



RIGHT  
HERE  
NOW.

regional arts australia  
national visual arts  
showcase 2015

Published on the occasion of the exhibition *Right Here Now: a powerful regional voice in our democracy*, held at the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House, Canberra, 17 November 2015 – 7 February 2016.

Curated by Holly Williams, Ivan Muñiz Reed and Glenn Barkley, The Curators' Department, Sydney.

Regional Arts Australia is the national advocacy and industry development body for the arts in regional Australia. Arts and culture are at the heart of community life across regional Australia. Regional Arts Australia promotes, convenes, facilitates, and resources arts and cultural activity for the one-in-three Australians who live in regional, remote and very remote Australia.

Regional Arts Australia  
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A national icon and one of the nation's most cherished buildings, Old Parliament House is home to the Museum of Australian Democracy. We present an active and award-winning program of exhibitions, events, learning and interpretation programs to engage people and to provoke conversations throughout Australia. We celebrate the history of Australia's democracy and the many milestones along its continuing journey, empowering people and communities to share their stories and aspirations for our democracy. We inspire all Australians to reflect on the spirit of our democracy and to recognise the power of our own voices within it.

We are proud to be associated with this very special exhibition which provides a forum for voices of regional Australia to reflect on our democracy.

Museum of Australian Democracy  
at Old Parliament House

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Cover:  
**Raymond Arnold** *Off the Grid — Constructing Settlement / Constructing Memory*, 2015 (detail). Courtesy the artist.



Australian Government



REGIONAL  
arts  
AUSTRALIA

Curated by:

THE  
CURATORS'  
DEPARTMENT



a powerful regional voice in our democracy

## Foreword

The Regional Arts Australia National Visual Arts Showcase highlights the artistic achievements of a range of leading and emerging visual artists working outside Australia's major city centres.

Regional Australia has a distinctive and exciting artistic voice, and is clearly a place where creativity can and is flourishing. This showcase brings the creative voice of regional Australia to our attention in a partnership with the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House.

Considering the theme for this year's showcase *Right Here Now: a powerful regional voice in our democracy*, I can think of no better place for the artists of regional Australia to demonstrate their particular view of our democratic system.

The showcase is a national strategic project of the Regional Arts Fund. It is designed to provide national coverage and national impact, and provides an opportunity for established artists to

work with emerging artists to develop their talents and access pathways for building careers in the arts.

The Australian Government is committed to supporting sustainable artistic and cultural development in regional and remote Australia. The Regional Arts Fund is just one of a suite of regional funding initiatives, including Indigenous arts, languages and culture programs, and national regional touring programs.

The Australian Government also provides significant funding for the arts in the regions through the Australia Council, the Government's principal arts funding body.

The showcase is a great opportunity for regional Australia to show the quality of work produced in regional Australia on the national stage. I want to congratulate Regional Arts Australia on the showcase and thank them for their ongoing support for arts and culture for regional artists and communities across the country.



**Senator the Hon Mitch Fifield**  
Minister for the Arts

## Introduction

Regional Arts Australia (RAA) is delighted to present another National Visual Arts Showcase promoting the artistic achievement of artists from regional and remote Australia. This year's Showcase follows an outstanding inaugural event in Parliament House in 2014.

The development of this Showcase, *Right Here Now: a powerful regional voice in our democracy* has been a unique opportunity for artists working in the non-metropolitan regions of Australia to portray their distinctive view of our nation; its physical, social and political landscape. Here we see renowned regional and remote artists, many of whom have works in the nation's most significant collections. These artists have mentored other local artists and it has been gratifying to observe how the depth of those mentor relationships has not only enriched this exhibition, but also laid the ground for new professional careers.

RAA is the peak organisation bringing together state regional arts organisations. One in three people live in regional and remote Australia and their arts and cultural contributions have a national impact. Australian artists at the cutting edge have always

sought out the regional and remote places, not because they are in the middle of nowhere, but because they are rich and exciting places where people feel at the centre of everything. Artists and arts workers help build strong communities, generate jobs and make a significant contribution to cultural export and tourism.

RAA is supported by the Ministry for the Arts and The Australia Council. The Showcase has been delivered through the Regional Arts Fund which continues to provide a unique platform for the support of artistic and cultural initiatives that help underpin livelihoods and communities in regional and remote Australia.

I particularly want to thank the artists and acknowledge the magnificent contribution of Holly Williams, Ivan Muñiz Reed and Glenn Barkley at The Curators' Department. I also want to emphasise our appreciation for the generous partnership support from the staff at the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House.

We are very proud of what has been gathered and presented here. Please enjoy this wonderful exhibition.



**John Oster**  
Executive Director,  
Regional Arts  
Australia

## Right Here Now

Absorbed into the lexicon of late 20th century management speak, the word ‘mentor’ actually comes from Homer’s epic poem *The Odyssey*. Arguably, both the term and the role of the wise guide itself, are just as relevant today as they were in Ancient Greece.

One of the standout features of Regional Arts Australia’s National Visual Arts Showcase is its emphasis on mentorship and its value for artists living outside the main centres. As with the first iteration of the Showcase held in 2014, *Right Here Now* has been constructed around a peer-directed model: seven established artists were selected from across regional, rural and remote areas (as defined by the ‘Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia’ code) and they were invited to propose an early-career artist (or collective) from their state or territory to work with. The nine-month-long mentorship offered not only the opportunity to find mutual challenge and practical support but in many cases to spark an ongoing creative kinship, overcoming the isolation that can typify regional arts practice. Having been given the freedom to establish the format for the mentorship, inter-generational, cross-cultural and collaborative engagements ensued. *Right Here Now* is the result of these highly successful processes.

Presented in the context of the

Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House, *Right Here Now* champions the freedom of expression, ideals of equality and the many different cultures that make up our nation. The strong link between the regions and Australia’s political history became clear during the project. Historical events and contemporary issues provided fruitful lines of enquiry for the artists.

