

Creative Responses to Sustainability

Cultural Initiatives Engaging with
Social and Environmental Issues



AUSTRALIA GUIDE

Creative Responses to Sustainability

**Cultural Initiatives Engaging with
Social and Environmental Issues**

AUSTRALIA GUIDE

CREATIVE RESPONSES TO SUSTAINABILITY

Cultural Initiatives Engaging with Social and Environmental Issues
Australia Guide 1st Edition, July 2018

Published by:

Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) 31 Heng Mui Keng Terrace Singapore 119595
T: +65 6874 9700
F: +65 6872 1135
www.ASEF.org

All rights reserved © Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), July 2018

Download from culture360.ASEF.org

Researcher

Claire Rosslyn WILSON

Editor

Team at Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), Valentina RICCARDI & Anupama SEKHAR

The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) acknowledges the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first inhabitants of the nation and the traditional custodians of the lands where we collaborate, research and learn. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past and present. The Asia-Europe Foundation is committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.

Special thanks to Yasmine OSTENDORF, author of the guides on Singapore, Korea, Indonesia and Berlin for the initial concept of the green guides.

Design

Inksurge

All rights reserved © Cover photo credit: *Golden Hour* by Cave Urban, Sculpture By The Sea Sydney, 2016. Photo: Mercurio Alvarado. Image courtesy Cave Urban.

ISBN: 9789811180361

culture360.ASEF.org contributes to the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 16:



The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) promotes understanding, strengthens relationships and facilitates cooperation among the people, institutions and organisations of Asia and Europe. ASEF enhances dialogue, enables exchanges and encourages collaboration across the thematic areas of culture, education, governance, sustainable development, economy and public health. ASEF is an intergovernmental not-for-profit organisation located in Singapore. Founded in 1997, it is the only institution of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). ASEF runs more than 25 projects a year, consisting of around 100 activities, mainly conferences, seminars, workshops, lectures, publications, and online platforms, together with about 125 partner organisations. Each year over 3,000 Asians and Europeans participate in ASEF's activities, and much wider audiences are reached through its various events, networks and web-portals. www.ASEF.org



culture360.asef.org is ASEF's arts and culture portal, initiated by the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and managed by ASEF's Culture Department since 2005. ASEF culture360 is designed to stimulate cultural engagement and enhance mutual understanding between Asia and Europe by providing relevant information through weekly updates on news, events, opportunities and resources. It also features a magazine with in-depth articles, interviews and profiles, and social media tools to enable online networking between individuals, as well as organisations across the ASEM region. Since 2011, culture360.asef.org also hosts the website of the Asia-Europe Museum Network (ASEMUS).



ASEF's contribution is with the financial support of the European Union. This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of the researcher and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union, ASEF or other co-organising institutions.

Table of Contents

→	Preface	v
→	Introduction	01
→	Ways of working	02
	Advocacy and education	04
	Science and technology	06
	Environmental trends	08
	Indigenous connection to land	09
	Regional art	12
	Disaster recovery	14
→	Thoughts on future directions	16
	Adapt and increase funding for cross-disciplinary collaborations	17
	Make environmental sustainability core to creative practices	18
	Engage in more sophisticated discussions	18
	Support project management structures	19
	Allow time and support to experiment	19
→	Directory	20
	A few notes on the Directory	20
	Environmental Film Festival Australia	21
	TippingPoint Australia	22
	CLIMARTE: ART+CLIMATE=CHANGE	23
	Green Music Australia	24
	The Transitions Film Festival	25
	Carbon Arts	26
	ClimActs	27
	Australian Network for Art and Technology	28
	SymbioticA	30
	Boho Interactive	31
	The Australian Forum for Acoustic Ecology	32
	Warruyanta Art Centre	33
	Karrkad Kanjdji Trust	34
	Buku Art Centre and Mulka Project	35
	Sculpture by the Sea	37
	The Araluen Arts Centre	38
	The Unconformity	39
	Cave Urban	40
	Bundanon Trust	42
	The Bogong Centre for Sound Culture	43
	Craft ACT: Craft and Design Centre's Artist-in-Residence programme	45
	Imaging the Land International Research Institute	46
	The Cad Factory	47
	Waterhouse Natural Science Art Prize	48
	Creative Recovery Network	49
	Australia Green Guide	50
→	Conclusion	52

Preface

Since 2015, the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) has been publishing the series *Creative Responses to Sustainability* through our arts & culture portal, culture360.asef.org. This series of country-specific guides looks at creative responses to sustainability in different countries in the Asia-Pacific. The Guides on Singapore (2015), Korea (2016) and Indonesia (2017) were researched by Yasmine OSTENDORF, the initiator of the EU funded network Green Art Lab Alliance (GALA) . Each guide features a directory of 20 to 25 most pioneering and significant cultural organisations contributing to social and environmental change through their artistic practice. culture360.asef.org has also collaborated with Yasmine for the publication of the spin-off in the series (*Creative Environment – a Guide to Art and Sustainability Initiatives in Berlin*), published in 2017 in partnership with the Ecologic Institute.

In 2018, we continue the series with a new approach, looking at engaging with a different local researcher in each country. This Guide for Australia is researched and written by Claire Rosslyn WILSON, who is also a former ASEF staff (2010-2012). Each guide will also feature an interactive map of the country with links to identified organisations so as to facilitate connections with the local operators in the country.

Creative Responses to Sustainability builds on the discussions initiated by the Green Art Lab Alliance since 2013 and previously, on ASEF's engagement with the topic of artists and climate change in global dialogues around environmental sustainability through its Connect2Culture programme (2008-2011) , also edited by Claire WILSON.

We invite you to discover this 4th guide in the series, featuring 25 arts organisations engaged in sustainability initiatives in Australia. We look forward to continuing this series with new exciting initiatives merging arts and environmental sustainability in Asia and Europe.

Valentina RICCARDI
Project Manager, Culture Department, ASEF

Singapore, July 2018

¹ Established in 2013, the Green Art Lab Alliance (GALA) is a network of 35 cultural organisations across Europe and Asia who are committed to understand and reduce their own carbon footprint as well as explore artistic engagement on the topic of environmental sustainability. Through the alliance, the partners stand stronger; they can exchange knowledge, collaborate, support and meet each other, do staff exchanges and residencies, access tailor-made resources and tap into each other's networks. greenartlaballiance.eu

² Download the programme portfolio of Connect2Culture (2008-2011) at: culture360.asef.org/resources/special-dossier-outlines-role-culture-tackling-global-issues

Introduction

The arts have a way of getting under the skin.

