*

## Goulburn Regional Art Gallery
*Paws on Public Art*

Goulburn Regional Art Gallery and Goulburn Mulwaree Animal Shelter collaborated on *Paws on Public Art,* a new partnership and social media initiative to support local animals in need. By pairing dogs with public artworks, the project offers a new way to appreciate public art and to see dogs successfully adopted to loving homes.





## Grafton Regional Gallery
*L U N A R_B I O M E*

*L U N A R_B I O M E*, a group exhibition brought together by Clarence Valley artist-run initiative Esk Studio. Augmented by a series of gatherings, performances, educators' evening and public programs that resonated beyond the exhibition itself, audiences were encouraged to listen, learn, and remember our place as caretakers within a living, breathing Earth.





## Hurstville Museum & Gallery
*Bilingual Baby Explorers*

*Bilingual Baby Explorers* welcomed infants under 12 months and their carers to explore Hurstville Museum & Gallery through play, songs and stories in Greek, Spanish, Mandarin and Nepali. Open to all families, the program fostered early learning, cultural inclusion, social connection and a sense of belonging.




## Maitland Regional Art Gallery
*Future Creatives*

*Future Creatives Forum* was a free annual creative industries event connecting young people from across the Lower Hunter who are at a pivotal stage in their education with leading artists and creative professionals. Presented by Maitland Regional Art Gallery and the University of Newcastle, the Forum combined artist talks, workshops, exhibition experiences and career insights to inspire the region's next generation of creatives.

## Manly Art Gallery & Museum
*The Collective for Environmental Art & Design (CEAD)*

Now in its third year, the *Collective for Environmental Art & Design (CEAD)* is MAG&M's ongoing platform for environmental engagement. Through exhibitions, forums, participatory programs and publications, *CEAD* brought artists, designers, environmental practitioners and communities together to exchange knowledge, foster collaboration and explore creative responses to our shared environmental challenges.







## Museum of Art and Culture, yapang
*Wreath of Nikinpa*

MAC yapang collaborated with the Nikinpa Women's Art Group, a collective of Aboriginal women supported by Moolonbiba Aboriginal Corporation, to create a unique mosaic public artwork as part of the revitalisation of the MAC yapang Sculpture Park and the relaunch of historic Awaba House. The collaborative process opened new artmaking techniques to the group while paying homage to the site (Nikinpa – the place of coal), transforming a well-loved community art practice into a significant civic artwork with lasting public value.

## National Art School Gallery
*The Neighbour at the Gate*

The opening week program focused on agency, storytelling and community building, providing accessible entry points and space to explore exhibition themes that unpack the impacts of previous immigration policies and post-frontier national identity-making on First Nations and Asian Australian peoples, highlighting the historical and contemporary parallels between these communities.



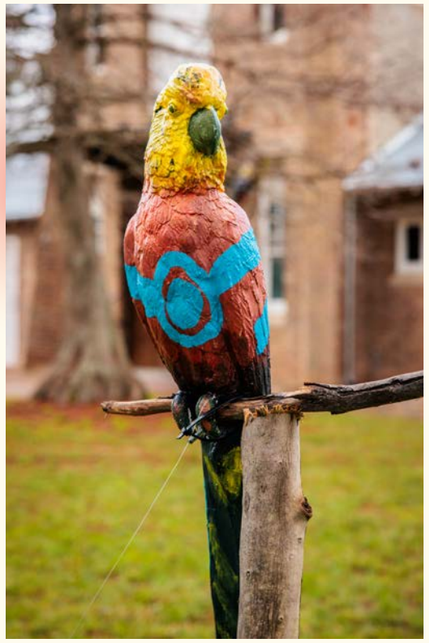


**New England Regional Art Museum**
*How to Weather Together*

*How to Weather Together* explored climate change through the everyday experience of weather, using art, performance, film, poetry and participatory activities to foster connection and reflection. Extending beyond the gallery, the Community Weathering Station at Black Gully Festival invited audiences to collectively imagine creative ways of living with environmental change.

**Ngununggula | Southern Highlands Regional Gallery**
*Glossy Black Cockatoo Project*

Through creative engagement and education, the *Glossy Black Cockatoo Project* aimed to raise awareness of the endangered glossy black cockatoo. Involving all 23 primary schools in the Southern Highlands, First Nations community, Wingecarribee Shire Council, the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, and Ngununggula, the project included the creation of sculptures, installations and special maps.





**Orange Regional Gallery**
*Connecting to Place (Pilot 2025/26)*

*Connecting to Place* was an art and wellbeing program that welcomed people from the local migrant and refugee community for monthly facilitated visits to the Gallery. The program created new opportunities for meaningful social connection and address loneliness and isolation through shared lunch, slow-looking, conversation, and collaborative art-making activities led by artist educators.





**Parramatta Artists Studios**
*Bare Skills: How to be an Artist at the End of the World*

*Bare Skills* was an innovative youth-led series of art and survival workshops for people aged 14–25. Grounded in Baramadagal and Dharug knowledge, the program brought young people, artists and experts together to build practical skills, climate resilience and collective care, while imagining creative ways to navigate uncertain futures. Using hands-on activities young people explored how they might navigate uncertain futures collectively rather than individually.

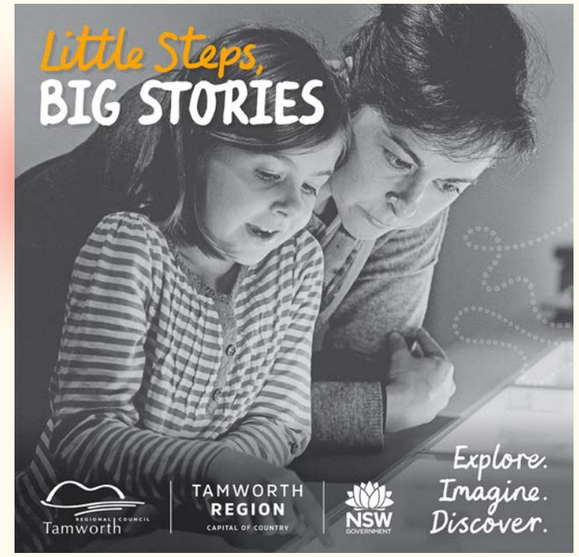


**Tamworth Regional Gallery**
*Tamworth Regional Community Choir*

The Tamworth Regional Community Choir uses singing and music to create connection, inclusion and wellbeing within a gallery setting and demonstrates how a gallery can use non-traditional creative practice to build meaningful and sustained connections with its community. Originating through partnerships supporting people living with dementia and their carers, the choir brings diverse community members together through singing, collaboration and performance.