Several of the artists’ current locations have played a significant historical role in the formation of Australian society. Tasmanian artists Raymond Arnold and Jessie Pangas took their inspiration from the same dilapidated building in the remote western Tasmanian mining town of Queenstown. Through their focus on this site they have examined the development of democracy in Australia — notably its connection to King O’Malley, a key figure of Australian public life during the early years of Federation. O’Malley was, among other things, instrumental in the development of the Union movement and in the selection of Canberra as the nation’s capital. Professor Rick Snell goes so far as to state: “King O’Malley who inspired and was inspired by what he encountered on the West Coast took its ideas, ideals and values to a wider audience confirming the contributions of the West Coast of Tasmania to the beginnings of Australian democracy.”<sup>1</sup> In far western New South Wales, known

as the last place Robert O’Hara Burke and William John Wills stayed before setting out on their ill-fated journey, the small settlement of Menindee is home to the five youngest artists in the project. The land around Menindee is ancient; it’s a place where some of the oldest rocks on the planet can be picked up off the ground and evidence of human habitation dates back 35,000 years. Part of the traditional lands of the Barkindji people, the area around Menindee became a place of significant conflict and bloodshed as one of the earliest inland sites for European settlement. The township is now home to a highly successful local school, one which emphasises creative practice and has an outstanding retention rate. It is here that mentor Rick Ball sought talented and committed young artists to work with.

Artist Chris De Rosa’s hometown in South Australia, Port Elliot, was host to the first public railway in Australia in 1854 and subsequently the country’s first reticulated water supply. South Australia was also the first place in the world where women could both vote and stand for parliament. Appropriately so, the work of Ebony Heidenreich (De Rosa’s mentee) comments on the past subjugation and silencing of women in society. Contemplating the role domestic crafts played in giving women a voice, her piece *Corpus Lingua* (or ‘body language’) takes its

### Donna Fortescue

*Beneath the Southern Cross we stand*, 2015 (detail), Eucalyptus marginata (jarrah), Corymbia calophylla (red gum) gum nuts and sticks, Xanthorrhoea (balga) resin and fronds, Banksia leaves, hessian, braid, charcoal, rabbit skin glue, aluminium and cotton thread, 130 × 202 × 10 cm. Courtesy the artist.



cue from women's handiwork and the possible covert gestures used to convey subversive messages.

The pivotal role women play in society is also at the heart of the work by the two Victorian artists. Whilst child rearing was given as one of the reasons why women should not be given the ability to vote in the late 19th century (some feared it would result in mothers neglecting their children<sup>2</sup>), Linda Botham and Bonnie Weidenbach demonstrate the strength and honour inherent in such a fundamental aspect of our lives. In personal ways they each have grappled with ideas surrounding motherhood and equality and they have found support in each other in the lead-up to the exhibition.

Issues of race and discrimination are clearly visible in some of the works in *Right Here Now*. When asked to consider their experiences of democracy living in a regional area Chayni Henry and David Collins from the Northern Territory turned to the overt discrimination they witness in daily life and their observations of 'The Intervention' in local communities. In Western Australia the resilient and proud Noongar artist and member of the Stolen Generations Sandra Hill developed *Skin Deep*, a work that extends her concern for racism in Australia beyond her Aboriginal heritage. For her "the whole concept of this work is that no matter what colour we are — we are all in this together. We are all joined by blood and humanity. By our humanness."

Other artists have found inspiration in the landscapes that surround them and in the environmental issues

that concern them. Having observed significant land clearing in her local area, Hill's mentee Donna Fortescue made a botanical flag, *Beneath the Southern Cross*, with a "hope to make modern day Australians more aware of the need to stand up for the environment that is the very essence of what defines our country and its people." Fortescue's piece is inspired by the Eureka Stockade, a rebellion of gold miners from Ballarat, Victoria that took place in 1854 and is considered an important historical development towards Australian democracy. Living in one of the most remote parts of Australia, Darnley Island, Jimmy Thaiday produced *Bumer*, a traditional drum made from woven ghost nets — deadly abandoned fishing nets which wash ashore on the Torres Strait. He chose to use a form associated with the 'voice of the people' to call attention to the problems that threaten the health of the oceans and way of life for his community.

Chris De Rosa has also turned to the ocean for inspiration; painstakingly rendering colourful seaweed forms from paper in her large installation *The Edge of the Sea*. Taking its title from a text by the influential marine biologist and conservationist Rachel Carson (whose book *Silent Spring* spurred the global environmental movement), De Rosa takes heed of the lines in Carson's book: 'Contemplating the teeming life of the shore, we have an uneasy sense of the communication of some universal truth that lies just beyond our grasp.'<sup>3</sup>

In New South Wales, Rick Ball also sought to engage with the unseen, perhaps spiritual qualities of the landscape through his

painting *Beginnings of Art*. Similarly, Cairns-based Brian Robinson's work *Ari Puilaig* includes references to the special charms and masks traditionally used in the Western Islands of the Torres Strait to encourage the monsoonal rains and growth of plants, reminding us of the vitality and interconnection found between daily life, spiritual understanding and nature.

We would like to extend our gratitude to Regional Arts Australia for inviting us to curate such a rich and diverse project and to the Museum of Australian Democracy for having the vision to include *Right Here Now* in their program. This invaluable opportunity enabled the artists to critically reflect on democracy as a lived experience and to produce work for a national audience.

We appreciate the assistance of Erub Erwer Meta and Alcaston Gallery with Jimmy Thaiday's work, Mossenson Galleries with Sandra Hill and Brian Robinson's work, Broken Hill Regional Art Gallery for the works from New South Wales and Bett Gallery for the works from Tasmania.

Lastly, we have been inspired by the creative relationships fostered between the participating artists — how they have challenged and supported each other in equal measure. We would like to acknowledge the enthusiasm and generosity of Linda Botham and Bonnie Weidenbach from Victoria, Rick Ball, Taya Biggs, Jade Cicak, Neil Mitchell, Joseph Newman and Tahlia Philp from New South Wales, Chris De Rosa and Ebony Heidenreich from South Australia, Raymond Arnold and Jessie Pangas from Tasmania, Brian Robinson and Jimmy Thaiday from

Queensland, Chayni Henry and David Collins from the Northern Territory and Sandra Hill and Donna Fortescue from Western Australia. May they continue to cultivate valuable connections, build skills and share ideas across this vast continent.