A recent encounter with the work “Going Nowhere 1.5” by British artist Simon FAITHFULL demonstrated for me how art can question the way we live. The piece is a video work in which a small sand-island in the North Sea is filmed from a drone as the tide gradually eats away at its coast. A tiny figure walks purposely around its edge, spiralling inwards as the waters rise. Eventually the dry sands of the island vanish beneath the waves and the figure is gone.³ This work was a metaphoric reminder about the pace of change in our world – why are we walking in the same circles while climate change is transforming the world around us? How can we adapt to these changes?

³ www.simonfaithfull.org/works/going-nowhere1-5/




⁴ culture360.asef.org/magazine/can-artists-make-difference-climate-change-debate

The arts are a way to reach out to people with new ways of thinking through the seemingly insurmountable challenges of our world today. As Guy ABRAHAMS, co-founder of Australian organisation CLIMARTE observes, the power of the arts lies in their ability to question the values we take for granted. ‘The arts is about posing questions, it’s not necessarily about providing answers. But you’ve got to pose the questions to start off with, and pose questions which aren’t about facts and data, but are about our values, how we want to live, how we feel, what’s important in our lives – those values that are fundamentally important to us but that we take for granted on the day-to-day.’⁴

This Guide provides an insight into the context of art and environment in Australia through examples of organisations and initiatives, as well as an overview of some of the key ways of working in this field. The Guide

highlights some organisations that creatively engage with environmental issues, as well as some initiatives that focus on the development of ethical and sustainable practices within the cultural sector itself.

The objectives of the Guide are to provide:

-  **A directory of organisations and initiatives in Australia that work in the nexus of arts and sustainability**
-  **Examples of good practices in the nexus of arts and sustainability that could be applied to diverse contexts**
-  **An overview of some of the key ways of working and challenges in the Australian context**

The Guide is based on interviews and surveys as well as research on key organisations and trends. Organisations were chosen for the centrality of environmental issues in their programmes. Not all organisations were available for interviews, in which case additional research was undertaken to provide an overview of their work. Every effort was made to ensure that organisations were selected from across the country, however, given that some urban centres tend to have more arts initiatives in the area of arts and sustainability, some places have more listed organisations than others.

Themes of environment and sustainability were approached in a relatively open way. For example, there are several organisations with a long history of collaborating in the science and technology fields, which often incorporates environmental concerns. Oron CATTs from SymbioticA emphasised ‘we don’t tend to use the term sustainability much in what we do...we are an artistic research lab that deals with questions around life...obviously along the line we are dealing with issues that can be linked with sustainability in some way or another.’ In another example, Indigenous approaches to land do not necessarily use the same sustainability terminology, but they are undoubtedly vital perspectives in this context.

Given the parameters of the research it was not possible to consult a wide range of stakeholders in this field (such as artists, curators, freelance arts managers, etc.) and as a result this is not a sector-wide survey of all the perspectives on the topic of arts and sustainability. Rather, the Guide is an overview seen from the perspective of organisations and their programmes and projects.

This Guide is for artists, researchers, educators, activists, arts managers and curators as well as anyone with a curiosity for arts and sustainability.

Ways of working

Australia is an urbanised country of over 24 million people, with the majority of the population living relatively close to the coastline.⁵ Australia comprises a land area of about 7.692 million square kilometres and is the planet's sixth largest country after Russia, Canada, China, the United States of America and Brazil. It's a relatively flat country; the highest point on the mainland is Mount Kosciuszko in New South Wales at 2,228 metres above sea level. Nearly 20% of Australia's land mass is classified as desert. As well as having a low average annual rainfall, rainfall across the country is also variable. Climatic zones range from tropical rainforests, deserts and cool temperature forests to snow covered mountains and also includes territory in Antarctica.⁶

As in all countries across the globe, the environmental challenges in Australia are varied and complex. Some of the key environmental issues include⁷:

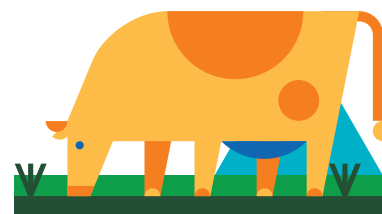
⁵ For a more complete picture of population distribution, please refer to the Australian Bureau of Statistics at www.abs.gov.au/Population

⁶ www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/our-country/the-australian-continent

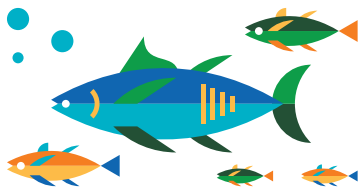
⁷ Information sources from WWF at www.wwf.org.au/ and the Origin Energy at www.originenergy.com.au/blog/about-energy/coal-in-australia.html



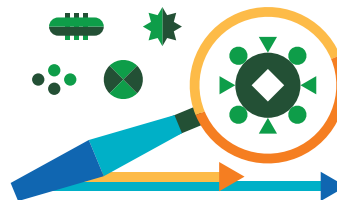
Deforestation



Agriculture clearing and overgrazing
this is one of the key pressures on biodiversity



Overfishing and illegal fishing



Introduction of exotic species

It's estimated that Australia gains around 20 new pests or diseases each year



Pollution



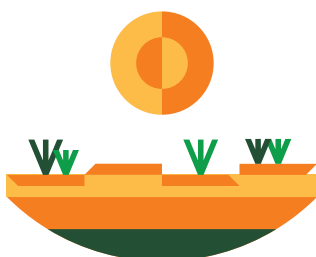
Coral bleaching on the Great Barrier Reef



Infrastructure development and population growth encroaching on non-urbanised spaces



Reliance on coal and the impact of mining
Australia is the world's fourth largest coal producer and at 73% coal is Australia's primary fuel source for generating electricity



Disasters

Such as floods, bushfires, tropical storms and drought

This section presents a number of key areas in arts and sustainability in Australia. These were themes that were raised during the research and were often core areas of the organisations' work that arose in the development of their programming, as a core part of their vision or as a certain perspective on creative practice.



From top to bottom:

Film screening at Transitions Film Festival.
Image courtesy Transitions Film Festival.

Midnight Oil support the Stop Adani Campaign.
Image courtesy Green Music Australia.

Pannel conversation at Transitions Film Festival.
Image courtesy Transitions Film Festival.

Advocacy and education

There are many formal structures for the training of artists in Australia. There are undergraduate fine art university degrees, diplomas in technical and further education (TAFE)⁸, post-graduate courses in universities and creative PhDs. In addition, there are several programmes which focus on on-going mentoring of artists, run by peak bodies (such as the Australian Society of Authors Emerging Writers' Mentorship Programme⁹), national and state funding bodies, foundations or organisations.

