



Arts north west

CREATIVE FLOOD RESPONSE PROJECT

For my returning,



FRRR
Foundation for Rural
Regional Renewal



Create NSW
Arts, Screen & Culture



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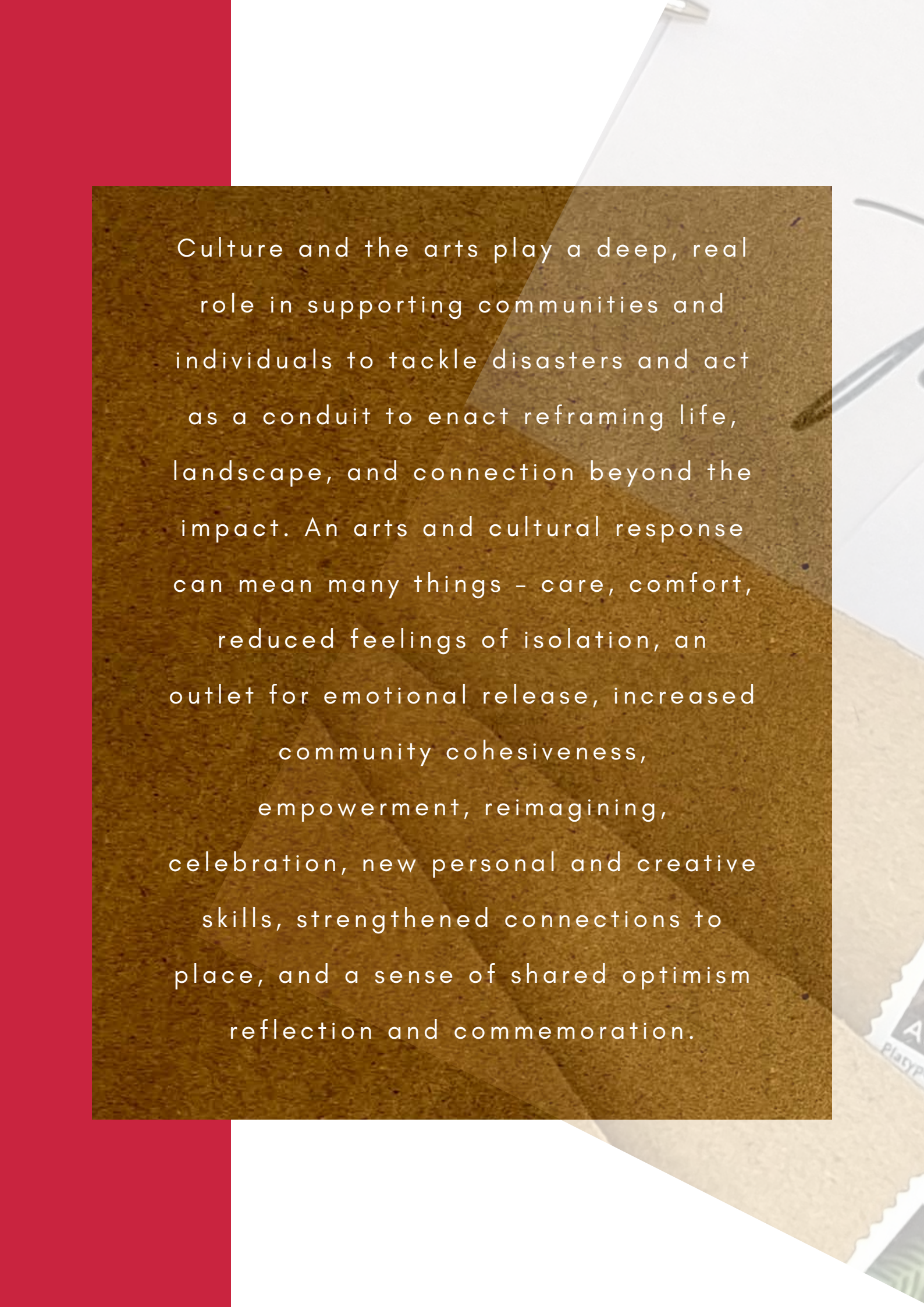
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Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which meet, learn, play and grow.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present and future. We acknowledge the loss and resilience of all First Nations people and are incredibly grateful for the knowledge that remains and the knowledge shared.



Culture and the arts play a deep, real
role in supporting communities and
individuals to tackle disasters and act
as a conduit to enact reframing life,
landscape, and connection beyond the
impact. An arts and cultural response
can mean many things - care, comfort,
reduced feelings of isolation, an
outlet for emotional release, increased
community cohesiveness,
empowerment, reimagining,
celebration, new personal and creative
skills, strengthened connections to
place, and a sense of shared optimism
reflection and commemoration.

Foreword

'A letter to My Returning' is a flood response project designed to creatively respond to the flood events of 2021/2022. During these flood events many regional communities across Australia were effected, and each one was effected differently. The New England North West experienced ongoing flood events that were relentless and continuous for a matter of months especially in the Gunnedah, Narrabri, Tamworth and Liverpool Plains local government areas.