**Holly Williams**  
**Ivan Muñiz Reed**  
**Glenn Barkley**  
The Curators' Department

1. Citation from the artist: Rick Snell Senior Lecturer in Law, University of Tasmania, Speaker's Notes 19 October 2004
2. Megan Hutching, *Leading the Way: How New Zealand women won the vote*, Auckland: HarperCollins, 2010
3. Rachel Carson, *The Edge of the Sea*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1955



**Jimmy Thaiday** working on *Bumer* at Erub Erwer Meta (Darnley Island Arts Centre), Torres Strait, Queensland.

**Chris De Rosa** at her studio in Port Elliot, South Australia.

## Chayni Henry

b. 1983. Lives and works in Darwin, Northern Territory  
Mentor to David Collins



## Chayni Henry

*Uneven Ground*, 2015  
(detail), synthetic polymer paint on board,  
60 x 90 cm. Courtesy the artist; photography by David Lawrey

“David and I have a long-standing friendship spanning over 15 years. We have seen each other come a very long way in that time: both personally and professionally. The project gave us the opportunity to utilise our skills and knowledge to work upon a subject of importance to both of us.

Living so remotely, out of necessity, a unique voice and sub-culture is developed, both artistically and as lived experience. Some transplants from beneath the Tropic of Capricorn can go for years living and working here without understanding or really experiencing the languages, food and wide cultural diversity that make up not just Darwin, but our fellow North Australian counterparts in Queensland or Western Australia — who we have far

more in common with than those in the distant centres we are governed by.

This work is inspired by a line used by the Museum of Australian Democracy: “the capacity for people to govern their own lives, to have their say.” As lifetime Territorians we knew that this is not true for many Indigenous Australians. My piece deals very literally with the times I observed exchanges that I knew wouldn’t have occurred that way if it were me in their place.”

Chayni Henry is a largely self-taught artist whose work follows a narrative form depicting life events, historical anecdotes and occurrences, largely

within the setting of her remote home town. Her unique style of large text blocks accompanied by painting is reminiscent of the South American devotional paintings “Retablos” from which she drew original inspiration.

She has since expanded her practice by exploring architectural forms with cut-out designs, whilst retaining the narrative component of earlier work. She has exhibited widely, including at the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia and has work held in many public, private and university collections including the National Gallery of Australia, Northern Territory Government, Artbank, Charles Darwin University, University of Wollongong Art Collection and Charles Sturt University.



## David Collins

b. 1977. Lives and works in Darwin, Northern Territory  
Mentored by Chayni Henry



“The highlight for me was having my work and ideas validated by Chayni. I guess I have unknowingly used her as a mentor in the past by picking her brain about art things and I’ve always been a massive fan of her work and sense of humour. I look up to her as a ‘real artist’, having considered myself as a ‘vandal pretending to be a gallery artist’. Her advice and support has been great throughout this project.

I struggled with the idea of painting something political, I guess I didn’t need to paint something political — but I did. It was nice moving away from my usual whimsical, playful style... I re-read the curatorial premise and the sentence about ‘governing one’s own life’ really stood out to me because

everyday when I drive to one of my oldest friend’s house I drive past a sign that screams at me — people in her small community don’t have the same rights as me. I asked if I could take the sign to make some art about democracy with it. She said, “yes... please get rid of it.” I painted a white cockatoo in a suit looking all self important. This was inspired by the idea of referring to bureaucrats and politicians as cockatoos: “white cockies, they fly in, squawk, shit on you and then they fly out”.

For me it doesn’t feel all that regional living in Darwin — I guess it is though; I am not sure how its really influenced me. It’s just my home.”

## David Collins

*White Cockies*, 2015  
(detail), spray paint on repurposed metal sign, 240 × 120 cm. Courtesy the artist

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David Collins began painting graffiti in 1990, he now works with spray paint, paint and pencil. Maintaining both a street art and gallery-based practice, he has collaboratively produced a number of large-scale commissioned murals in the Northern Territory including the *West Lane Mural*, a warehouse-size work at Top End Sounds and the *Textures of Darwin* project with Jesse Bell. He is an active member of the Darwin arts scene. In 2015 he became the founding director of the artist-run space Mayfair and is also a member of the Darwin Community Arts Board.



## Brian Robinson

b. 1973. Lives and works in Cairns, Queensland  
Mentor to Jimmy Thaiday



“When I was first approached about the exhibition and was asked to put forward the name of a mentee, I wanted to include someone living not only regionally but very remotely, as well as someone that had a strong drive for their visual arts practice and also be of Indigenous Australian descent. The first name that came to mind was Jimmy Thaiday.

The main highlight of the mentoring process for me has been the weekly phone interactions with Jimmy, discussing artistic work, family and friends, island life on Erub and cultural traditions, inspirations and influences that have shaped his practice. He has gone from artistic colleague and countryman to close friend.

My images are often strange and seemingly incongruous concoctions yet there are many recurring motifs and characters that appear. Masks and masked figures, referencing performative and ceremonial Torres Strait Islander traditions; dinghies and canoes, symbolic of travel and exchange; and the floral bloom, symbolic of fertility abundance, harvest and regeneration

often take emblematic forms. Like the tidal currents that course through the Straits, a myriad of cultural influences run through my ancestry and own lived experiences. Raised on Waiben (Thursday Island) my family are fisher folk whose Roman Catholic faith exists in synergy with traditional indigenous spirituality.

*Ari Puilaig* are words spoken in the traditional Torres Strait dialect of Kala Lagaw Ya, the language of the Western Islanders. When translated into English it means ‘Maker of the Rain’. This sculptural installation is inspired by the natural environment of the islands’ flowering plants and fruiting trees that line the streets and surround the communities growing wild or in garden plots as well as the monsoonal rains and the four seasons that assist with their growth.