Is there a link between education and employment in the arts? There is certainly employability from creative arts courses, but not necessarily in related arts jobs. The average artist spends 57% of their time on their creative work, 24% on arts related work and 19% on non-arts work. These figures only capture the practising professional artists however, not those who work in non-arts related jobs and who create in their spare time.¹⁰ Surveyed professional artists were highly qualified, with 65% of them holding a tertiary qualification, compared to 25% in the workforce at large, according to the Australia Council report *Artist Careers*¹¹. This implies that undertaking formal education is quite common for professional artists in Australia although it doesn't necessarily lead directly to arts related jobs.

In addition to arts degrees, there are some university programmes that examine the intersection between art and environment, such as the Arts Environment degree at the University of South Australia¹² or the Bachelor of Creative Arts and Design (Environmental Art) at Charles Sturt University¹³ in New South Wales. There are relatively few that combine fine art and sustainability, and many artists develop their skills and knowledge on environmental concerns in parallel or after their fine art studies. A few examples of such skill sharing are covered in this directory and can be found in the examples of SymbioticA and The Australian Network for Art and Technology (ANAT).

The other side of the education coin is the way in which artists educate audiences and advocate for change in their practice. In this Guide there are several organisations that have education and advocacy at

⁸ TAFE is generally a shorter, more focused training in areas such as business, finance, hospitality, tourism, construction, engineering, visual arts, information technology and community work. Due to funding cuts however, these courses have been reduced.

⁹ www.asauthors.org/services/award-mentorships

¹⁰ www.australiacouncil.gov.au/research/making-art-work/

¹¹ www.australiacouncil.gov.au/workspace/uploads/files/artist_career_research_summary-591bc8ff7bbbc.pdf

¹² study.unisa.edu.au/courses/007468/2018

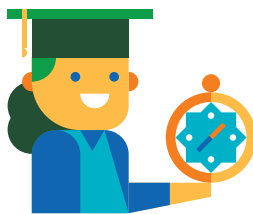
¹³ futurestudents.csu.edu.au/courses/communication-creative/bachelor-creative-arts-design-environmental-art



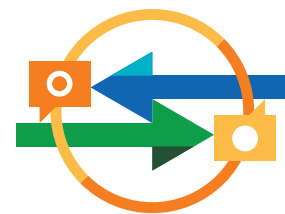
In this sphere of advocacy and education, the topic of mining has garnered much attention in recent years, specifically the mining of uranium on Indigenous lands and the development of coalmines. The most recent example of this is the proposed development of the Adani Carmichael coal mine in Queensland, which includes the construction of a port that will threaten the Great Barrier Reef. There has been much mobilisation around this issue, with Green Music Australia conducting a campaign with well-known musicians and Plumwood Mountain Journal, the Australian journal of eco-poetics, mobilising the poetry community to speak out and put pressure on politicians¹⁴. The overwhelming public opposition to the mine impacted the Queensland state election in 2017, with the National Labor Party Queensland Premier Annastacia PALASZCZUK announcing the withdrawal of support for the development shortly before the elections.

Questions of sustainable practices can also become very complex for arts organisations when financiers or contractors are closely linked to ethically questionable or environmentally harmful activities. This came to a head in the 2014 Biennale of Sydney where more than half the artists boycotted the event to protest against one of the core funders, Transfield Holdings, who is connected to large contracts related to the immigration detention centre at Manus Island.¹⁵ This event raised questions such as who should fund the arts? As well as questioning what impact these kinds of protests actually have.

Challenges



Difficulty in finding relevant, full time job experience after university graduation



Potential conflict of interest for arts organisations when it comes to sustainable and ethical practices

¹⁴ plumwoodmountain.com/2018/03/05/hope-for-whole-ebook-now-available/

¹⁵ theconversation.com/is-there-any-clean-money-left-to-fund-the-arts-24159

Opportunities



Several formal courses and professional development opportunities available for artists interested in environmental issues



Public campaigns do have the capacity to change political discourse

Science and technology

Innovation is currently a popular topic under the Liberal National Party (LNP) leadership, with the National Innovation and Science agenda announced in December 2015. The focus of the agenda is to improve competitiveness, standard of living, wages and the social welfare net. However, this focus on innovation doesn't necessarily result in initiatives beneficial to the arts. At the same time as supporting innovation, the national government has reduced funding to the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)¹⁶, an organisation that explores innovations in science and technology. An area that was particularly hard-hit was the climate science research, with 100 climate scientists due to lose their positions before a public outcry encouraged the CSIRO to revise their plan. In addition, the Climate Commission, an independent body established in 2011 by the National Labor Party to communicate reliable and authoritative information about climate change in Australia, was abolished in 2013 when the LNP came to power. Due to public outrage and after a successful crowd funding campaign that raised more than AUD 1 million in a short amount of time, it was re-launched as the independent Climate Council¹⁷.

“Ten years ago most of the artists were emerging artists because they were the ones that got it, they understood what interdisciplinary practice was. And now it's almost all quite established artists...There is a broadening appreciation of the places that art can be.”

-VICKI SOWRY, DIRECTOR OF ANAT

The Australian Network for Art and Technology (ANAT), who has been working in this field since 1988, doesn't necessarily see the policies of innovation reflected in improved conditions for artists or the scientists they collaborate with. As ANAT Director Vicki SOWRY observes, 'Part of the frustration is around the very narrow understanding of what innovation is, i.e. taking a new process or object to market is pointless, because it totally discounts all the failures that need to happen to get it to that point.' The value of arts and science collaborations can be not to necessarily focus on concrete outputs, but rather enable a shift in thinking, which can be a pivotal element of innovation. However, this exploratory approach can be difficult to measure, and SOWRY notes that 'there are a lot of issues around capturing the values of these [programmes] because they are at the R&D stage.'

Working in interdisciplinary collaborations is an area that is changing. SOWRY comments that 'ten years ago most of the artists were emerging artists because they were the ones that got it, they understood what interdisciplinary practice was. And now it's almost all quite established artists...There is a broadening appreciation of the places that art can be.' But while artists have been gaining confidence in this area of research, the policies have not necessarily followed supported this development. There have been some incredible new ways of doing things created by artists, but the expectation that there will always be successful outputs from these collaborations shuts down the open thinking required to create true innovation.

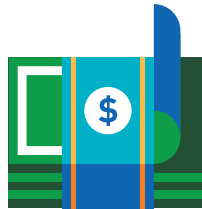
¹⁶ www.csiro.au/

¹⁷ www.climatecouncil.org.au/

Aside from organisations that work specifically in the area of arts and science collaborations, there are other ways artists explore this nexus in once-off projects. For example, there have been several projects in collaboration with botanical gardens, such as the Red Room Poetry “New Shoots” poetic partnership with the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney, Sydney Olympic Park and Bundanon Trust¹⁸ or the annual art exhibition “Botanica” at the Royal Botanic Garden in Sydney¹⁹. State governments have also supported these types of collaborations such as the Queensland Government’s Artist in Residence Science Programme²⁰ and Tasmania’s long-term collaboration with Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service to support local residencies at wilderness, historical and cultural locations across Tasmania²¹.