As the peak Arts Organisation for the New England North West, Arts North West knew that a creative response to lifechanging events can be cathartic and assist with the process of recovery. We knew that a creative project was needed to help our communities to explore their regional identities and how they are sculpted by our natural environment, increase resilience and provide space and opportunities for community to gather, reflect and connect post flood events.

Through out the delivery of the project 'A Letter to My Returning' we have learnt about physical impact; the damage to homes, livelihoods and the landscape. We also learnt emotional impact; the fear, the exhaustion and the isolation many people experienced. We are proud to have been able to provide a creative outlet to explore and reflect on the events and support people on their journey to recovery.

'A Letter to my Returning' has been a deeply moving experience that has helped us to establish substantial networks and friendships that have reduced a sense of isolation. Together we have built our community resilience and pathways to support each other into the future.

We sincerely thank all of our participants, artists and every person who have walked on this journey with our region as we walk together on the journey from response to recovery.

From Arts North West Executive Director
Lauren Mackley

CREATIVE FLOOD RESPONSE PROJECT

To my returning,

'A Letter to My Returning...' is a creative recovery response project; working with flood-affected individuals from the local government areas of Gunnedah Shire Council, Narrabri Shire Council, Moree Plains Shire Council and Tamworth Regional Council. The project asked community members to respond to the continual and ongoing flood events that affected numerous townships for over a year.

The letter-writing component provided an opportunity for individuals to respond to their experience during the natural disasters endured, reflect on returning home after a flood event or return to life post-flood.

Arts North West has engaged local artists from flood-affected communities to create artworks that respond to letters as well as their own experiences and interpretations floods the effects on homes, livelihoods, and the landscape.

Artists involved in the 'To My Returning' exhibition include:

MAREE KELLY | AUDREY FOGG | MORAL LACKLEY
JADE PUNCH | MARIE LOW | MARK WASHINGTON
LENA SMITH | TANIA HARTIGAN | ETHAN TOWNS
HELEN STANLEY | AMY CANFIELD | ALYSSA BARWICK
JO DUCK | LISA MARPLE | JULES JANNA
CHRISTIANE BIRKETT | LINDA PAINO

To my returning,

Throughout the project delivery of 'A Letter to My Returning...' Arts North West received letter submissions via post, webforms and email from numerous people from throughout the New England North West.

There were workshops hosted with the Moree Library and Gunnedah Shire Library and Arts North West attended The Gunnedah Flood Support Group and partnered with the Moree Flood response team and visited Boomi, Garah and Mungindi. These workshops encouraged people to participate and created a safe space for people to explore and share the impacts of the floods for themselves and their communities.

We thank everyone who participated in the project and contributed submissions.

We would like to extend a special thanks and commemoration to the incredible Gunnedah poet the late, Kenny 'Sava' Lloyd. He will always be remembered for his passion, tenacity and wit. This project was designed in consultation with Kenny and will be a lasting memory of him. It is people like Kenny who breathe creativity and bind us together in our time of need.



RIP Kenny 'Sava' Lloyd.

The project's framework was co designed by community and Arts North West collaborating closely with both private and public mental health services. This collaboration culminated in the development of an engagement package comprising of letter templates, comprehensive directory of mental health and emergency support services and agencies operational within the region as well as pens and postage paid envelopes.

'Letter to My Returning...' was officially launched in Gunnedah on June 3, as part of the 'Gunnedah Safety Sausage Sizzle' event in Wolseley Park. This event, attended by over 250 individuals, served as a pivotal platform for disseminating information about the project, with more than fifty engagement packages distributed amongst attendees and people providing letters at the event. Arts North West worked alongside Gunnedah Family Support, Gunnedah Shire Council, RAMPH, CAMMS, Red Cross, Centrecare, Gunnedah SES, Gunnedah Police and RFS as well many other community services providers develop pathways for better and cohesive networks in the community to build connectedness during natural disasters.



Maree Kelly

- GUNNEDAH



ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Maree is a landscape painter from Gunnedah in north-western NSW. She lives on a farming property south of Gunnedah near the village of Curlewis. She works from her studio at the family farm on a rocky hillside at the end of Long Mountain with a panoramic view of the plains. Maree has tertiary environmental science and art qualifications, graduating from Newcastle University with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in 2001. Passionate about the environment, her work draws on her knowledge and experience in both fields, creating artworks that reflect her deep connection and understanding of the landscape. Maree has painted and exhibited in many solo and group shows for over 20 years. She has won several local art awards and has been a finalist in national art prizes such as the Paddington Art Prize, Muswellbrook Art Prize, Cromwell's Art Prize, Norvill Art Prize and the Country Energy Landscape Prize.

ARTIST STATEMENT

The painting draws on my personal experiences during the flooding events of 2021-22 and depicts a flooded wheat crop near Emerald Hill (just west of Gunnedah). Like many farming families, we had endured several years of extreme drought, and the season finally looked good. Hopes were high for a good yield. Then the rains came, and the crops we had pinned so much hope on were ruined. Water surged through paddocks, drowning crops, taking precious topsoil, carving out deep gullies and sweeping away fences. Despite the floods' impacts, mother nature's beauty in all its force was something to behold. The painting explores the juxtaposition of this natural beauty against the devastating damage caused by the floods.