The islands and my upbringing gave me the freedom to explore not only the surrounding environment but also my thoughts and artistic creativity which were refined and honed over many years of sketching — down at the wharves and in the environment as well as sitting at the kitchen room

## Brian Robinson

*Ari Puilaig* [Maker of the Rain], 2015 (detail),  
PVC plastic, enamel spray paint, feathers, shells and toys,  
180 x 250 x 40 cm.  
Courtesy the artist,  
Mossenson Galleries  
and Michael Reid

table drawing from imagination and memory. Even though I was a child growing up in the Torres Strait, one of the most remote destinations in the country, I was still influenced heavily by television, comic books and other publications that I could get my hands on.”

Brian Robinson is of the Maluyligal and Wuthathi tribal groups of the Torres Strait and Cape York Peninsula. He was raised on Waiben (Thursday Island) and the Atherton Tablelands, near Cairns. Robinson recently won the Western Australia Indigenous Art Award. His work is in the collections of the National Gallery of Australia, the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australian National Maritime Museum and the Australian Museum, Sydney, the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, Cairns Regional Gallery, Cairns, Jean-Marie Tjibaou Cultural Centre, Noumea, New Caledonia and the Museum of Contemporary Aboriginal Art, Utrecht, The Netherlands.



## Jimmy Thaiday

b. 1987. Lives and works in Erub/Darnley Island, Queensland  
Mentored by Brian Robinson



“Having the opportunity to visit and be mentored by Brian was inspiring — to see another artist working in his studio and to witness his work ethic towards his practice was very valuable. Informal opportunities to work with others is often much better than working in a structured tutoring situation.

I believe everyone has the right to an equal and valid voice and opinion whatever their racial background and whether they are from the city or living remotely in a regional area.

As an Erubian and Torres Strait Islander, the Warup (drum) represents the voice of the people and the Seuriseuri (club) represents law and order amongst our people. These two works are adaptations of cultural artefacts, which are significant across the Torres Strait.

The traditional drum used amongst Torres Strait Islanders is a means of

sound, used for occasional purposes to signify events/time and during cultural performances. I have chosen to use ghost net to symbolise the need to give a voice to a problem that threatens our oceans and in turn our livelihoods and way of life.

As an artist living remotely I am inspired by my culture, traditions and customs. The physical environment — the land and sea dictates day-to-day life and oral stories influence my work as well.”

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Jimmy Kenny Thaiday was born in Cairns and grew up on Erub in the Eastern Islands of Torres Strait. His tribal clan is Peiudu, one of four tribes on Erub. He has participated in many group exhibitions and prizes including the Telstra National Aboriginal and

## Jimmy Thaiday

*Seuriseuri*, 2015 (detail),  
wood fired RSF clay,  
resin, natural fibres  
and feathers,  
33 × 13 × 2 cm.  
Courtesy the artist,  
Erub Erwer Meta  
and Alcaston Gallery,  
Melbourne

Torres Strait Islander Art Award, the Gab Titui Indigenous Art Awards, The Shepparton Indigenous Ceramic Award and *Our Stories, Our Place*, Tandanya. He has completed a number of group commissions including *Dauma and Garom* for the Australian Museum in 2013. His work is in the collections of the National Maritime Museum, The National Gallery of Australia and Parliament House, Canberra and Cairns Regional Gallery, Cairns. In 2008 he completed a Visual Arts course Cert III at North Queensland Tafe specialising in printing techniques and carving.



## Rick Ball

b. 1954. Lives and works in Broken Hill, New South Wales. Mentor to Taya Biggs, Jade Cicak, Neil Mitchell, Joseph Newman and Tahlia Philp



“I’ve been fortunate enough to know and watch the artistic development of these young people for many years. When I showed them their work being put into frames for this project I think they sensed that their role as artists is actually real — and beautiful. To see the impact of it, the look on their faces, their work entering another world. I felt very privileged.

For me this process is about an old tightrope walker sharing experiences, skills and an awareness of the perils with younger, less experienced tightrope walkers. It’s enormously rewarding, and it’s very important for older artists to see fresh timber on the fire, so to speak.

Working on a beautiful French paper as a strong base, I produced a work called *Beginnings of Art*. The title encapsulates an idea that has been active in me even as a young kid ...

That ‘deep time’ is here.

Amongst other things, my current work explores this idea of a ‘deep past’ now. It feels that by living far enough away from the gravitational pull of a big urban metropolis such as Sydney, deeper things can come through from the landscape. I’m now surrounded by some of the oldest exposed rock on the planet. Having lived in far-west New South Wales for over thirteen years I feel connected to the peculiar energy of the vastness... the ancient rocks... and the iconic rhythm of land/water patterns of the creeks and inland rivers.

For me, when thinking about democracy, it means the choice to remain silent. This is a choice that the vast open space of Lake Menindee offers when its dry — its really important. For example, being unencumbered, naked even, no-one within cooee so that a person can

## Rick Ball

*Beginnings of Art*, 2015  
shellac, oil and gouache  
on paper, 84 × 194 cm.  
Courtesy the artist

investigate unexpected ways — which to me is vital to democracy. I think that the freedom to choose is what democracy does, at its best.”

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Artist and educator Rick Ball graduated from the National Art School in Sydney in 1976 and has been practicing since 1982. Working in a slow and intuitive way, his works are inspired by the powerful landscape found in western New South Wales. Ball has held more than 16 solo exhibitions, his work is held in a number of public, corporate and private collections. He won the Outback Open Art Prize in 2012.



**Taya Biggs, Jade Cicak, Neil Mitchell,  
Joseph Newman, Tahlia Philp**

All b.1999. Live and work in Menindee, New South Wales  
Mentored by Rick Ball



Though bordering the desert, the small settlement of Menindee in far-western New South Wales is surrounded by large lakes and abundant bird life. Home to less than a thousand mainly Indigenous residents, the close-knit community of Menindee is historically significant. The area has evidence of Indigenous habitation dating back 35,000 years and was one of the first inland settlements in colonial Australia.

Based on the positive critical reception of their work in recent exhibitions, five young artists from Menindee Central School were invited to participate in *Right Here Now* by artist and educator Rick Ball. Working across wide variety of mediums and techniques including cardboard, paint and photography these artists have been developing their own contemporary style. Menindee Central has a well established creative exchange program with schools in

Sydney — this has enabled several of these artists to find inspiration beyond their remote home including an on-site workshop at the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia in Sydney. Recent exhibitions include *Art in Menindee: a remote outback town* at Maitland Regional Gallery in 2014 and *Menindee Art Spectacular* at Cooe Gallery, Sydney in 2011, where Jade Cicak, Joseph Newman and Neil Mitchell first began exhibiting together.