**Tamworth Regional Museums**
*Little Steps, Big Stories*

This free guided program invites parents and children to go on monthly adventures at Tamworth Regional Museums, where learning feels like play and curiosity is always welcome. Each session incorporates an informative guided tour and a hands-on creative activity that matches the theme of the participating museum, and with friendly guides leading the way, kids can ask questions, spot interesting objects, and uncover stories from Tamworth's rich cultural heritage.






**Tweed Regional Gallery &**
**Margaret Olley Art Centre**
*Exploring Baabinje's Backyard*

A First Nations-led program, *Exploring Baabinje's Backyard* was a response to the exhibition *Baabinje's Backyard*, which was based on the children's book by Dr Bronwyn Bancroft AM (Bundjalung) and Ella Noah Bancroft (Bundjalung). Connecting students across preschool to Year 2 through yarning, exhibition exploration and artmaking, the program created meaningful learning experiences for young audiences and their educators.





**Tweed Regional Museum**
*Connected: Signals to Stars*

*Connected: Signal to Stars* brought a world-class museum experience directly to small inland schools across regional Northern NSW through the Museum on Wheels. The project toured to 6 LGAs across inland Northern NSW: Kyogle, Tenterfield, Glen Innes Severn, Gwydir and Moree Plains. Guided by two experienced teacher educators, primary students explored how First Nations knowledge, telecommunications and digital technologies have played a central role in building and connecting small and isolated communities across time and place.

# Engagement Programs

## Large Organisations



**Art Gallery of New South Wales**
*Pathways to Practice program with Little Orange Studio*

Through a long-term partnership between the Art Gallery of NSW and Little Orange Studio, ten artists with disability developed and presented major commissions, exhibitions and public programs. Across 2025–26, the *Pathways to Practice* program increased visibility, professional opportunities and audience engagement while championing inclusion in contemporary visual arts.

**Australian Museum**
*Ask the AM*

*Ask the AM* gives people a new way to explore trusted knowledge by asking questions in their own words. This sector-leading AI-assisted search experience strengthens the Australian Museum's digital engagement by connecting online audiences with natural science, culture and visitor information through inclusive language, transparent sources, responsible guardrails and ease of discovery.






**Blacktown Arts**
*Blacktown Garage Party*

*Blacktown Garage Party* was a two-day family friendly festival presented in partnership with Sydney Festival and Powerhouse Parramatta celebrating Pasifika culture, music, art, and karaoke. The program created an atmosphere for audiences to gain insights into a culturally grounded, welcoming and intergenerational experience, and featured a commissioned installation by international artists Edith Amituanai and Sione Monu, alongside local artist Salote Tawale.





**Murray Arts Museum Albury (MAMA)**
*Yamandhu wudagarbinya?*

Through tours, creative activities, school learning programs, family experiences and teacher resources, *Yamandhu wudagarbinya?* encouraged children, families and schools to engage with Wiradjuri language and culture. The program built lasting connections between the artist, the museum and the community, creating active learning spaces, making activities and online resources.



**Museum of Contemporary Art Australia & Bayside Council**
*Dennis Golding: On the Foreshore*

*On the Foreshore* presented large-scale outdoor murals created by Kamilaroi/Gamilaraay/Biripi artist Dennis Golding with young people from the Bayside area. Inspired by the land and waterways of Kamay Botany Bay, *On the Foreshore* was a creative response to living and playing on Country and celebrated identity, culture and community on the site where First Nations people first encountered European settlers.

**Museums of History NSW**
*Dream Feast*

Presented for Vivid Food 2026, *Dream Feast* transformed the Caroline Simpson Library Collection into a multisensory dining experience at The Mint using food, music and projections to create a contemporary dining experience through a heritage lens. Drawing on archival menus, guests were invited to share a five-course feast that offered a contemporary reflection on how tastes, rituals and ways of gathering have evolved over time.





**Museums of History NSW and Parliament of NSW**
*Reconciliation Through First Nations Languages Virtual event*

*Reconciliation Through First Nations Languages* was a unique online learning experience for almost 10,000 primary-aged students created by Museums of History NSW and Parliament of NSW. The Parliament's expertise in civics and reconciliation initiatives, combined with Museums of History NSW's language revitalisation project and history expertise connected students to Aboriginal language preservation and cultural knowledge.



**Newcastle Art Gallery**
*Water Stories*

*Water Stories* was an interactive digital art experience that transformed Newcastle Art Gallery's facade into a glowing underwater aquarium. Inspired by local waterways and First Nations storytelling, the project created a participatory public work of art that connected culture, creativity, and environmental awareness during the Gallery's reopening celebrations.





**Newcastle Museum**
*Hunter Science Festival 2025*

The *Hunter Science Festival* was a leading regional science engagement program that removed barriers to STEM participation, transforming the way regional communities connect with science. Admission was free and the Festival program included hands-on exhibits, live demonstrations, workshops and conversations with scientists and innovators. With record attendance of more than 7,000 visitors and over 30 partners, it demonstrated outstanding collaboration, community impact and innovation.

# Accessible Arts Award for Access and Inclusion

Accessible Arts is the peak arts and disability organisation in New South Wales, advancing the rights of, and opportunities for, people with disability or who are d/Deaf to develop and sustain professional careers in the arts and have equitable access to arts and culture across NSW.