'Ruined Wheat Crops' 2023 Oil on canvas, 36cm x 112cm

Jade Punch

- GUNNEDAH



ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Born and bred a Gunnedah gal, Jade completed her preliminary higher school education at St Mary's College with a focus in the Arts, Jade completed her Higher School certificate in 2001, building her base knowledge in Music, Photography, visual arts and design and technology. After the birth of her son in 2011, Jade enjoyed a home maker's position whilst keeping her creative thirst quenched by running children's craft classes at the Gunnedah Country Markets and children's birthday parties, providing a clothing alterations and repairs service and building furniture from discarded objects for local customers.

Jade launched her soul trader business "Jade Punch Art" and seized the opportunity to explore and develop her art skills further, entering and placing in the local show societies' craft pavilion competition in 2017. Jade also received Highly Commended in the Novice section of the 2017 47th Annual Arts and Ceramics exhibition and in the 2017 Biannual Waste Into Art Exhibition.

Jade is passionate about waste reduction and her artworks tend to display her love of repurposing discarded objects and waste materials. She uses her art to encourage a less wasteful community and a circular economy.

ARTIST STATEMENT

I began this piece by scrunching and tearing different papers to symbolise the debris created then transported and deposited into people's yards and homes by the waters. I chose a palette that captures both the sense of despair in the flood effected people as well as the colours of the mud, filth and mould left behind. The use of layering in the work represents multiple flooding events, each flood adding to the damage caused by the one before. I wanted to use key, emotion provoking words from the letters in the work but was also drawn to the beautiful cursive of Mr Loyd's handwriting. The inclusion of his generationally indicative penmanship mixed with rewritten block lettering symbolises the wide stretched effects of the flooding over all generations.

The gold and bronze flecks of colour act as an example of the golden glints reflected by the sun hitting the water as it ebbs and flows. I have created movement with the curves in the tears of the paper, creating the shape of a river as it flows down stream across the top of the work. I wanted to create a personification of the water in some way. Some of the letters likened the flooding to a snake, and one used the metaphorical language of the flood sleeping on their floor. When I researched the symbolism of the snake, I discovered that many cultures believe the snake to be indicative of change and renewal and that the indigenous Australian culture teaches that the snake is the keeper of the rivers and waterways. For these reasons, I have created the snake in a curled up, sleeping position as a representation of the flood itself, with its head pointed in an angular direction upward to meet with the river above, just as our two rivers move toward each other in the Gunnedah region.

The splash of red in the work is a traditional move of mine which I use to profess the completion of my works when practicing with water colour mediums. It is an extension of my signature.



'It slithered from its banks' 2023 Mixed Medium

Mark Washington

- MOREE



ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

I was born in November, 1975 in Moree. I am from the Kamilaroi tribe. There are six in my family. Now I have three kids of my own and two beautiful grannies.

I have been doing art for a while now before coming to TAFE. I used to go to Yurrandaali here in Moree to do art and screen printing. The printed fabric then went overseas. It was here I met Ken Done and he sponsored us to do our screen printing which was made into fashion. We had all the technology. The fashion was even sold in Club Meds.

I have been studying Certificate III Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural art at TAFE this year but it feels like longer. I am really enjoying it. We have done so much this year.

I have enjoyed learning about painting, improving my dot art and landscaping. I have also loved doing carving and sculptures. Carving has been a big part of our culture here on the Mehi River over the generations. I have also used the carvings designs I have done on bark on lino prints which have come up really good. They have sold well with tourists. I have also carved designs into emu eggs and then paint them too. I have also had a go at jewellery making using echidna quills and quandong seed to make necklace. I love art. It makes me feel calm.

ARTIST STATEMENT

This painting is about the Mill- bullah waterholes at Waa Gorge. Waa Gorge is located at Mount Kaputar National Park. The waterholes are spectacular when it rains, with the water streaming down the mountain and landing into waterholes. Over time the pools have become deeper and deeper with the current and power of the water. From the rainfall that created the Mill- bullah waterholes, the heavy rainfall around Mt Kaputar also causes river levels along the Namoi River at Narrabri to rise.

These waterholes were often used to collect water when streams were dry. It is also a place where animals gather for a drink during the dry seasons. As a result, it was also a place that you were able to hunt animals as they drank the water.



'Waa Gorge' 2023 Acrylic on Canvas

Audrey Fogg

- TAMWORTH



ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Audrey Fogg is a proud Gomeroi woman and Registered nurse residing in Tamworth NSW. She is married and has two beautiful daughters. She grew up watching her grandfather artist Cyril Knox painting with his oil paints in his art shed sparking a love of painting. Both her parents love art, painting, drawing and inspired her to sit and spend time in a creative space. Her father loved is Aboriginal art and would sit and carve amazing, detailed images by hand into emu eggs.