“Being in a regional area is fun — it influences my work by letting me be free to do what I want. The open spaces give me ideas. I have been cutting cardboard for about five years. The last twelve months I have been making the best artworks that I have ever made. I am very confident that a lot of people will like my artwork that will be in *Right Here Now*. Its fun, coloured and it catches your eye.” — Jade Cicak

**Tahlia Philp**

*Empire*, 2015, photograph,  
58 x 68 cm. Courtesy the artist

**Jade Cicak**

*Land and Family*,  
2015 (detail), ink and  
synthetic polymer  
paint on sculpted  
cardboard, 62 x 73 cm.  
Courtesy the artist

**Neil Mitchell**

*Land*, 2015 (detail),  
synthetic polymer  
paint on canvas,  
40 x 50 cm.  
Courtesy the artist

“I think being in a small town: the river, the red dirt and all the empty space affects my artworks. This year I have been working on cardboard, cutting into it with a Stanley knife, also drawing, painting and using textas on it.”  
— Taya Biggs

“I am a young Aboriginal woman. I am 16 years old and I live in a small remote town. When thinking about how living regionally influences my work it’s a very interesting question but I’m not sure how to answer it. Is it the open space? The community numbers? Out of all the things I could pick I would say my family has a huge influence on my work. *Empire* was created in Sydney at the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia in collaboration with an extraordinary artist Liam Benson and my outstanding mentor Rick Ball that I have worked with for many years.” — Tahlia Philp



## Linda Botham

b. 1960. Lives and works in Shepparton, Victoria  
Mentor to Bonnie Weidenbach



“I first met Bonnie, appropriately, at an exhibition opening at the Shepparton Art Museum (SAM). Upon seeing the drawings Bonnie developed for the exhibition, I was immediately drawn to them — they felt simpatico with mine. I regard us both as like-minded women, working together apart, rather than myself as purely ‘mentor’ to Bonnie as ‘mentee’.

Around the time of my invitation to participate in *Right Here Now*, my mother had just been diagnosed with cancer and Bonnie was pregnant with her second child. Sadly, my mum passed away early in June; wonderfully, Bonnie’s child is due in October.

I wanted to honour my mum’s memory; she was secular in her beliefs but did have a soft spot for the Dalai Lama. Hence *Flags for Mum* presents a series of small, intimate works on

paper that resemble Tibetan prayer flags. The aim of the Tibetan flags is to spread blessings and good will into the air when the wind blows on them.

*Flags for Mum* is a collective memento mori, a reflection on motherhood and on the delicacy of the human condition. Each ‘flag’ acts as a conversation, a snippet between my mother and me. There are drawings reproduced from childhood; symbols of mortality; drawings of angst and loss, amidst fond memories.

Working as an artist in a regional area has its benefits: not too many distractions, no outside influences other than those collected subliminally via media, books, technology. For me, the work becomes distilled more easily; focus is less interrupted, as opposed to the busyness and diversions of life in the city. Any artistic endeavours I have

## Linda Botham

*Flags for Mum*, 2015  
(detail), string, paper,  
charcoal, carbon pencil,  
cotton, silk and linen  
thread, dimensions  
variable. Courtesy the  
artist

undertaken have been extremely well supported over the years, by the local artists’ groups and SAM, also Bendigo, where I studied at La Trobe University.”

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Using charcoal and carbon pencil, Linda Botham’s recent exhibitions include *Drawing Wall #17* at the Shepparton Art Museum, *The Sketchbook Project 2012 World Tour*, Brooklyn Art Library, N.Y., the *Dobell Prize for Drawing*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney and *send in the clowns*, Off the Kerb Gallery, Melbourne in 2009. Botham has a Bachelor of Visual Arts from La Trobe University, Bendigo.



## Bonnie Weidenbach

b. 1993. Lives and works  
in Shepparton, Victoria  
Mentored by Linda Botham



“The most satisfying part for me was the way Linda and I entered into the mentoring process without knowing that our work would be so closely tied. Though the experiences of birth and death are seemingly opposed, for Linda and I, they represented strong bonds in our relation to motherhood. The processes of loss and birth can be isolating experiences, but through our mentorship I have been able to work not only these themes but also with the deep acceptance of their universality and impact on society.

I feel that by some odd chance, Linda and I have ended up working together at such opposing but uniting and momentous (though at the same time ‘mundane’, as so many people experience them) times in our lives.

Being based in Shepparton has allowed me to take a slower approach to life, and to focus more internally. Leaving Melbourne CBD, where the pace of life and congestion of people

allowed little time for introspection, Shepparton has been a place that allows closer connection to a community. Moving here meant moving home. Living here was a decision made for my young, growing family. The people who made me a mother. And it’s that motherhood that has inspired this work.”

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Bonnie Weidenbach’s practice focuses on drawing and printmaking. She recently returned to Shepparton from Melbourne where she participated in group shows through the VCA Student Gallery and Margaret Lawrence Gallery. In addition to raising her young family she has been working from her home studio and participating in small community art projects, including a floral installation at the recent Shepparton Arts Festival. Weidenbach has a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne.

## Bonnie Weidenbach

*Mama*, 2015 (detail),  
pencil and cotton on  
paper and fabric,  
117 × 91 cm.  
Courtesy the artist



## Raymond Arnold

b. 1950. Lives and works  
in Queenstown, Tasmania  
Mentor to Jessie Pangas



“My painting has been developed in relation to Jessie Pangas’ painting. We worked with a site in the mining town of Queenstown in western Tasmania. It’s a historic building established very early in the settlement of this wilderness valley as infrastructure for the innovative Abt railway. Jess has pictured the Federation period house from a vantage point to the east. I have made my painting of the view back to the east through a beautiful faceted window. In a sense we are looking to one another as artists, confirming a type of reciprocal action and in turn the mechanism of mentor and mentee. My use of the diptych format and the parallel alignment of picture plane and window frame echo the doubling action.