Another area of innovation can be seen in the development of sustainable creative practices, as artists seek out more sustainable materials for their work. One such example is Queensland-based jeweller Clare POPPI²² who uses recycled metals and bio-degradable components for her work. She finds that due to the speciality of her area, the networks and organisations in this space are more internationally focused, such as Ethical Metalsmiths²³ or the No Dirty Gold Campaign²⁴, and membership is still relatively small. On an organisational level, innovation is sometimes driven by arts funders, such as the City of Melbourne who encourages grant recipients to implement environmentally friendly practices. As TippingPoint Australia Director Angharad WYNNE-JONES observes, ‘I think the City of Melbourne – also the City of Sydney – is exemplary in terms of government organisations in setting standards. The target for City of Melbourne is zero emissions by 2020. That’s a necessary framework to be working within.’²⁵

Challenges



Lack of funding in both the arts and the sciences



Too much emphasis on outputs and applied innovation, rather than exploration

¹⁸ Red Room Poetry creates poetic projects and learning programs in collaboration with a spectrum of poets, schools, communities and partners for positive social impact. See more at redroomcompany.org/projects/new-shoots/

¹⁹ www.rbgssyd.nsw.gov.au/whatson/botanica

²⁰ www.qld.gov.au/dsiti/science-innovation/artist-residence-science-program/about

²¹ www.arts.tas.gov.au/funding/programs/residencies/tasmanian_residencies

²² www.clarepoppi.com/

²³ www.ethicalmetalsmiths.org/

²⁴ earthworks.org/campaigns/no-dirty-gold/

²⁵ www.realtimearts.net/article/issue109/10680

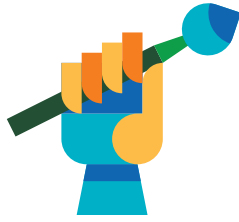


It takes time for artists and scientists to learn how to communicate with one another

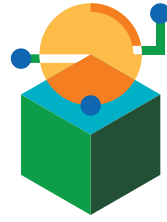


Impact can be difficult to measure and report on, especially within rigid organisational structures

Opportunities



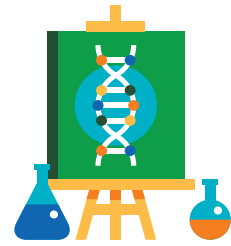
More experienced artists working in this field, increasing the expertise of the sector



Out-of-the-box solutions can arise from explorative collaborations



Sustainable practices can be fostered by support from local governments and funder



Arts organisations are exploring these arts and science collaborations in once-off projects

Environmental trends



Chai Wala by Cave Urban, Woodfordia, QLD, 2017. Image courtesy Cave Urban

Several organisations noted that attention to specific environmental concerns changes over the years. Jed LONG from Sydney-based design collaborative Cave Urban noted that ‘if anything some of the changes have almost gone backwards. Thinking about some of the things that interest us, in terms of embodied energy and where materials come from, these were things that were really spoken about ten years ago and in the last ten years not much has changed. And if anything, because that amount of time has passed, when you talk about it almost seems old fashioned...Sometimes that appetite, I find, comes and goes. But at the same time there’s new areas of sustainability that become of interest.’

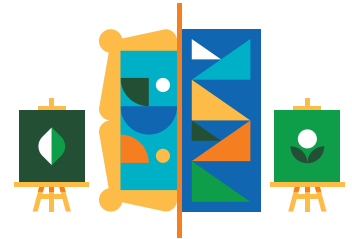
The discussions across topics of sustainability are not always equally balanced, with some areas, like the current attention given to plastic waste, becoming more visible. This creates the risk that some important areas of sustainability become neglected due to lack of general public interest.

Philip SAMARTZIS, Co-Founder and Creative Director of the rural Bogong Centre for Sound Culture (BCSC) highlights that it could be beneficial to pay attention to these under represented topics in sustainability. He observes that it's 'an oversaturated market when it comes to environmentally driven projects or ideas around sustainability, I think people are over that to a large degree. So it's also about being inventive when you talk about sustainability and climate change....I think it's also about being strategic about the types of communities and locations we're dealing with and how they're being represented and what we're trying to advocate for...I think it's about a point of difference.' Audiences can become tired of certain ideas that they see repeated in exhibitions or festivals and the challenge of advocating for sustainability is to find creative ways to approach the topic.

Challenges



Saturated market for environmentally driven arts projects



Trends in art and sustainability often change, potentially leaving behind important issues that are no longer fashionable

Opportunities



Chance to create a fresh perspectives by focusing on under reported environmental issues

²⁶ www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/2017/06/22/native-title-not-land-rights

²⁷ tjanpi.com.au/

²⁸ Country is an Aboriginal English word that refers to a person's land, sea, sky, rivers, sites, seasons, plants and animals. It's a place of heritage, belonging and spirituality.

Indigenous connection to land

Indigenous art is very diverse, encompassing classical, traditional and contemporary practice across all forms of expression. In many creative practices a connection to land is pivotal. As Natalie CROMB highlights, 'Indigenous people do not perceive land in the title and property value sense but rather as a provider which in turn needs to be protected.'²⁶ Tjanpi artist Nyurpaya KAIKA-BURTON from the Tjanpi Desert Weavers²⁷ in remote central deserts in the Northern Territory explains her connection with culture and Country²⁸:

'We go out into Country to the actual place where the stories take place, where those dreaming tracks move through the country. We go there and we find the materials. Those trips to Country and making the



Noosa Biosphere Reserve, Biosphere Soundscapes Welcome to Country. Image courtesy Biosphere Soundscapes.

sculptures involve all the family. Our children watch us doing this and they learn directly from us. They are all getting to know the stories now, but in a really different way. It is for the *malatja malatja tjutaku*, the descendants of our children, that we are very concerned. We believe that the absolute power and strength of these sculptures and the community involvement in making them, will keep our stories as strong as ever.²⁹

An article by Catherine LIDDLE explains her connection to Country in which she states that ‘to not know your country causes a painful disconnection, the impact of which is well documented in studies relating to health, wellbeing and life outcomes.’³⁰

This connection to land as expressed through art can also have legal implications, and has played a role in important lands rights and native title cases³¹, as well as in areas such as communal rights and human rights.