Audrey has dedicated the last 4 years to her art, because her priority was to raise her children as a working single mother. She found that she had a passion for painting Aboriginal art on kitchenware. She was thrilled to see that people fell in love with her products, and has them in homes in America, England, The Netherlands and throughout Australia.

Audrey also paints canvas Aboriginal art and has had the pleasure of commissioning a growing number of artworks. She has also been successful in numerous artistic projects.

She loves to tell stories through her art, sharing her Aboriginal culture and heritage.

You can see more of Audrey's work on her Facebook page. Lil Aud's Aboriginal Art.

ARTIST STATEMENT

The Namoi - Reading this I wanted to show the flowing, sliding flood like a Brown snake from an aerial view. This is very much a style I use with a lot of my Aboriginal artworks. I have a number of green islands with small homes viewed from above. The writer considers if they should move away? Maybe next time. This is a reality for so many who love their homes and community.

Dear Floodwaters - Paragraph 2 and 7 were the inspiration for my artwork.

Paragraph 1 - I have painted the shining violet across the paddock and paragraph 7 Woken to chickens wet and panicking. I really appreciated the writer in this letter, so graphic and the emotion you can feel from the letter.

This project was great to be a part of. The floods also impacted my life and my love ones. It also gave me an opportunity to paint artworks I may have not considered painting until I was selected for this.



'Dear Flood Waters' 2023 Acrylic on Canvas

DEAR FLOOD
WATERS



'The Namoi' 2023 Acrylic on Canvas

THE NAMOI

Jo Duck

- GLEN INNES



ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

JO was born Jo-Ann Seaton in Guyra NSW, grew up in the outback and has settled in Glen Innes, the heart of the beautiful New England. JO DUCK is a self-taught lifetime artist and qualified designer who works in acrylics, pen & pencils and digital mediums. Her art covers a broad range of disciplines including landscapes, portraits, graphic design, book illustration, wire sculptures and wall murals, and specialises in visual concept design. JO is a prizewinning artist with her most recent accomplishment being Grand Champion Art in Show at Glen Innes last year. JO teaches her art skills to children and adults, holds Paint & Sip events, caters to small group painting parties as well as teaching NDIS clients Art Therapy. In 2018, Jo opened her own art school, known as ART'SKOOOL with JO DUCK in Glen Innes NSW.

ARTIST STATEMENT

This triptych has been painted in response to The Letter to My Return, and shows in 3 parts the devastation, the displacement and the return. It has been based on the reflections of the survivors, as well as the images that inundated the media following the Hundred Year floods of the Northern Rivers in 2022.

The triptych is not based on any one town, though the scenery is representative of the many towns and villages engulfed by the floods.

(1) "The Devastation" was a distressing piece to paint. How to convey the panic, danger and fear of all those who endured? Having studied the images found on social media and having read the Letters to my Return, I was able to piece together a disturbing scene of chaos, which I hope will touch everyone who observes it. This first part of the painting depicts the height, speed and destruction of the rising waters, with survivors making their way out of the floodwaters that took their homes and livelihoods. The ominous sky of blacks and purples indicative of the ultimate discomfort, shock and depression felt by all.

(2) "The Displacement" was equally distressing. In this part of the painting, with the waters subsiding, I have incorporated the Signpost to represent the survivors' displacement... Where to? Nothing they knew was the same... everything they had, gone...lost in the piles of debris that now littered the streets. For this part, I painted a broken environment with just a few of the survivors under a clearing sky and raw daylight, to emphasise the magnitude of the disaster they had come through.

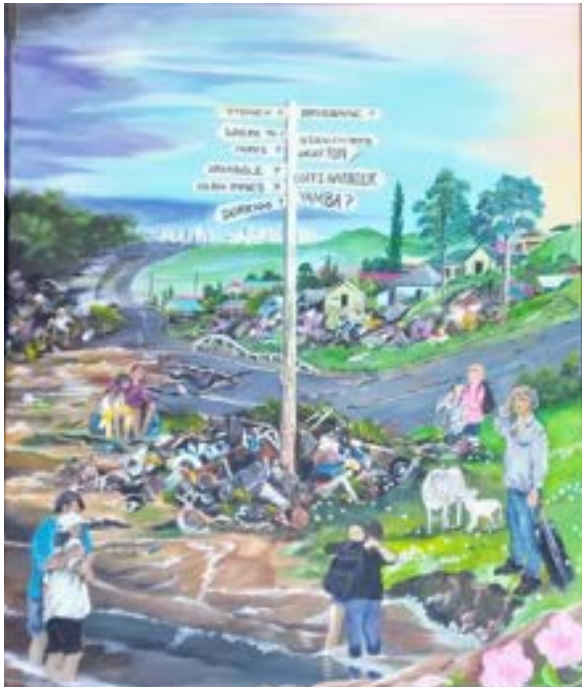
(3) "The Return" ...Thinking this would be an easier piece to paint, I began researching the Northern Rivers' towns, one year on, hoping to find positive images of the region returning to normality, but was saddened to discover not a lot had changed. I then decided to depict those things in life that go on regardless: The river, no longer a threat, serene and back in its bed. The road leading up to its bridge, still in place and functional. The broken pot of someone's beloved Petunias, representing new growth and life going on. The dove hovering over the scene is symbolic of peace returning to what was chaos... and the letter on the parchment, reflective of the feelings of so many survivors.