An imaginative reading of the landscape/townscape opening up beyond my picture window has the politician King O’Malley moving out of the shadows of Hunters Hotel to the far

right of the picture where he has just addressed a crowd from its balcony and disappearing into the Mt Lyell Hotel through the middle ground. O’Malley was a visible figure in Australian public life during the early years of Federation. He is particularly remembered for his role in the establishment of the Commonwealth Bank, for taking the ‘U’ out of the Australian Labor Party and in the selection of Canberra as the national capital.

I worked in France over many years as an artist and became interested in the 19th century painter Gustave Courbet. I made pilgrimages to his hometown France’s Loue Valley where many of his early paintings were made — he was a regional artist! One particular site was of special interest to me, the so-called *Source de la Loue*. Courbet’s paintings of this site confirmed for me both in their physicality and metaphoric titling that

## Raymond Arnold

*Off the Grid —  
Constructing Settlement /  
Constructing Memory*,  
2015, synthetic polymer  
paint on linen, diptych,  
82 x 123 cm.  
Courtesy the artist

artists need to find their own ‘source’. I’ve found my inspiration, my meaning, in the western mountains of Tasmania.”

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Since 1977 Raymond Arnold has had more than 54 solo exhibitions and numerous group exhibitions nationally and internationally. His work is represented in many national, state and regional gallery collections in Australia and major institutions in France, UK and USA. For over thirty years Raymond has run an artists’ co-operative in Hobart, lectured at the Tasmanian School of Art, screenprinted thousands of posters for community groups and completed public art commissions. He received a Federation medal for services to the Art Community and for ten years ran Landscape Art Research Queenstown (LARQ).



## Jessie Pangas

b. 1982. Lives and works  
in Gawler, Tasmania  
Mentored by Raymond Arnold



“Collaborating with Raymond Arnold on this project has been a process that has come naturally and been greatly edifying, giving us a specific focus through which to build upon the relationship we have already established. On first seeing Raymond’s work, I identified in it something very Tasmanian — his work was coming out of a connection to place. In his art and lifestyle I saw a model for how to sustain a successful arts practice from a remote location. He has continually encouraged me despite my relocation to the very opposite end of the country for a time. I recall living in a tent on an Indigenous homeland when one of his orange parcels would arrive with a catalogue for an upcoming show, a stark contrast to the world I was living in and a reminder to me of the value of what I was trying to achieve.

*House of Congress* was developed alongside, and is a mirror image of, Raymond’s painting. While he positioned himself looking out the window towards the township, I positioned myself in the street looking towards the house in which he sat. This

positioning reflects our focus as artists, Raymond looking out at Queenstown in its full historical, political and environmental context while I focussed in on the domestic to uncover what this particular house and place has to say about its context and our experience of it. While Raymond’s painting speaks of construction — the process of building and imagining, my painting speaks of decay and the coming back together of the natural environment with the built.

The title reflects this: congress being ‘the action of coming together’ at the same time it references the national legislative body of a country, deliberately contrasting the power and centrality of this institution with the vulnerability and neglect of this ageing building in a remote and threatening landscape.

I have always been oriented to the margins and this stance permeates and is a feature of my work. There have been times when I have doubted whether I could sustain a successful arts practice in a way that complemented my regional and remote lifestyle. The necessity to be self

## Jessie Pangas

*House of Congress*,  
2015, synthetic  
polymer paint on  
linen, 91.5 × 91.5 cm.  
Courtesy the artist

animating and to find creative solutions to the limitations of being based away from the centre of my field has actually been to my strategic advantage. So it is no disadvantage in the end. Everything you need is where you are.”

Jessie Pangas is an early-career artist with a focus on printmaking and painting. Although born in Tasmania, she has spent most of her life elsewhere, completing her high school in India and subsequently studying Anthropology at the University of Melbourne followed by a Diploma of Art, Craft and Design (Printmaking) from TAFE Tasmania. She has lived and worked on the margins, in a broad acre housing commission development in Tasmania and a remote Indigenous community in north east Arnhem land. Since her return to Tasmania two years ago she has participated in a number of group and solo exhibitions and is exhibiting at the Devonport Regional Gallery in 2016.



## Chris De Rosa

b. 1959. Lives and works in  
Port Elliot, South Australia  
Mentor to Ebony Heidenreich



“Working with Ebony has been enlightening on a number of levels. During the initial discussion phase of the project parallels began to emerge between our practices that we had been unaware of, and rather than me simply ‘guiding or leading’ Ebony, it was more a situation of us sharing approaches and technical information. To some degree we have mentored one another.

Like most Australians I live on the edges of the continent and spend a great deal of time in this liminal space observing and collecting the marine organisms and detritus of flotsam which drift in and out daily with the tide and change with the seasons. The shoreline is also a place of change and portent, where luminous weeds and sponges are bleached out by the elements, while discarded rope and plastic litter the littoral zone. The work comes from the collecting, scanning and reconfiguring of these

organisms. Although I want to preserve (and indeed heighten) the colour and beauty of the seaweed itself, it is the transformation that occurs from under to above the sea that interests me: a kind of reverse sea change.

My print processes echo those transformations. I am in a sense preserving the decayed weed as a kind of mythological lace through a process of perforating the paper of the seaweed prints. More recent developments have resulted in the addition of some three-dimensional ceramic ‘lace’ pieces becoming part of the works. This work has come about through research, experimentation and an interest in the collision of science, art and crafting.

There is often a genuine isolation in regional practice where the usual social support structures of urban artistic activity (where work is discussed on a social basis) are missing. Regional support structures can be more scattered and fractured. Preparation

## Chris De Rosa

*The Edge of the Sea*,  
2015 (detail), ceramic,  
digital inkjet print,  
etching, pigment, stain  
and stencil on paper,  
165 × 250 × 5 cm.  
Courtesy the artist;  
photography by  
Grant Hancock

for this show demanded discussion between the artists about the hows and the whys of each other’s work. This required having to articulate and communicate ideas in a way that doesn’t necessarily occur in a more isolated regional practice.”