Accessible Arts has partnered with Museums & Galleries of NSW to present the Award for Access and Inclusion across exhibition and engagement categories from both museums and galleries.





## Lismore Regional Gallery
*NOISY HOUR*

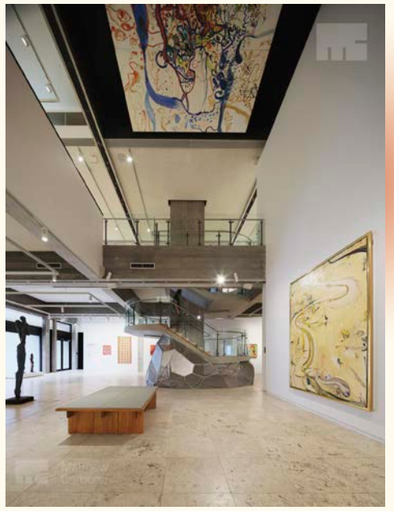
*NOISY HOUR,* an ongoing access program was developed from feedback by community members living with disability, who noted that quiet galleries can be a barrier for people who vocalise or move while experiencing art. Each exhibition round, a creative practitioner responds to current exhibitions, inviting audiences to express themselves freely, supporting diverse ways of experiencing art. Eight programs have been delivered, half engaging artists with disability, including REDInc's artist collective. Trialled with an MGNSW Audience Development Fund grant, it is now an ongoing program.

## Maitland Regional Art Gallery
*Darren Horsefield: Recycled Monster Art*

*Recycled Monster Art* was an evolving installation by Hunter artist Darren Horsfield of more than 100 sculptures made from discarded plastic. Horsfield worked from an on-site studio throughout the exhibition transforming waste into playful monsters. Horsfield was presented as an artist first, challenging perceptions of disability further professional outcomes were generated for the artist, including the sale of 47 artworks. The project attracted more than 28,000 visitors and a free school holiday program engaged 168 participants.





## Newcastle Art Gallery
*Access in the Reimagined Newcastle Art Gallery*

Developed by community, for community, Newcastle Art Gallery's reopening placed accessibility at the centre of the visitor experience, integrating it seamlessly across infrastructure, interpretation and programming. Fayen d'Evie's sculptural commission integrated tactile translations of collection works, Braille and site-derived materials. Funded through the MGNSW Audience Development Fund, the Gallery launched its first permanent digital access guide, including audio interpretation, audio description, Auslan video and transcripts. This access-focused approach demonstrated how accessibility can drive innovation, enrich cultural participation and transform institutional practice.

## The Gale History Museum at Macquarie University
*Signs, Symbols, Ciphers: Decoding Communication*

*Signs, Symbols, Ciphers* explored how humans encode and interpret information, from writing and braille to Auslan and encryption. Developed with Marianne Strauss, a PhD student who has lived experience of blindness, the exhibition incorporated a braille and large print booklet with a tactile QR code linking to online text with text-to-speech. A NextSense School collaboration added an Auslan alphabet poster and video. The Museum's understanding of accessibility was transformed and it now includes braille, large print and tactile digital access in all new exhibitions.





## Verge Gallery
*Dismantle / Assemble*

*Dismantle / Assemble* by Cindy Yuen-Zhe Chen was a multidisciplinary exhibition which explored how Southeast Asian histories are inherited and transformed through family memory, keepsakes and migration. The exhibition included tactile sculptures Auslan videos, audio descriptions, braille and tactile markings and was produced in consultation with blind/low vision and d/Deaf and hard of hearing communities. The exhibition aimed to reduce barriers to participation for audiences with diverse sensory and communication needs and its success resulted in enquiries from other NSW galleries about implementing accessibility measures.


THE
PORTLAND DISTRICT HOSPITAL
VISITING REGULATIONS
MONDAY
WEDNESDAY
FRIDAY
SUNDAY
2-15 TO 3-15 P.M.
EVENING
6-45 TO 8-00 P.M. DAILY

# Volunteer Achievement Award

The Volunteer Achievement Award acknowledges the outstanding contribution of an individual who has demonstrated leadership in the completion of a significant project for their organisation in the previous 12 months, or through developing creative solutions to address challenges faced by the organisation.



**Carol Olsen**
*Rocky Hill War Memorial and Museum*

Carol made a contribution to one of the museum's most ambitious projects, leading a major collections audit reviewing more than 3,500 catalogue records in preparation for migration to a new collection management system. She rewrote descriptions, researched objects, prepared significance statements and condition reports, and verified key collection data. Carol's work representing hundreds of volunteer hours has significantly strengthened the museum's ability to manage, interpret and provide access to its collection.

**Heather Green**
*Emmaville Mining Museum*

Heather Green has strengthened Emmaville Mining Museum's collection management, research and visitor resources. She supported the organisation of the Museum's diverse collection by contributing to a catalogue in excess of 6,000 items, making the collection more accessible. Heather undertook extensive research into local mining and community history, restored historical photographs and developed displays and publications. She also designed a visitor brochure, implemented a touchscreen display and is the museum's Treasurer.





**Margaret Bain**
*New England Regional Art Museum*

After five years of research, Margaret self-published A Portrait of Howard Hinton, a sell-out book deepening the understanding of NERAM's founding patron. She donated all profits, approximately $6,000, to support collection conservation. Margaret also delivered talks, guided the Friends of NERAM's Footsteps of Hinton tour, and continued her research and front-of-house volunteering. Her work has strengthened NERAM's institutional knowledge, supported collection care, and made its history more accessible to the community.






**Tony Gilmour**
*Pilot's Cottage Museum*

Tony Gilmour has enhanced the Kiama Historical Society by overhauling membership and volunteer management, revitalising the patron program, and raising the museum's profile. The Society faced eviction from the heritage-listed Pilot's Cottage in April 2026 and, with only five days to respond during the Easter holiday, Tony spearheaded the campaign to save it. Mobilising members and engaging politicians and historical organisations, he presented the museum's case to Kiama Council, securing the museum's tenancy.