There is not enough space to explore all facets of indigenous art and its relation to land here, so the Directory has focused on a few art centres as case studies. Art centres are important because they are more than just spaces for exhibiting work; they are knowledge centres, support networks and creative hubs. Manager of Queensland’s Indigenous Art Centre Alliance³² Pamela BIGELOW observes that the concept of an arts centre can be different in local communities. ‘When I say an “art centre”, it’s such a homogenous word and people think of a gallery or anything they can relate to in an urban centre. Initially people don’t understand that it is a community social enterprise. It’s there to manage the artists’ careers and develop economic outcomes within an appropriate social and cultural context...It’s a place of opportunity for people who wish to join it, run by an Indigenous board and is created from a groundswell of need within the community.’³³ BIGELOW adds that Indigenous art centres can also be a main source of employment for local people in the community.

Sophie WALLACE, manager of the Yarrenyty Arltere Artists³⁴ in Larapinta Valley Town Camp in Alice Springs, explains the importance of arts centres. ‘The centre started as a place where people could deal with the grief and trauma they were suffering...The centre remains absolutely

²⁹ d33dlkx851fuz.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/FINAL-RAF-Impact-1458-low-res-spreads.pdf

³⁰ www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/2015/10/22/why-connection-country-so-important-aboriginal-communities

³¹ When the continent was colonised 1768 it was declared by the British as terra nullius; uninhabited land. This was overturned only as recently as 1992 in the High Court’s Mabo decision that stated terra nullius to be a lie. This was followed by the Native Title Act 1993, which was intended to acknowledge and protect Indigenous connection to land. You can read more about Native Title here: www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/2017/06/22/native-title-not-land-rights

³² iaca.com.au/

³³ www.artshub.com.au/FESTIVAL/NEWS-ARTICLE/SPONSORED-CONTENT/FESTIVALS/STAFF-WRITER/REMOTE-ARTS-CENTRES-ARE-THE-UNSUNG-HEROES-OF-INDIGENOUS-ART-PRACTICE-253977

³⁴ www.yarrenytyarltereartists.com/about/

crucial for the community: not just as a place to make money but as a place to meet, unwind and work through problems. It's a hub, so other services are available and it's open to all family members too, not just the artists.'³⁵



Western Australia's Chamber of Arts and Culture estimates that there are more than 80 community art centres across Australia, most of which are Aboriginal-owned. Although underpayment and exploitation of artists was rife, a Senate inquiry into the Aboriginal arts sector in 2007 led to reforms and the establishment of a non-governmental Indigenous Art Code, which has helped to improve the situation.³⁶

Challenges

- Remote communities are difficult to access and touring work can be expensive
- If Indigenous art isn't supported there is a risk of declining number of practitioners working in the arts, that would impact communities
- Since it can be difficult for regional communities to reach urban or international audiences, there is the risk of exploitation by middlemen

Opportunities

- Indigenous perspectives can provide an important way of living in the world with more connection to the land
- Art centres provide a hub of creative practice and knowledge as well as build a support system for communities
- Art centres can provide an economic income for communities
- Connection to land can be seen through a creative practice that reaches back thousands of years
- New approaches to Indigenous artistic practice are continually evolving
- There is increasing recognition, nationally and internationally, of the importance of a wide range of Indigenous artistic practice

³⁵ edition.cnn.com/style/article/australia-indigenous-artists/index.html

³⁶ edition.cnn.com/style/article/australia-indigenous-artists/index.html



Leah Barclay, *Perspectives on Listening*, Biosphere Soundscapes International Workshop and Symposium, 2017. Images courtesy Biosphere Soundscapes.

Regional art



Michael Vorfeld performing. Image courtesy Bogong Centre for Sound Culture.

“The negotiation, the planning, the implementation is a big part of the experience. I often put myself in very hostile situations...[because] you find something truthful in a situation that’s uncomfortable.”

-PHILIP SAMARTZIS, CO-FOUNDER AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF BCSC

Regions in Australia are often defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics’ Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia, which divides regions into five classes of remoteness on the basis of access to services. The categories include major cities, inner regional, outer regional, remote and very remote.³⁷ There is a clustering of arts organisations based in the larger cities, given the easier access to resources and larger audiences. Research undertaken by the arts funding and advisory body Australia Council for the Arts shows that while increasingly people in regional Australia recognise the positive impact of the arts, only one in ten professional Australian artists live in outer regional, remote or very remote areas. Craft practitioners, visual artists and community arts and cultural development (CACD) artists are the most likely to live outside capital cities. Additionally, artists living in the regions earn almost a third less than their city counterparts for creative work. One in three Indigenous people in remote Australia creatively participate the arts, however remote creative arts participation rates have been declining and as the Australia Council notes, this is ‘a concerning trend given the importance of First Nations arts to cultural and economic sustainability, and community wellbeing’.³⁸

³⁷ The majority of the land is classified as very remote. Read more here: www.abs.gov.au/websit-e/dbs/d3310114.nsf/home/remoteness+structure

³⁸ Read the full Australia Council reports here: www.australiacouncil.gov.au/research/regional-arts-summary/

Along with access to infrastructure and the ability to earn an income, there can be other challenges to moving to regional areas. The Bogong Centre for Sound Culture (BCSC) is located in regional Victoria and often hosts national and international artists in their residency programme. Co-Founder and Artistic Director Philip SAMARTZIS, who has also worked in places such as Antarctica and the very remote Kimberly region in Western Australia, notes that sometimes artists find the experience very isolating and that it’s difficult to spend weeks in a relatively remote area. As he explains, the artists sometimes ‘miss companionship and social interaction...often they won’t see anyone for days if not a week or two at a time, so that can be confronting for people who aren’t used to that.’

But for SAMARTZIS it's the challenge that make these types of experiences valuable for an artistic practice. He says 'I'm attracted to it because it is difficult...The negotiation, the planning, the implementation is a big part of the experience. I often put myself in very hostile situations... [because] you find something truthful in a situation that's uncomfortable.' When an artist goes into deep field research in an unfamiliar location, nothing makes sense and you can't take anything for granted and often every decision you make has elevated level of risk. For SAMARTZIS, this enables him to create work with deep meaning.

“It is also vital that regional areas aren't only seen as “receivers” of art, waiting to consume metropolitan arts practice, but are recognised as centres of arts creation in their own right with potential markets in metropolitan and international areas.”

- MICHAEL MORAN, CURATOR OF MAMA

In addition to the challenge of being a creative practitioner in regional and remote areas, it can also be expensive to tour artwork to regional areas given the often low population density and vast distances. This is magnified for very remote areas. As the Indigenous Art Centre Alliance Manager Pamela BIGELOW observes, 'Travel costs can be extreme...It costs just as much to go to Erub Island as it does to go to Paris. And you want to bring artists to an exhibition in Melbourne? Everything in a remote community is harder. Supplies, resources, getting arts materials – everything takes time.'³⁹ Regional touring is often supported by national and state bodies, such as the Regionals Arts Australia, who fund, support and promote regional artists and organisations. Another solution to providing access to very remote communities is the Flying Arts Alliance⁴⁰, which flies artists to regional and remote Queensland to deliver specific workshops or programmes that the community otherwise wouldn't have access to.