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Chris De Rosa recently undertook a residency at the London Print Studio. She has had numerous solo exhibitions including *Seawoman* at Port Jackson Press, Melbourne and *The Sea Inside* at The Pod, Adelaide. She has participated in many group exhibitions across Australia, including at the Samstag Museum, the University of South Australia, the Art Gallery of South Australia and the Fremantle Arts Centre, Fremantle. Her work is held in collections including the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra and Charles Darwin University, Darwin.



## Ebony Heidenreich

b. 1990. Lives and works in  
Basket Ranges, South Australia  
Mentored by Chris De Rosa



“The mentorship is an incredibly valuable and rich experience, especially working cross-disciplinarily — myself as a ceramist and Chris as a printmaker. She handled my somewhat haphazard and intuitive approach to making and encouraged me greatly along the way. During our time together I also discovered the rich heritage that informs her work, primarily coming from her female lineage which was of special interest to me and gave us lots to talk about.

Fuelled by a fascination of traditional women’s handicrafts and their historic and social implications, my work titled *Corpus Lingua* (‘body language’) comments on the past subjugation of women and their work. Because women were in many ways silenced — were not allowed to formally speak, write or create art — perhaps they used their hands to

convey secret and subversive meaning through domestic crafts. My ceramic practice continually returns to the body’s relationship to making. I wonder what information can transpire through the gestural traces a material like clay can contain. If hands can *know* — store memory and in some cases think for themselves — then it is my intention that through material manipulation they can also articulate things that are difficult to put into words. That what may have been unwritten or unspoken need not be left without a voice.

I approached this work in a way that was quite new to me, stripping back all forms of technicality or tools and employed a very basic, primitive way of working with my hands alone. By ripping, squeezing and clawing the clay into various shapes, I began to see patterns that could be likened to crochet or lace — an unexpected yet

## Ebony Heidenreich

*Corpus Lingua*, 2015,  
terracotta with glaze,  
dimensions variable.  
Courtesy the artist;  
photography by  
Danielle Morton

somewhat pertinent outcome.

Living in the Adelaide Hills on large properties, I grew up roaming the outdoors — collecting, constructing, making and making do — and coming from a family of hand makers, I have become aware of a constant desire to know the world through handling and negotiating raw or natural materials. This undoubtedly translates into my approach to clay.”

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Ebony Heidenreich recently completed a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Hons) majoring in ceramics at the University of South Australia. She has been the recipient of several awards and has participated in a number of group exhibitions in Adelaide and surrounds.



## Sandra Hill

b. 1951. Lives and works in  
Balingup, Western Australia  
Mentor to Donna Fortescue



“Discovering how closely aligned Donna and I are in terms of artistic vision and practice has been great, I’ve really enjoyed seeing that we are on such similar wavelengths. Unknowingly we’re both working or have worked with flags. Justice means a lot to her, as it does to me and we are both very strongly tuned in to the environment. When I chose Donna I didn’t know these things about her so it’s become more like a collaboration in a way. When she’s hit a roadblock I have been able to help her out with it — using my knowledge base to guide her a bit. She’s a white woman and I’m an Aboriginal. That’s the gem in the crown: two different artists working together so beautifully. It has made me want to do more with her in the future — even have a show together.

Within this work are a few themes dealing with layers of society and layers of democracy. The external skin: because Aboriginal people come in all different colours — and it’s not just about Aboriginal people anymore. This is the thing that has shifted with me — the reality that this country is so racist. It’s not about

Aboriginal people — it’s about anybody of colour. Other people coming here as refugees (being dispersed by war or other reasons) and they come and are spurned by the Australian people because they don’t reflect the white Australian image. With this artwork the skin that I am stitching together — the long strips of resin died rice paper — represents the skin of all the people. The whole concept of this work is that no matter what colour we are — we are all in this together. We are all joined by blood and humanity. By our humanness.

To me living at this moment in Australia, this is not a democracy. There is no democracy because people are not free in this country. We have closed our borders — what kind of democracy is it for a government to do that without asking and notifying the people? What kind of democracy denies Aboriginal communities their lifeline in their Country? What kind of democracy is it if we don’t have a say in it? I have been completely immersed in making political work for years — it heals me to get the angst out through my art. When

## Sandra Hill

*Double Standard*, 2015  
(detail), plywood, MDF,  
ink, rice paper, shellac,  
marri and balga resins,  
102 × 150 × 10 cm.  
Courtesy the artist and  
Mossenson Galleries

I make work that hurts me emotionally and cognitively, living in Balingup is a beautiful place to heal from it. It’s a refuge. In places like Sydney there is no escape, it’s traumatising with the consumerism and visual pollution.”

Sandra Hill is a Yorga (‘woman’) of the Noongar Aboriginal people of the south west of Western Australia. Her traditional clans are Ballardong and Wilmen on her mother’s side and Wardandi and Minang on her father’s. She has participated in national exhibitions and prizes including the Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award and the Bankwest Art Prize. Her work is held in numerous collections including the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Berndt Museum, University of Western Australia, Crawley and the Edith Cowan University Art Collection, Perth.



## Donna Fortescue

b. 1964. Lives and works in Australind, Western Australia  
Mentored by Sandra Hill



## Donna Fortescue

*Beneath the Southern Cross we stand*, 2015  
(front and back views),  
Eucalyptus marginata (jarrah), Corymbia calophylla (red gum) gum nuts and sticks, xanthorrhoea (balga) resin and fronds, banksia leaves, hessian, braid, charcoal, rabbit skin glue, aluminium and cotton thread,  
130 x 202 x 10 cm  
Courtesy the artist



“I was honoured to be selected by Sandra for this project; I’ve always admired her as an artist and her strength to tell her family’s personal stories through her artwork. Visiting her lovely warm home and studio was exciting, her wealth of knowledge of working with resins from the local forest was one of the highlights; I learnt a great deal about Indigenous culture especially the language and the connection to Country. Sandra was extremely positive about my ideas and we felt a connected spirit existed between our art practices.