# Volunteer Museum of the Year

The Volunteer Museum of the Year Award acknowledges outstanding activities and achievements over the previous 12 months, including significant governance or policy work; contributions to community heritage and local histories; creative responses to challenges; major collection projects; new audience-focused initiatives; community partnerships; and significant events.



## Cringila Museum

Cringila Museum continues to promote Maltese culture and heritage through its collection and commissioned artworks.. Over the past 12 months, the Museum commissioned a second mural, maintained its displays and promoted its activities. Operating without dedicated funding, the association has invested significant funds over 11 years to develop the Museum. Through volunteer leadership and collaboration with artists, it preserves and shares Maltese history, helping younger generations understand their cultural heritage.

## Gerringong Heritage Museum

Over the past 12 months, Gerringong Heritage Museum's volunteer team delivered the Werri 100 Project, celebrating 100 years of Werri Beach history through community stories, photographs and historical research. Attracting approximately 3,000 visitors, the project included a public exhibition, the creation of a 200-page book, and a map and signs for a self-guided walking tour. Collaboration with the State Library of NSW, local groups and residents raised the Museum's profile and demonstrated the value of community-led projects.






## Port Macquarie Museum

Over the past 12 months, the museum has commenced major conservation works on its historic Store building, curated three exhibitions, and digitised 333 collection items for public access through eHive and Trove. The Museum delivered creative workshops, progressed collaborative projects with Birpai Elders and artists and published a new local history book.The museum secured government and philanthropic grants to support 10 projects, strengthened partnerships and advanced the Museum's sustainability and long-term resilience.






## RSL LifeCare ANZAC Village, Narrabeen, War Museum

Over the past 12 months, the museum has doubled visitor engagement through interactive resources, storytelling and enhanced displays. Volunteers developed hands-on activities, self-guided tours and storytelling guides, bringing to life personal stories of military service. New interpretation includes QR codes, information boards, an aircraft booklet and a Vietcong Tunnel Diorama built by volunteers. These projects have increased community awareness and reinforced the museum's role at RSL LifeCare in education and historical understanding.

## The Glen Museum

During 2025–26, the Glen Museum's long-serving volunteers continued its development from a private collection into a professionally managed community museum. They improved displays and object interpretation, cared for the collection, researched local history and began cataloguing the diverse Charlie Pinch Collection. Volunteers expanded visits for school and community groups sharing knowledge and memories of Portland. Through collection management, visitor engagement and community relationships, they strengthened the Museum's role in preserving Portland's history.



# ACHAA Awards

Aboriginal Culture, Heritage & Arts Association (ACHAA) is the Peak Body for Aboriginal community-controlled cultural spaces across NSW. Its 23 member centres comprise cultural centres, knowledge centres, language centres, galleries, museums and Keeping Places.

Through inspiring community leadership, ACHAA members create Living Centres for Living Cultures dedicated to advancing NSW Aboriginal culture, arts and heritage.

ACHAA has worked closely with Museums & Galleries of NSW since its foundation in 2014. Each year since 2019, ACHAA has presented two IMAGinE Awards:

- The ACHAA Award for Outstanding Lifetime Contribution to NSW Aboriginal Culture, Heritage and Arts
- The ACHAA Award for Excellence by an Aboriginal Curator



# The ACHAA Award for Outstanding Lifetime Contribution to NSW Aboriginal Culture, Heritage and Arts

## *Rhoda Roberts AO*

This year's ACHAA IMAGinE Award for Outstanding Lifetime Contribution to NSW Aboriginal culture, heritage and arts is dedicated to Rhoda Roberts AO.

A proud Widjabul Weiybul woman from the Bunjalung Nation, Rhoda is a much admired and widely recognised creative force, creating works of lasting impact on national and international stages.

One of Australia's greatest trailblazing cultural warriors, Rhoda was a producer, writer, broadcaster and performer whose creativity was fearless and driven, inspiring countless others to follow and creating new pathways and ways of seeing First Nations arts and culture everywhere.

Much of her work challenged Australian arts and cultural institutions to make room for truth by elevating Black representation and excellence.

As the daughter of Pastor and activist Uncle Frank Roberts Jr, Rhoda's introduction to Aboriginal politics started early. It was also the beginning of her understanding of the power of storytelling. Originally wanting to be a journalist, she found her voice while studying at Brian Syron's City Acting Studio in Sydney before becoming a co-founder of the Aboriginal National Black Theatre Trust in 1987.

Rhoda became the first Aboriginal presenter on Australian television on the SBS program First in Line. It was aptly named, launching a career of firsts in media and the arts: She was the creative producer of The Dreaming, the first of four Cultural Olympiad Festivals leading up to the Sydney 2000 Olympics.

From there she established The Dreaming Festival, first in Sydney and later at Woodford in Queensland. Having also overseen The Awakening segment of the Sydney Olympics Opening Ceremony, Rhoda had in a few short years developed a formidable reputation as a top producer of large-scale cultural events.

As creative director for Sydney's New Year's Eve celebrations, her personal favourite, Rhoda brought unique Aboriginal perspectives to the stirring spectacle of fireworks and musical accompaniment. She brought a quieter, more respectful tone to the dawn ceremony on 26 January. But in terms of lasting traditions, there is no doubt that by introducing the expression Welcome to Country to the modern era, Rhoda created a legacy that has reshaped Australian culture.

Having been the inaugural Indigenous Sydney Opera House Trustee, it seemed natural that she would return there later to become its first Head of Indigenous Programming, overseeing Songlines and later Badu Gili projections of Indigenous artworks across the rooftops as well as the Homeground Festival with its Dance Rites, bringing together First Nations dancers from across the country in a celebration of culture through dance.

Yet in person, Rhoda was almost the opposite of these epic productions: humble, exuding warmth, curiosity and on an endless quest to see First Nations youth excel, including her own three children, Emily, Jack and Sarah.

There are too many achievements to list here; truly a lifetime's contribution to Aboriginal arts and culture. This award is just one of many that have recognised Rhoda's unique gifts since her sad passing in March this year.