Keith Armstrong on The 'Re-Introduction' Project, part of the 2012 ANAT Synapse Art-Science Residency Program, collaborating with the Australian Wildlife Conservancy. Images courtesy: Keith Armstrong

³⁹ www.artshub.com.au/FESTIVAL/NEWS-ARTICLE/SPONSORED-CONTENT/FESTIVALS/STAFF-WRITER/REMOTE-ARTS-CENTRES-ARE-THE-UNSUNG-HEROES-OF-INDIGENOUS-ART-PRACTICE.253977

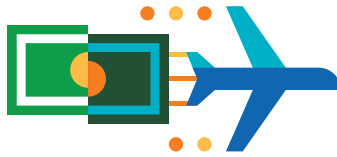
⁴⁰ flyingarts.org.au/

Often regional organisations need to find a balance between catering to the needs of the community and attracting a wide audience. For example, Murray Art Museum Albury (MAMA) in regional New South Wales receives 50% of its visitors from outside the region. When putting on experimental exhibitions, as MAMA Curator Michael MORAN explains, 'It is a gamble to see how an artform that has a perception as either

being peripheral or esoteric is embraced'⁴¹. However, as highlighted in an article about regional art in Australia, 'It is also vital that regional areas aren't only seen as "receivers" of art, waiting to consume metropolitan arts practice, but are recognised as centres of arts creation in their own right with potential markets in metropolitan and international areas.'⁴²

This balance can be a challenge when regional spaces are more difficult to visit and when the local community is small. The original idea for BCSC was to base all their activities in the Alpine region, but over time they have reached out to display the work in urban settings such as Canberra, Melbourne and regional centre Albury Wodonga in order to reach wider audiences.

Challenges



Touring can be expensive



Gaining sufficient audiences can be difficult in remote areas

Opportunities



Artistic practice can provide support for regional communities



Regional and remote communities can provide opportunities to create distinctive work

Disaster recovery

With the effects of climate change it is predicted that countries will suffer from more natural disasters, and Australia is no exception given its dry climate and tropical zones. Common disasters include floods, cyclones, bushfires and drought. In 2010 - 2011, Queensland experienced major flooding that affected at least 90 towns and in 2009 Victoria experienced the Black Saturday bushfires, to name just a few recent events.

Although there aren't many arts organisations working exclusively in this field – the Creative Recovery Network in the Directory is one that does – there have been several short-term projects that address disaster recovery in the aftermath of the disaster. Such examples include a number of projects funded by Regional Arts Victoria after the Black Saturday bushfires involving a series of quick response grants for

⁴¹ visual.artshub.com.au/news-article/sponsored-content/museums/richard-watts/satisfying-regional-australias-hunger-for-contemporary-art-255593

⁴² theconversation.com/explainer-what-are-regional-arts-and-why-do-they-matter-34862

artists to work in their communities on projects that contributed to the recovery effort.

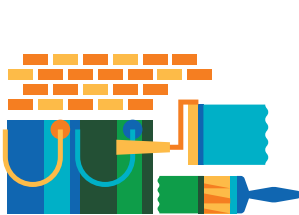
Michelle BOLMAT, the Kinglake Arts Alliance Artistic Director, observed that two years after the event some artists are still too traumatised to work while others have found art crucial to recovery. ‘You can’t stop them, they have this need to express, to explain what happened.’⁴³

“In my experience, arts plays a critical, but hugely undervalued role, in this process (disaster recovery). However, I don’t believe it is art as a spectator activity —it is the participation, the involvement in the creative process that makes the difference.”

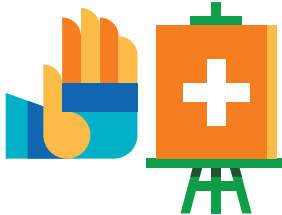
-BRUCE ESPLIN, COMMISSIONER OF VICTORIA’S EMERGENCY SERVICES

As Victoria’s previous Emergency Services Commissioner Bruce ESPLIN observed in 2011, ‘In my experience, arts plays a critical, but hugely undervalued role, in this process (disaster recovery). However, I don’t believe it is art as a spectator activity – it is the participation, the involvement in the creative process that makes the difference.’⁴⁴ An embedded artistic practice can be very influential when recovering from disaster. With the current environmental challenges set to worsen, more initiatives like these need to be considered both before and after disaster events in order to develop resilient communities.

Challenges



More can be done within the arts in the preparation stage in order to build resilient communities



Arts is not always seen as a central component in the disaster recovery process

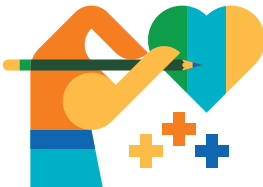


Potentially more people will be impacted by natural disasters in the future

⁴³ www.smh.com.au/entertainment/art-and-design/hope-and-resilience-emerge-in-black-saturday-art-20110119-19wm4.html