The battle of the Eureka Stockade in 1854 was at a time in Australian history that saw a young country attempt to assert its independence under colonial rule. It is seen as a key event in the development of Australian democracy and identity and has come to represent

a symbolic stand against injustice and oppression. Regional miners in the goldfields of Victoria came together to forge a sense of the Australian ideal of ‘mateship’ as they fought under the flag of the Southern Cross.

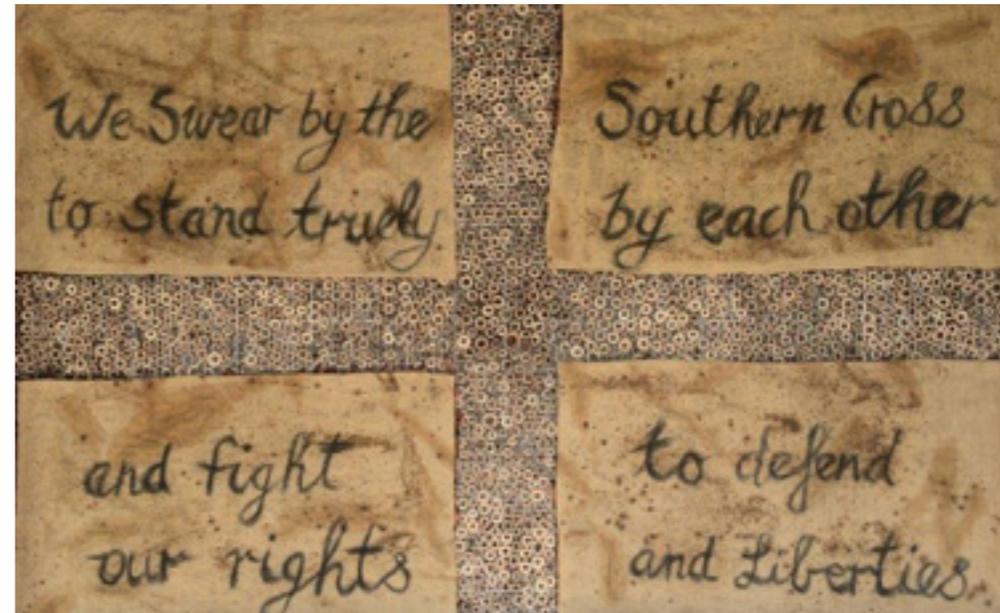
The Southern Cross flag is used as a symbol of protest by organisations and individuals at both ends of the political spectrum, [through my work] it’s time now for the environment itself to protest. The use of materials that I find just outside my door has heavily influenced this work. By using the natural environment to represent the symbolic flag, I hope to make modern day Australians more aware of the need to stand up for the environment that is the very essence of what defines our country and its people. The regional areas that are being mined, drilled and cleared to

create mineral and agricultural wealth and exports, need to be protected and the natural environment needs to stand against destruction, just as the miners did many years ago.

I have spent most of my life in regional Western Australia. My childhood was spent in the wheat and sheep farming area south east of Perth. The wide-open countryside on the family farm has had a great impact on my sense of space and the materials that I feel comfortable using within my artwork.”

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Donna Fortescue has a Bachelor of Visual Arts and has participated in group exhibitions in Bunbury and Perth. She also works as a Gallery Officer at the Bunbury Regional Art Galleries.



## List of Works

### Raymond Arnold

*Off the Grid — Constructing Settlement / Constructing Memory*, 2015, synthetic polymer paint on linen, diptych  
82 × 123 cm

### Rick Ball

*Beginnings of Art*, 2015  
shellac, oil and gouache on paper  
84 × 194 cm

### Taya Biggs

*Connection to Land*, 2015  
sculpted cardboard, ink and synthetic polymer paint  
63 × 53 cm

### Linda Botham

*Flags for Mum*, 2015  
string, paper, charcoal, carbon pencil, cotton, silk and linen thread  
dimensions variable

### Jade Cicak

*Land and Family*, 2015  
ink and synthetic polymer paint on sculpted cardboard  
62 × 73 cm

### David Collins

*White Cockies*, 2015  
spray paint on repurposed metal sign  
240 × 120 cm

### Chris De Rosa

*The Edge of the Sea*, 2015  
ceramic, inkjet print, etching, pigment, stencil and stain on paper  
162 × 250 × 5 cm

### Donna Fortescue

*Beneath the Southern Cross we stand*, 2015, Eucalyptus marginata (jarrah), Corymbia calophylla (red gum) gum nuts and sticks, Xanthorrhoea (balga) resin and fronds, Banksia leaves, hessian, braid, charcoal, rabbit skin glue, aluminium and cotton thread  
130 × 202 × 10 cm

### Ebony Heidenreich

*Corpus Lingua*, 2015  
terracotta with black gloss glaze  
dimensions variable

### Chayni Henry

*Uneven Ground*, 2015  
synthetic polymer paint on board  
60 × 90 cm

### Sandra Hill

*Skin Deep*, 2015  
screenprint on Perspex, electrical components, rice paper dipped in marri, balga and acacia resins, hand-stitched with waxed linen thread,  
130 × 80 × 10 cm

### Neil Mitchell

*Land*, 2015  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
40 × 50 cm

### Joseph Newman

*Untitled*, 2015  
sculpted cardboard, sand, synthetic polymer paint  
65 × 49 cm

### Jessie Pangas

*House of Congress*, 2015  
synthetic polymer paint on linen  
91.5 × 91.5 cm

### Tahlia Philp

*Empire*, 2015  
photograph  
52 × 68 cm

### Brian Robinson

*Ari Puilaig [Maker of the Rain]*, 2015  
PVC plastic, enamel spray paint, feathers, shells and toys  
180 × 250 × 40 cm

### Jimmy Thaiday

*Seuriseuri*, 2015  
wood fired RSF clay and resin, natural fibres and feathers  
3 × 13 × 2 cm

### Jimmy Thaiday

*Bumer*, 2015  
ghost net and twine over steel frame  
40 × 200 × 40 cm

### Bonnie Weidenbach

*Mama*, 2015  
pencil and cotton on paper and fabric  
dimensions variable



Government of Western Australia  
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