One of those, from Creative Australia, is fittingly the Rhoda Roberts Trailblazer Award. With nominations open for the inaugural award until 1 December, it will be an enduring reminder of Rhoda's greatest achievements: her gift for nurturing talent and emboldening future generations to carry the flame forward.



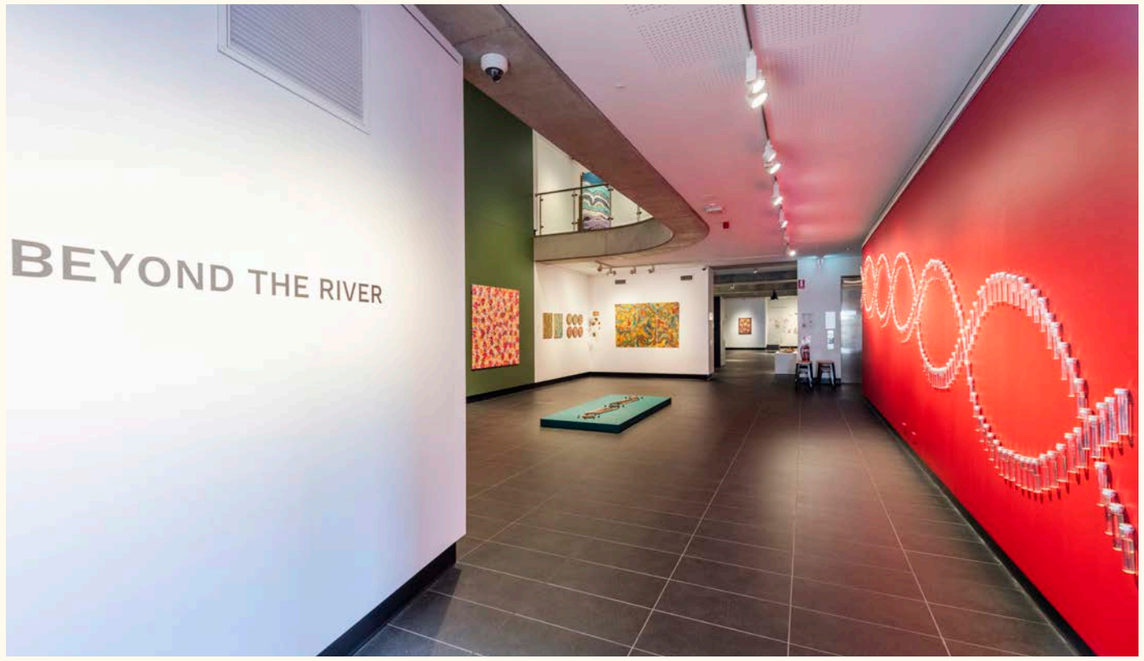
# The ACHAA Award for Excellence by an Aboriginal Curator



**Frances Belle Parker**
Grafton Regional Gallery
*Beyond The River*

Curated by Yaegl artist Frances Belle Parker, *Beyond the River* brought together 11 First Nations women artists connected to the lands and waters of the Yaegl, Bundjalung and Gumbaynggirr nations. The exhibition explored First Nations women's knowledge systems and the cultural significance and preservation of the Clarence River, also known as Breimba, Biirrinba and Bindarray.

Parker grounded the exhibition in connections to Country, kin and culture, bringing the artists together through a collaborative vision. She facilitated workshops and mentoring with Dr Bianca Beetson and Dr Bronwyn Bancroft, supporting the artists to explore their connections to Country and the river. The project strengthened their individual practices through a collective contemporary lens.



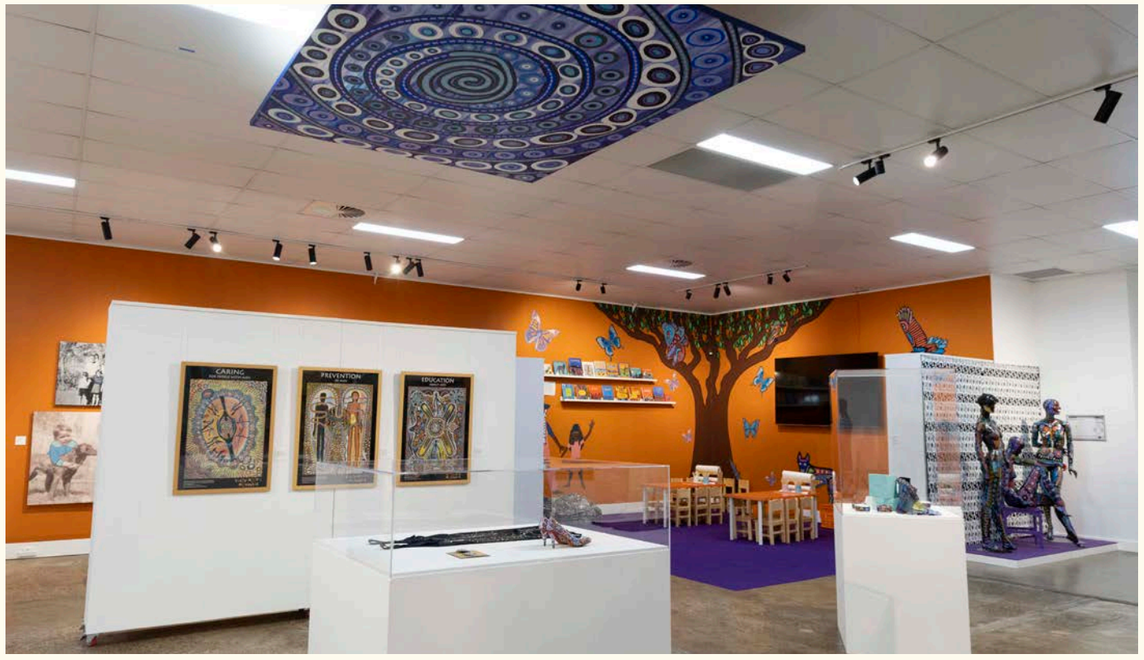



**Kyra Kum-Sing**
Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative
*I am Gurgun: A retrospective of work by Dr. Bronwyn Bancroft AM*



Curated by Kyra Kum-Sing, *I am Gurgun* presented a major retrospective showcasing 50 years of Dr Bronwyn Bancroft AM's artistic practice. The exhibition provided audiences with a rare opportunity to experience the depth and diversity of the artist's creative journey, bringing together paintings, textiles, book illustrations, health promotional posters and historical ephemera from major collections and the artist's studio.