The triptych in all its three parts was not meant to be a beautiful painting...instead, it has been designed to evoke emotion and empathy for the thousands who suffered this hundred-year climatic event. If it disturbs you, the observer, then my job has been done.



THE DEVASTATION

'The Devistation' 2023 Acrylic on Canvas



THE DISPLACEMENT

'The Displacement' 2023 Acrylic on Canvas



THE RETURN

'The Return' 2023 Acrylic on Canvas

Amy Canfield

- MOREE



ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

My name is Amy and I am a passionate muralist and artist. I have been painting for as long as I can remember; art has always been a significant part of my life. After taking art classes throughout school, I pursued my passion further and obtained a foundation diploma in art and design in the UK. Little did I know that during this time, I was already creating kids' bedroom murals without realizing that being a muralist could be an actual profession. Following my time in school, I decided to take a break from the traditional path and embarked on a journey to Australia to explore and experience new things. It was during this time that my art continued to evolve, and I was fortunate enough to win a competition to design and execute a mural in the rural town of Moree, NSW. This opportunity fueled my creative fire, leading me to work on various other murals, including one for the local art gallery and McDonald's. Designing and installing murals has transformed from a mere job into a profound calling in my life. I wholeheartedly believe that it is my duty to infuse the world with happiness and colour through my artwork. Let's join forces to breathe life into this dream together.

ARTIST STATEMENT

In the aftermath of the devastating floods that swept across Australia, I found solace and inspiration in the heartfelt letters I had read from affected individuals. These acts of sincere communication struck a chord within me, igniting my desire to translate their emotional experiences into an artistic narrative.

Through my art, I strive to bridge the gap between the personal and the universal, bringing forth stories that resonated deeply with me, such as the very humbling poem depicting the chickens in the chicken coop squabbling, not knowing the extent of the disaster yet soldiering on as a sort of metaphor for what was endured by their owners.

The letters I received offered me an intimate glimpse into the lives of those who had experienced loss, confusion, and hardship due to the floods, and it is upon their words that I build my visual exploration. In my creative process, I aim to encapsulate the essence of these letters, capturing their raw emotions and transforming them into visual representations. By employing a combination of mediums, techniques, and styles, I communicate my own response to their stories while inviting viewers to engage in a dialogue of empathy and connection.

My brushstrokes flow freely, depicting the overwhelming force of water sweeping through communities and the heartbreaking aftermath that was left behind. I seek to convey the resilience and strength of these individuals, the resolve to rebuild and find hope amidst the chaos.

Ultimately, my art serves as a tribute to the strength of the Australian people and a testament to the transformative power of empathy. By inviting viewers to contemplate the emotional impact of the floods through my artistic interpretation, I aim to foster a sense of solidarity, compassion, and hope in the face of adversity.



'Muddled' 2023 Acrylic on Canvas

Helen Stanley

- GUNNEDAH



ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Helen Stanley completed an honours degree in Fashion and Textile Design from Winchester School of Art in Hampshire, England in 1986. Since emigrating to Australia in 1988, she has continued to create artwork using many different mediums. These include illustrative works using graphite, ink and watercolour, mixed media works with themes of animals, patterns and nature, silk painting, pastel landscapes, and painting murals. Helen enjoys new challenges and thrives on adding to her repertoire of techniques. Colour is an important feature of her work. Helen enjoys making her pieces appealing by sensitive use of colour. Over the last 25 years she has taught numerous workshops in her local community. Helen regularly exhibits at local shows and has been successful in achieving recognition for her works. She has held two exhibitions with another artist, in her hometown of Gunnedah. Currently, she is President of Arts Gunnedah.

ARTIST STATEMENT

My inspiration for this artwork came from the wonderful letters penned by the community who were witness to the many floods in this region. My family and I have also been under duress of the flood waters on many occasions, so I could relate well to these letters. The title of my artwork is 'Watch the Line'. This feels apt because when the water begins to rise, we anxiously watch the level of the water on a stick placed in a strategic spot.

This artwork is illustrative in nature as I wanted to depict the debris that is below the surface which contrasts with the peaceful atmosphere of the scenery above the floodwaters. The destruction below the water, is shown by the bedraggled wheat, a major concern for the farmers, and the rubbish, such as cans and paper that are all a part of the conglomeration of modern life. The frog, beetles and snails signify that there is life below the surface, therefore showing nature thriving during adversity. The materials I used are ink, watercolour and gouache. This has given some areas a translucent feel and others, solidity, both elements prominent in a landscape hosting a flood.