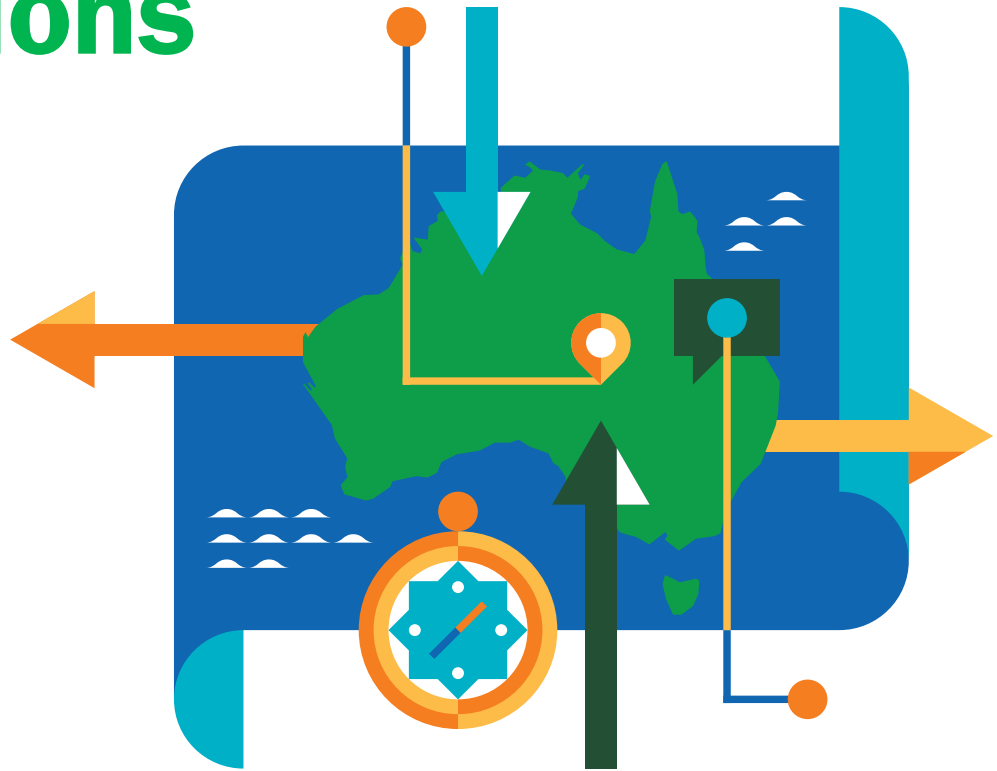
⁴⁴ creativerecovery.org.au/respond/

Opportunities



Participation in art programmes is a way to process traumatic events

Thoughts on future directions



This Guide explores many ways of working in the nexus of arts and sustainability in Australia. In addition to the organisations listed here, there are many arts organisations that are engaging with environmental issues through their on-going programming. These include museums, biennials, large festivals, fringe festivals, artist - run spaces, literature journals, collectives and many more. It might not be a core aspect of their organisational structure, but engagement with sustainable issues is embedded in various ways across the sector.

This section presents a few ideas of possible directions for future engagement in this arts and sustainability, based on the research and on exchanges with key arts organisations. This is not intended as an in-depth investigation into future trends, but rather a presentation of possible directions in order to spark ideas and stimulate discussion.

Adapt and increase funding for cross-disciplinary collaborations

One of the key concerns mentioned by the organisations was the lack of funding. This is particularly the case in Australia in recent years where there has been a decrease in national arts funding (although this is sometimes mitigated by state-led initiatives). But more specifically, funding is a challenge in this cross-disciplinary field as it often falls between the arts and the sciences funding structures. As the Director of Environmental Film Festival Australia Chris GERBING comments, 'I think that one of the most difficult situations is finding funding organisations that are also prepared to span the arts and sustainability space – so for both corporate and government dollars to recognise the way arts can bring new perspective, generate change and connect people beyond traditional means. For us, as a film festival, this means that it can be difficult to access funds from the sustainability pool, because we are limited in our ability to demonstrate on-ground sustainability changes, such as reduced emissions. From an arts perspective, film festivals are often excluded in 'arts' funding, perhaps because there are a plethora of events, or that the curation and display of film material (in whatever way) is not deemed as 'artistic practice'. I would like to see more opportunities that recognise the value the film festival (with related and parallel audience engagement activities) can bring to creating a cohesive, arts-engaged and sustainability minded community.'

“Institutionally there needs to be less expectation that artists will be drivers of innovation, because that’s not their role. But they do play a very important role in trying to make sense of new approaches, new knowledge, because artists, to a large extent, are meaning-makers.”

-ORON CATTS, DIRECTOR OF SYMBIOTICA

Bundanon Trust CEO Deborah ELY also commented on the challenge in this area, stating that 'Although the arts funding streams are willing to support artists working in relation to environmental concerns, articulating the benefit of artists' involvement in sustainability initiatives to non-arts bodies is a challenge. This is an advocacy opportunity for us all.' Sometimes it is not that there is no funding available, but rather the reporting requirements make it difficult for cross-disciplinary projects to find their place, an issue that was also raised by Vicki SOWRY Director of the Australian Network for Art and Technology (ANAT).

Director of SymbioticA Oron CATTS also warns that artists need to be able to focus on their core practice, rather than the outputs or activities that are supplementary to it. He says, 'Institutionally there needs to be less expectation that artists will be drivers of innovation, because that’s not their role. But they do play a very important role in trying to make sense of new approaches, new knowledge, because artists, to a large extent, are meaning-makers. The engineers and the scientists might come up with new knowledge and new ways of doing things, but artists help make sense of it in some way.'

Make environmental sustainability core to creative practices

How is it possible to get more arts organisations engaged with issues of sustainability? One way is to embed environmental sustainability into the core of an organisation's work. However, this can be a challenge in a field where time and money is scarce. As Green Music Australia CEO and Co-Founder Tim HOLLO observes, 'the biggest challenge is the lack of priority given to environmental issues by people and organisations who, generally, consider it to be very important. A key reason for that is that it is, of course, very difficult to get by in the arts and we are all constantly close to the wire. When we are under pressure, it is that much harder to focus on things which aren't central to our activities.'

Structures established by grant-givers or governments can encourage arts organisations to be more engaged in this area. HOLLO suggest that 'all arts organisations receiving government grants...put sustainability plans in place, ensuring that it becomes core business. A step back from there is to work with artists and audiences to build the demand for arts organisations to act – this is a key model we have used on plastic waste, for example.'

“All arts organisations receiving government grants...should put sustainability plans in place, ensuring that it becomes core business.”

-TIM HOLLO, CEO AND CO-FOUNDER OF GREEN MUSIC AUSTRALIA

Engage in more sophisticated discussions



Workshops run by Boho Interactive. Image courtesy Boho Interactive.

Given the current political context, in which the arts and climate change are not seen as a top priority, some organisations and artists are calling for a more profound debate in this area. As David FINNIGAN, Co-Founder of Boho Interactive, comments, 'The confected culture war around the idea / existence of 'climate change' is a tedious irritation. Most countries in the world (apart from Australia and the US) have long since moved on from this zombie conversation...Very few places in the world are having the sorts of sophisticated discussions in the private sphere that we need in order to make change, but in Australia the conversation is notably degraded.'



Get The Kids And Run project by Boho Interactive, 2016-2019, Singapore. Image courtesy Boho Interactive.




These can be challenging conversations to have however. The Cad Factory Artistic Director and artist Vic MCEWAN knows first hand the difficulties of engaging diverse audiences in these debates. ‘We work in a cross-sector way, our organisation believes that if we are exploring complex issues, we are going to have the most impact by involving all parties. So we don’t shy away from creating functional relationships with those who we may traditionally share a position of ideological opposition. We find these relationships challenging and a part of a slow and deep process of effecting real change.’ Perhaps the arts are the very place to have these conflicting opinions shared in order to move towards a more positive debate that inspires change across a broad range of publics.