Working with curators and conservation teams, Kum-Sing secured significant loans and organised the exhibition around themes exploring defining moments in Bancroft's career. These included her fashion designs from the 1980s, a dedicated gallery space exploring family through mixed-media works and paintings, and an interactive children's space featuring audiovisual storytelling, a workshop area and a mural by Bancroft's daughter, Rubyrose Bancroft.





## Kyra Kum-Sing

Customs House

*Barani / Barrabugu (Yesterday / Tomorrow)*

*Barani / Barrabugu (Yesterday / Tomorrow)* explores Sydney Aboriginal histories, places, people and activism through 31 stories drawn from the City of Sydney's Barani website and community archives. Curated by Kyra Kum-Sing, the exhibition at Customs House was the first City of Sydney-produced exhibition in the newly refurbished space to be curated by an Aboriginal curator.

Kyra led consultation with Aboriginal communities and an advisory panel, ensuring their perspectives informed the selection and interpretation of stories and places. Through photographs, historical records and community-held collections, the exhibition celebrates continuing connections to Country and the enduring strength of Aboriginal culture in Sydney. Kyra also mentored emerging curator Nioka Lowe-Brennan, supporting knowledge transfer and future Aboriginal curatorial capacity.






## Ronald Briggs

State Library of NSW

*Mervyn Bishop: Close Up*

As Senior Librarian, Indigenous Collections, Ronald Briggs led the State Library of NSW's 2024 acquisition of Mervyn Bishop's photographic archive and curated *Mervyn Bishop: Close Up*. The exhibition explored Bishop's career as Australia's first Aboriginal press photographer, spanning more than 50 years, alongside the personal and family influences behind his work.

Across three spaces, it presented professional photographs, intimate family images and a projection of photographs from the archive. Ronald worked with Library cataloguing staff to document more than 200,000 images and collaborated closely with Bishop and his family to identify people, verify stories and guide selection for display. This process uncovered candid family photographs and early images taken by Bishop's mother, creating a lasting record for the Library and Bishop's community.





# Credits

Special thanks to this year's IMAGinE Awards and ACHAA Awards judges: **ACHAA Comittee, Alice McAuliffe, Amy Mills, Cassandra Li, Ellen Lloyd Jones, Fiona Pulford, Jasmin Brown, Julianne Liddicoat, Kalindi Hopping, Laura Carey, Naomi Manning, Vanessa James.**

IMAGinE Awards logo by **Kerri Kennedy**.