'Watch the Line' 2023 Ink, Water Colour and Guache on paper

Lisa Marple

- NARRABRI



ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

I am continually fascinated by the innate beauty and potential of my sometimes unconventional materials, experimental techniques and the ability of my art making to tell stories upon a canvas.

Viewers of my work describe it as ethereal, magical and rich in texture and detail. I have been an artist since a small child when I "made do" with the materials I could find around me and manipulated them into objects and artworks which I found to be beautiful and full of meaning. I am largely self taught and for more than thirty years have mapped my own journey of experimentation which lead me into ever new fields of creative expression.

My artwork is for an audience which appreciates the artist who strives to be authentic, skilful and true to representing their unique vision of the world.

ARTIST STATEMENT

As a country artist who experienced and "lived" the floods in our region, reading the "Letters to My Returning" evoked memories and emotions from that time which had become buried in the every day busy-ness of farm, family and work life. We too, were cut off from the rest of the world for several days to a week at a time but were lucky enough that the flood waters encircled our home like a moat and allowed enough high ground to remain for our menagerie of farm animals to be safe. In losing all power, we were bound to each other and Mother Nature in a way in which I had never quite experienced before, with nothing to distract us from our fears, thoughts and emotions. I felt great awe in the sheer power of Mother Nature and her flood waters, a great contrast to our human insignificance and helplessness. Several times a day we would go to check the Bullawa Creek which cut off our farm from the rest of the world. We would mark its tides with a stick to record the ebb and flow.

In this artwork, titled "Surfacing", I wished to represent the complex layers of emotion which the flood experience stirred within us. The deep, dark bottom layers of feathers are like the river rocks and the muddy waters which form the flooding Bullawa Creek bed. They also connect with the "Letter To my Returning" authors' struggle with their darker emotions and thoughts, which can lie latent until a trigger such as a flood disaster, provokes them to rise to the surface. The colour gradient of darkness to light signifies the healing which occurs when we "allow" ourselves to feel and connect with our community after such a traumatic experience. White feathers rise towards the top of the artwork, like the turbulent froth and foam upon the floodwater surface. A piece of river driftwood, from the now dry and drought affected Bullawa Creek riverbed holds everything together in a visual chain of knots, signifying the ongoing and relentless, cyclic systems of nature.



Photography by Jim A. Barker, Narrabri Public School



Photography by Jim A. Barker, Narrabri Public School



Photography by Jim A. Barker, Narrabri Public School

Ethan Towns

- NARRABRI



ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

As a 25-year-old artist from Wee Waa, I proudly walk the path laid by my mother, embracing a deep connection with art. My work is a reflection of my passion for nature and a profound interest in the science that underpins it. With a background in zoology and entomology, understanding the intricate web of life around me is not just a profession but a cornerstone of my creative expression. My artwork is a tapestry that weaves together the scientific intricacies of the natural world and the aesthetic beauty it holds.

ARTIST STATEMENT

The artwork captures the emotional turmoil associated with the decision to leave flood-prone areas. It features a woman with her hair depicted as a tumultuous river, symbolizing the force and unpredictability of nature. Intertwined through her hair is a snake, an allegory for a river system, which is slowly filling up Yarrie lake. This snake is reminiscent of the letter, suggesting the interconnectedness of river systems. In the background, tourists are depicted enjoying themselves, oblivious to the struggles of the locals who are directly affected by the floods. The snake is colored brown, subtly indicating its creeping, insidious presence in this landscape slowing causing the flood.

WORKS IN PROGRESS: 'THE RAGE FLOOD OF MY MIND'



Moral Lackley

- TAMWORTH



ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Moral Lackley is a contemporary Australian artist living in Regional NSW, currently located in Tamworth. Moral Lackley uses various practices, mediums and disciplines to interpret and discover unorthodox ways of approaching contemporary issues. Arts role is to help us to become aware of a feeling that may not be unfamiliar to us but which we did not actively focus on before. This transformative experience is what Moral is constantly seeking. Moral aims to create a visual and experiential process that allows the viewer to understand what constitutes 'us'. Exploring different and shared experiences, perceptions, felt ideas that tether 'us' as a community and makes us a society.

ARTIST STATEMENT

'Void' is the only way to describe the deeply personal first-hand experience myself and my family had throughout the 2021/2022 flood events. These artworks utilise black to represent the 'Void'. The items and statements that once strike fear and anxiety grew to become null of meaning and mundane. Over the course of November 2021 - 2022 our young family had our home inundated with water, we were evacuated and housed in temporary accommodation on numerous occasions and burnt the generosity of friends and family, who time after time helped us clean and pack-up our home. With a baby on my hip, we returned time after time to clean-up and start again only to be met by more water in coming weeks.

The situation became void - exhausting, repetitive and over time it became lacking in intensity, dragging. Often waking or watching a large abyss of water coming to our front door and the 'Void' approaching. With no authority or ability to control.

We were...

Void of place.

Void of voice.

Void of emotions.

Null and void.



'Void #1...' 2023 Flood effected clothing, paint, glue, fabric stiffener

Tania Hartigan

- WALLABADAH



ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Tania Hartigan is a woman of the land with great knowledge of bush foods and owner of 'The Artshack' at Wallabadah, a paradise with deep history in its soils. She grew up in Woolbrook and belongs to the Gamilaraay people with family ties connecting her to Barraba, Quirindi and Gunnedah in the New England North West. Tania grew up surrounded by family and strong role models, with grandparents who always put family first, aunties and uncles that contributed her growth and cultural knowledge. Those same priorities of a tight knit family have been instilled in Tania, she started her family tree as a young girl and has been adding to it ever since.

"I love organising family reunions, I am moved to inspire my kids, nieces and nephews to keep their family close," she said.

Tania uses these bonds as inspiration, capturing family portraits in pastels. Amongst her other inspirations, she describes herself as being earthy, connected to country and all it's whispers of history and life. 'The Artshack', Tania's farm, is her happy place,

"It feels like equal part luck and fate that I ended up here. The terrane the country the trees the ruggedness of the land felt instantly like home."

Tania loves to be immersed in the landscape, around the gum trees and native plants and lively nature. While on a walk around her property, she discovered evidence of sacred sites that is evidence Gomerioi people have travelled through and lived there for thousands of years. Tania says,

"We all look, but we don't see. Art has taught me to slow down and take in the little details that slip past you when life is at full pace."

Tania loves working across the board with mediums, painting is her go to and getting lost in the tones and hues. She also has a talented hand for portraits, print making and weaving.

ARTIST STATEMENT

During the floods, I found that I could not get to work as roads were flooded. One particular morning I was rushing about, the creek was down.....I was off to town. I jump quickly from the car not looking at the ground at my feet. As I stepped down the slop my feet slipped in the mud.....I hit the ground which felt like concrete.....crack!

"We all need to look, be aware of the sign's Mother Earth give to us and not rush through Life. Art has taught me to slow down and take in the little details that slip past you when life is at full pace."

Tania loves working across the board with mediums, painting is her go to and getting lost in the tones and hues. She also has a talented hand for portraits, print making and weaving.

TWO CATS CREATIVE

Marie Low

- GUNNEDAH



Marie Low has been a journalist and communications advisor for more than 30 years. She has worked as a reporter and sub-editor for daily newspapers and has been the editor of two NSW community newspapers. Marie has also worked as a media advisor to state government ministers, headed a government media department, and worked within a well-regarded metropolitan communications consultancy as a senior consultant.

Her family tree change brought her to Tenterfield and then Gunnedah where she now is one half of Two Cats Creative.

Her clients include local government, Australian Community Media who feature a national opinion column by Marie once a fortnight, Downtown Magazine and a number of other regional and national bodies. She has won national awards for both journalism and photography. Marie loves to write and she loves to take creative photos.

Alyssa Barwick and Marie Low are the photographer behind Two Cats Creative. The two have held their own very successful exhibition, Sirens of Gunnedah, which featured conceptual portraits of 52 Gunnedah women. It showed in both Gunnedah and Sydney. They are also accomplished events photographers and have captured everything from Colour Runs to Anzac Day parades, dance and stage shows, agricultural shows and fairs and markets. They are in demand throughout the region for their clear, crisp and creative images that document a large range of events.

Alyssa Barwick

- GUNNEDAH



Alyssa Barwick has worked as a graphic designer for more than 20 years. After working in Canberra she returned to her hometown of Gunnedah and worked as the graphic designer for the Namoi Valley Independent, producing many award-winning editions.

Alyssa now runs her design agency, Two Cats Creative, with friend and business partner, Marie Low. Alyssa is highly regarded for her stylish yet functional design aesthetic.

Alyssa has designed eight books in her time in Gunnedah and now designs websites for a wide range of clients.

In 2019, Alyssa and Marie's photography exhibition, Sirens of Gunnedah, broke opening night records with more than 300 people crowding in to see more than 50 conceptual portraits of Gunnedah women.

Two kids and a dog keep Alyssa busy outside of work.

ARTIST STATEMENT

Words from the Water – The rivers were here long before we called this place home. They have risen and fallen with the breath of the climate and the whim of the weather. Marie Low's Words from the Water visits drought and flood in the north west of New South Wales in the water's own words. This text art is in three parts: My Cracking Skin, Woken Laughing, and My Widest Waters. Words by Marie Low, design by Alyssa Barwick.

1. Gunnedah in flood 2021.

An aerial view as the first of a series of floods spreads through the streets of Gunnedah, New South Wales in November 2021. Image: Marie Low.

2. Wolseley Park.

Homes in Gunnedah, New South Wales are surrounded by water as it floods into Wolseley Park in the middle of town. Image: Marie Low.

3. All the Rivers.

The swollen waterways of Gunnedah, New South Wales, wind a spectacular path through the landscape. Image: Marie Low.

ARTWORK TITLE

Lena Smith

- MOREE



ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Lena Smith is a generational artist who grew up watching her family paint and has several murals in Moree already, including the On Demand bus service, as well as commissions in the Northern Territory. She met with some of the Aboriginal men who worked on the railway line and captured their journey in the mural.