## Image credits

### Introduction

**v /** Festival Opening Night. Photo: Christina Mishell.

### Exhibition Projects – Galleries / Visual Arts

**02 /** Photo: James Horan for Museums of History NSW.
**03 / Top** Courtesy of Airspace Projects. **Bottom** A family viewing *Holding Light* exhibition at Bondi Pavilion Art Gallery, Sydney, June 2026. Photo: Ella Dreyfus.
**04 / Top** *Rewritten Ground,* installation view, clockwise Kendell Watts, Sarah Randall and Joel Tonks. **Bottom** Photo: Jessica Maurer.
**05 / Top** *Home | a place we call*, Hawkesbury Regional Gallery 2026. Rosa Visciano, Doilies, fru-fru, cushions and Amaretti biscuits (detail), 2026, stoneware, cream glaze, underglaze, glaze, chalk & acrylic paint, lacquer, wax, papier mâché, fabric, fabric collage, copper foil, gold and silver leaf, found objects, Hawkesbury Regional Gallery. **Bottom** Manning Regional Art Gallery *feathered: Birds in Myth and Memory*, 2025.
**06 / Top** Photo: Amber Hooper. **Bottom** Courtesy of Mudgee Arts Precinct.
**07 / Top** Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre, School Holiday Workshop, *Muscle: Simon Reece*, 2026. **Bottom** *Sress Fugue in Blue* by Madeleine K. Snow, model Mahalia Leckner, Jewellery courtesy Studio Melt, on location at the Spray Basins Hunter Water Tomago. Photo: Edwina Richards.
**08 / Top** Photo: Cherie Winter. **Bottom** Cindy Yuen-Zhe Chen, Touching Places Past and Present - Penang, 2026. Photo: Jessica Maurer.
**09 /** *feathered: Birds in Myth and Memory*, 2025, Manning Regional Art Gallery.
**11 / Top** Photo: Dean Qiulin Li. **Bottom** Installation view, *'Acts of Inheritance'*, Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, 7 February – 3 May 2026. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Silversalt Photography.
**12 / Top** Blue Mountains Cultural Centre, *PLAY!* exhibition. KATE REID 'We're all in this together' 2025. Photo: Maja Baska. **Bottom** Photo: Sharon Hickey.
**13 / Top** Photo: Arbil Felma. Courtesy of City of Sydney. **Bottom** Todd Fuller *Dear Christians* (video still).
**14 / Top** Courtesy of Gosford Regional Gallery. **Bottom** Installation image *'Moving'* featuring Hannah Brontë, 'Venus', 2024, digitally printed textiles and featuring Hannah Brontë, 'EYE HEAR U MAGIK' 2020, (still), single channel video, colour, sound, 7:36 min, courtesy the artist. Photo: Silversalt Photography.
**15 / Top** Installation view *Brenda L Croft, 'after/image'* featuring Brenda L Croft. Courtesy the artist and Niagara Galleries, Melbourne. Photo: Silversalt Photography. **Bottom** Jagath Dheerasekara, *'a river is a witness',* installation view, Lewers: Penrith Regional Gallery, 2026. Photo: silversalt.
**16 / Top** '*Clare Milledge: complex notophyll vine forest: ground-proof*' (installation view) exhibited at Lismore Regional Gallery, 29 November 2025 - 15 March 2026. Image courtesy the artist and STATION. Photo: Andy Macpherson Studio. **Bottom** Installation view of *The Art of Adaptation: Culture Changes Everywhere* at Manly Art Gallery & Museum.
**17 / Top** Image: *Salote Tawale: The Tide Continues*, 2026 Museum of Art and Culture, yapang. Photo: Kat Valentine. **Bottom** Jacky Cheng, Imaginary Homelands, 2025, installation view, *The Neighbour at the Gate,* National Art School Gallery, Sydney, 2025, Xuan paper, sumi ink, beeswax, paraffin, natural dyed silk thread, cotton thread, gold Cricula silk cocoons, cotton, joss paper, commissioned by the National Art School with support of the NSW Government through the Blockbusters Funding initiative, image courtesy the artist and the National Art School © the artist. Photo: Peter Morgan.
**18 / Top** *Echoes of the Earth* (installation view), 2025. Photo: Simon Scott. **Bottom** *Drawn from Pain Written from Truth* (installation and audience view), 2026. Photo: Daniel Elliot.
**19 / Top** Harrie Fasher walking through *Before Dawn* at Orange Regional Gallery. Photo: Silversalt Photography. **Bottom** *RELIC*, 2025, Install View. Photo: Jessica Maurer.
**20 / Top** Courtesy of Singleton Arts + Cultural Centre. **Bottom** *Bush Lines* exhibition opening, Gallery View with Liam Keenan, Maud Page and Bridget Guthrie. Photo: Antony Hands
**21 / Top** *'Lynda Draper | Glimmer'*, installation view, 2025, Campbelltown Arts Centre. Photo: Silversalt Photography. **Middle** Jordan Gogos. Installation of garments from Iordanes Spyridon Gogos label, 2021-2025. Photo: Chantel Bann. **Bottom** Gerry Wedd, Mark Patterson, Gabriella Smart, WAVE, 2022, digital video with sound, 12 min. Installation image in *Mud to Masterpiece*. Photo: Zoe Lonergan.
**22 / Top** Art Explorers in *Foreshore* exhibition. Image courtesy Mosman Art Gallery. Photo: Jacquie Manning. **Middle** Courtesy the artist and Milani Gallery, Meanjin Brisbane. Commissioned by Murray Art Museum Albury, 2025. Photo: Jeremy Weihrauch. **Bottom** *New Religion*, Installation view, 2026, Ngununggula. Artworks: Julia Robinson, King of limbs (2023); Rising Dark (2023); It does not dally (2023); and Ergot dreams (2021). Photo: Mim Sterling.
**23 /** Photo: Jessica Maurer.

### Exhibition Projects – Museums / Heritage

**25 / Top** Photo: Louise Kear. **Bottom** Courtesy Clyde River & Batemans Bay Heritage Museum.
**26 / Top** Photo: Mandy Strong. **Bottom** Courtesy of Port Macquarie Museum.
**27 / Top** Courtesy of Snowy Scheme Museum. **Bottom** Photo: Christine Adams.
**29 / Top** *We Are Here,* Aunty Gail Smith. Photo: Jessica Maurer. **Bottom** *Bloomfield: 1925-2025*. Photo: ORM/Kirsten Cunningham.
**28 /** Behind the Scenes exhibition tour for *"Materials Revolution"* (2025), UNSW Library.
**30 / Top** Selection of ancient glass unguentaria. Courtesy of The Gale History Museum, 2026. **Middle** Kyle and Bijang Slabb. Photo: Melting Wax Photography. **Bottom** Behind the Scenes exhibition tour for *Materials Revolution* (2025), UNSW Library.
**31 / Top** *'Georges River Reflections'* Exhibition Installation. **Bottom** *The Antarctic: Scott, Mawson, Shackleton* at the Jervis Bay Maritime Museum & Gallery.
**32 / Top** Photo: Jack of Hearts Photography. **Middle** Photo: Paul Dear. **Bottom** *Nundle's precious gems and mineral collection*, Gallery View. Photo: Sally Alden.
**33 /** *Model Newcastle*, Mechanical Fish Tank. Photo: Paul Dear.

# Credits

## Exhibition Projects – Major Metropolitan Institutions

**35 / Top** Installation view of *Mike Hewson: The Key's Under the Mat*. Courtesy of AGNSW. **Bottom** Courtesy of Queensland Museum.
**36 / Top** Photo: David James. Courtesy of Chau Chak Wing Museum. **Bottom** Photo: James Horan for Museums of History NSW.
**37 / Top** *Paper Universe* Exhibition. Photo: Bruce York, State Library NSW. **Bottom** Mervyn Bishop: Close Up, exhibition view. Photo: Bruce York.
**38 /** Melissa Gilbert, Hyper Temples Playkit Series, 2022. *PLAY!* at Blue Mountains Cultural Centre Photo: Maja Baska.