ARTIST STATEMENT

My painting represents the floods that went through Moree and the surrounding towns in 2023. The circles represent each community & the lines connecting them represent the roads. The brown river you see going through the circles represent the flood water which flows straight through the towns. The footprints you see, represent the people/ community coming to help in any way they could. The arches in the top and bottom corners represent shelters. Places that people had to leave their homes and relocate to until the water resided. The animal prints you see, just represent some of native animals you see around Moree that were also impacted by the flood.

Linda Paino

Creeping across the plains, 2023

Acrylic, Pouring
Medium, Silicone on
canvas



ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Linda is a self taught that practices in the Tin Kat Alley Studio in Fassifern. Linda was drawn to the arts in highschool where she privately pursued her practice in painting and drawing. She is drawn to painting the landscapes around her and loves to play with how the land around us can be interpreted, especially when she explores a birds eye perspective. Linda uses strong colours that are found in nature to allow herself to experiment and portray landscapes in abstract styles.

Linda is an annual participant in the Lake Macquarie Open Studios tours where she exhibits her works.

ARTIST STATEMENT

My first experience with flooding was in 2021 when my daughter called me panicking and telling me there is a flood coming. She had just moved by herself to a new town where she had not known anyone; it was her first flood. It was impossible for me to get up to her and all I could do was watch the news, read facebook posts and try and help over the phone. I felt so helpless. I couldn't get to her to comfort her and I couldn't care for her the way I would if I was there. Instead we waited as the water slowly and silently crept across the plains, pulling sediment from the earth and putting my daughter out of reach.

'Creeping Across the Plains' draws from one of the letters which includes "You creep across the plains ever so slowly but relentlessly invade our homes with what always seems like such little time". This letter reminded me of the long wait my daughter and I shared, where we anticipated the imminent mass of water that would reach her. The water takes up majority of the work, pulling from the land as the earth and water become one.

Jule Jarner

The Flood Waters

Pidgeon Hole, 2024

MDF, Plywood,

Acrylic, Paper, Coffee

and Alcohol ink



We will never truly know what was left unread and what was lost in the flood waters. Lets hope our birth certificates, marriage certificates, passports and family photos have not fallen victim to the flood waters. Sadly we can not recover what was lost but what we can do is start rebuilding.

*Help us rebuild by writing your
letter to the flood waters and
putting it in the
Flood Waters Pidgeon Hole.*

This work was donated by Jule Jarner to support the To My Returning Exhibition.

Christiane Birkett

*A Gyrocopters
perspective, 2021-
2022*

Photography



ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Dan started to fly the gyro-copter, which I describe as the motorbike in the sky, in September, 2019, and in April 2020 he received his passenger endorsement.

From my first flight I was captivated, astonished, and delighted by the photographic opportunities – there is so much to see from the air that you aren't aware of from the ground!

The different shapes and angles, the tractor scribbles, the shadows and reflections, the science fiction wormholes, algae 'cliffs', the disguised rainbow serpent making its way across a paddock – !

You can also get close and personal to man made objects, and see machine cemeteries invisible from the ground!



Exhibition Opening

BANK ART MUSEUM MOREE



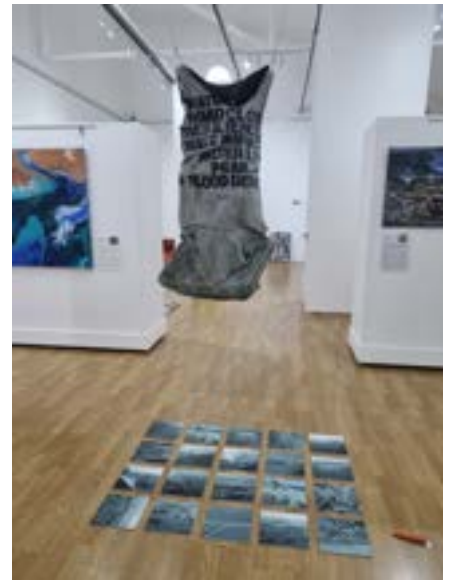




Exhibition Opening

GUNNEDAH BICENTENNIAL
CREATIVE ARTS GALLERY







FRRR

Foundation for Rural
Regional Renewal

This project was made possible with funding by the FRRR Strengthening Rural Communities grant fund, through contributions from The Collie Foundation.

FRRR is a national foundation specifically focused on ensuring the social and economic strength of remote, rural and regional communities of Australia. FRRR connects common purposes and funding with locally prioritised needs through targeted, well-informed investments in local organisations that will stimulate ideas that create vibrant communities.

All of FRRR's funded projects focus on building resilience and strengthening communities. The Strengthening Rural Communities (SRC) Rebuilding Regional Communities (RRC) stream gives small remote, rural and regional communities across Australia the opportunity to access funds for a broad range of initiatives that directly and clearly benefit local communities.

This funding has enabled Arts North West to deliver meaningful projects such as this. We are thankful for their generosity and support.



To

To

To my return



Arts
North
West

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