## Engagement Programs

**39 /** *Blacktown Garage Party.* Photo: Garry Trinh.
**41 / Top** Photo: Brooke Olsen. **Bottom** *Show Us Your Olives!* event at Cowra Regional Art Gallery. Photo: Anne O'Hehir.
**42 / Top** Image still from video. Videographer: Sivani Yaddanapudi. **Bottom** *From Page to Gallery* participants with Sophie Chauncy.
**43 / Top** Jane facilitating a punch needle workshop. Photo: Vicki Cornish. **Bottom** Courtesy of Nambucca District Historical Society.
**44 / Top** Photo: Michele Barker. **Bottom** Artist David Rosetzky keynote lecture, South East Centre for Contemporary Art (SECCA), April 2026. Presented in collaboration with FLING Physical Theatre. April 2026. Photo: Marcus Ward Curran.
**45 / Top** Courtesy of The Gale History Museum. **Bottom** I*deas Exchange: Circular Economy* for *"Materials Revolution"* (2025), UNSW Library.
**46 /** *PAS - Bare Skills, Shelter.* Photo: Rihana Elsamouly.
**47 / Top** PROCESSION // a return to the streets, Chinese Seniors Group and Kogarah Storehouse Indonesian Activity Group with artist Jason Phu, working out of The Kogarah Storehouse. Photo: Christina Mishell. **Bottom** Courtesy of Albury LibraryMuseum.
**48 / Top** PLAYMAP in the City Art Gallery at the Blue Mountains Cultural Centre. **Bottom** Courtesy of Henry Simmons.
**49 / Top** Courtesy of Gosford Regional Gallery. **Bottom** Clementine with detail: James Lieutenant and Kate Vassallo, 'Lilac Walk', acrylic on brick, 2018.
**50 / Top** Image courtesy of Esk Studio and Grafton Regional Gallery. Photo: Chloe Van Dorp, Simon Hughes Photography. **Bottom** B*ilingual Baby Explorers* session featuring a group of mothers and babies participating on a bilingual tour in English and Mandarin.
**51 / Top** Artist Steffie Yee speaking to students at *Future Creatives* 2025. **Bottom** Dabee Wiradjuri Elder Peter Swain transformed storytelling and mark-making into a collective exploration of Country, water and shared custodianship. Part of *CEAD* Forum 2026: A Day with KSCA.
**52 / Top** Photo: Neil Keene. **Bottom** Screenprinting workshop for *The Neighbour at the Gate* public programming, NAS Gallery, 2025. Image courtesy the National Art School Gallery. Photo: Peter Morgan.
**53 / Top** *How to Weather Together* (installation view), 2025. Photo: Simon Scott Photo. **Bottom** *Glossy Black Cockatoo Project* launch event. Photo: Brian Rapsey.
**54 / Top** Artist Educator Antariksa and Connecting to Place participants explore *ARTEXPRESS*. Courtesy of Orange Regional Gallery. **Bottom** Parramatta Artists Studios, *Bare Skills Water*. Photo: Rihana Elsamouly.
**55 / Top** Photo: Emma Stilts. **Bottom** Courtesy of Tamworth Regional Museums.
**56 / Top** Program participants visit the *Baabinje's Backyard* exhibition. Photo: Kristopher Cook Photography. **Bottom** Photo: Sally Singh.
**57 /** Screenprinting workshop for *The Neighbour at the Gate* public programming, NAS Gallery, Sydney, 2025 with support of the NSW Government through the Blockbusters Funding initiative. Image courtesy the National Art School Gallery. Photo: Peter Morgan.
**59 / Top** Artists from Little Orange Studio with their mural project Pet Palace in the Kaldor Family Hall, Naala Nura Art Gallery of New South Wales. Courtesy of Art Gallery of New South Wales. **Bottom** australian.museum/ami Copyright Australian Museum.
**60 / Top** *Blacktown Garage Party.* Photo: Garry Trinh **Bottom** Photo: Jeremy Weihrauch.
**61 / Top** *Dennis Golding: On the Foreshore,* 2026, Ramsgate Beach, Ramsgate NSW, produced by the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia in partnership with Bayside Council. Photo: Garry Trinh. **Middle** Photo: Caroline McCredie for Museums of History NSW. **Bottom** Photo: Frances Cordaro.
**62 / Top** Newcastle Art Gallery *'Water Stories'* 26 September 2025. Photo: Lachlan Matheson. **Bottom** Photo: Lee Illfield.

## Accessible Arts Award for Access and Inclusion

**63 /** Installation image of *Recycled Monster Art: Darren Horsefield.*
**65 / Top** *NOISY HOUR* with REDInc artist collective. Image courtesy of Lismore Regional Gallery. Photo: Elise Derwin. **Bottom** Installation image of *Recycled Monster Art: Darren Horsefield.*
**66 / Top** Installation view, Fayen d'Evie, ( reflecting air ) "...Touch enabled her to discern minute details... which often pass unnoticed...", 2025. Newcastle Art Gallery, Australia, © the artist. Photo: Edwina Richards. **Middle** Perkins Brailler, Loan, Marianne Strauss, 2025. Courtesy of The Gale History Museum. **Bottom** Photo: Jessica Maurer.

## Volunteer Achievement Award

**69 / Top** Photo: Justin Croft. **Bottom** Courtesy of Heather Green.
**70 / Top** Margaret Bain launches 'A Portrait of Howard Hinton; at NERAM, 2025. **Bottom** Photo: Lynne Strong.

## Volunteer Museum of the Year

**71 / Top** Courtesy of Cringila Museum. **Bottom** Courtesy Gerringong & District Historical Society.
**72 / Top** Volunteers Steve, Peter and Anne preparing for works to the historic Store building, May 2026. Courtesy of Port Macquarie Museum. **Middle** Courtesy of RSL LifeCare War Museum. **Bottom** Courtesy of The Glen Museum.

## ACHAA Awards

**71 /** Kylie Tung, Chair, M&GNSW, Marika Duczynski, Chau Chak Wing Museum, The University of Sydney accepts the The ACHAA Award for Excellence by an Aboriginal Curator for *Mungari: Fishing, Resistance, Return*, Auntie Jeanette Crew OAM.
**76 /** Photo: Daniel Boud
**77 / Top** Photo: Sharon Hickey. **Bottom** Photo: Sharon Hickey.
**78 / Top** Photo: Arbil Felman. Courtesy of City of Sydney. **Bottom** Photo: Arbil Felman. Courtesy of City of Sydney.
**79 / Top** Image courtesy of the artist, Frances Belle Parker. **Bottom** Photo: Simon Hughes Photography.
**80 / Top** Ronald Briggs. Photo: Joy Lai. **Bottom** Mervyn Bishop: Close Up, exhibition view. Photo: Bruce York.

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