Support project management structures

Another topic that was raised during the research was the importance of administrative processes. Carbon Arts Co-Founder Jodi NEWCOMBE argued that there is ‘little recognition for the role of the creative producer and its importance in complex fields such as sustainability, particularly for social impact and public engagement.’ This is a complex field and interlocutors, such as creative producers, can be vital in bringing together not only artists and scientists, but also diverse publics, partners or funders. SOWRY also mentioned the importance of establishing appropriate administrative systems as a way to manage these complex processes. For example, insisting on appropriate consultation and preparation before applying for a grant might seem bureaucratic, but it can help to guide a successful collaboration. Working across multi-sector and multi-disciplinary teams presents project management challenges and all arts employees need to be trained in these kind of projects and in new ways of working.

Allow time and support to experiment

In the more exploratory programmes it is important to allow time for experimentation and development. In some cases, when working on new ways of approaching a problem, the path is not clear. This may lead to “failed” projects or a ten-year gestation period before there is a concrete output or solution. There needs to be a different approach for these exploratory projects, both on an organisational level as well as from a funding perspective. How impact is measured in these cases may need to be reconsidered.

Advocacy & Education Science & Technology Indigenous connection to land Regional art Disaster recovery 

Directory

A few notes on the Directory

The 25 arts organisations and initiatives in the directory were chosen based on:

- An engagement with environment at the core of their work or as a large part of their programmes
- Their openness to international collaborations
- Their structure as an organisation (rather than a one-off project)

In each of the organisations there is a location stated in the Directory. This is where the organisation is located, although in most cases the projects are also implemented regionally, nationally or even internationally. In some cases staff from the organisations can also be located in different areas.

The assignation of sector and focus for each organisation is intended as a quick overview, and the way the organisation engages in these areas often depends on the individual programmes. Where the sector is listed as being cross-disciplinary, in the majority of cases this indicates that the organisation is open to working with artists involved in visual art, literature, performing arts, sound/music or craft. The way they engage in these areas can vary and depends on the focus of each organisation.

Unless otherwise stated, all quotes are from personal email or Skype exchanges between the researcher and the organisations.

1



FOUNDED:

2010

SECTOR:

FILM FESTIVALS

FOCUS:

ADVOCACY, EDUCATION

WHERE:

MELBOURNE (VICTORIA) AND NATIONAL TOURING PROGRAM

SIZE:

20+ VOLUNTEERS

MORE INFO:

EFFA.ORG.AU/



Film screening at the Environmental Film Festival Australia. Image courtesy Environmental Film Festival Australia.



Industry Day at the Environmental Film Festival Australia. Photo: Martin Stringer. Image courtesy Environmental Film Festival Australia.

ENVIRONMENTAL FILM FESTIVAL AUSTRALIA

The Environmental Film Festival Australia (EFFA) is a yearly film festival that explores the relationship between humans and their environments, featuring work from Australian and international filmmakers. They screen a range of works including traditional feature-length documentary, short form, fictional films, experimental works, virtual reality, full dome and IMAX titles. The aim of EFFA, which has now grown from its Melbourne base to present programmes in other cities, is to encourage discussion, action and hope for a more sustainable future. As EFFA Patron and former leader of the Australian Greens Party Bob BROWN states, ‘EFFA gives Australians a glimpse into some of the most pertinent environmental issues facing the world today and reminds us that these issues are not all happening in faraway places, they are happening right here on our doorstep.’⁴⁵

There is a yearly call for films and many titles are from overseas, although EFFA strives to present 30% of their films from local talent and they are actively seeking to represent indigenous perspectives. EFFA is open to hosting international artists who can share their experiences with the local environmental film production industry, although their funding to support these initiatives is limited.

An interesting initiative of EFFA was the 2017 partnership with the filmmaking agency Digital Storytellers, which provided a workshop for eight environmental organisations to learn how to create their own digital content with easy to use technology.⁴⁶ The short films were then screened during the festival. This was a way to raise awareness of the work of these environmental organisations, but it also enabled the organisations to reach out to diverse audiences through creative distribution methods, vital in the ever-changing media context.

⁴⁵ www.ffa.org.au/mission/

⁴⁶ www.ffa.org.au/digital-storytellers-2017/

FOUNDED:

2011

SECTOR:

**CROSS-DISCIPLINARY,
FESTIVALS**

FOCUS:

**NETWORKING,
ACTIVISM,
EDUCATION**

WHERE:

MELBOURNE (VICTORIA)

SIZE:

3 STAFF

MORE INFO:

**TIPPINGPOINTAUSTRALIA.
COM**

“Culturally, I’m really interested in how artists engage with the idea of radical carbon reduction and what the impact of that might be on the way we make work, the way we participate in it and engage with it.”

–ANGHARAD WYNNE-JONES, DIRECTOR OF TIPPING POINT AUSTRALIA

TIPPINGPOINT AUSTRALIA

TippingPoint Australia connects artists with scientists, economists, politicians and activists to develop and promote multidisciplinary projects that expand understandings of climate change. The non-profit organisation facilitates workshops, hackathons and labs with schools, organisations and diverse sectors. TippingPoint Australia was developed after a series of forums in 2010 in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane and it is a sister partner of the UK’s network organisation TippingPoint⁴⁷.

In an interview TippingPoint Australia Director Angharad WYNNE-JONES explained her personal interest in the area of art and environment. ‘Culturally, I’m really interested in how artists engage with the idea of radical carbon reduction and what the impact of that might be on the way we make work, the way we participate in it and engage with it. If there is anything not completely terrifying about climate change it is the opportunity to re-imagine some of those old modes of cultural production that have serviced a particular kind of economy.’⁴⁸

TippingPoint Australia has developed a number of projects, including a 2017 three-day international, interdisciplinary event that focused on a critical natural resource: water. “Water Futures” was a knowledge exchange and trans-disciplinary laboratory focused on sustainable water futures and involved artists, scientists, Indigenous elders, economists, activists, politicians, diplomats and the community. In another project, “Weather Stations”, Matt WICKING, Leisa SHELTON and Angharad WYNNE-JONES led sessions with teenage school students focussing on art and sustainability, resulting in a number of short documentary films made by the students.

⁴⁷ www.juliesbicycle.com/tippingpoint

⁴⁸ www.realttimearts.net/article/issue109/10680

13

FOUNDED:

2010

SECTOR:

CROSS-DISCIPLINARY,
FESTIVALS

FOCUS:

EDUCATION,
ADVOCACY,
ARTISTIC PRESENTATION

WHERE:

MELBOURNE (VICTORIA)

SIZE:

7 BOARD MEMBERS

MORE INFO:

CLIMARTE.ORG



“It’s one thing to talk about an art and science nexus, but it has to be a real collaboration and you have to really unpack that...so that everybody’s got a role, a shared role, so that there’s a real cross-pollination of ideas.”

–BRONWYN JOHNSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CLIMARTE



CLIMARTE: ART+CLIMATE=CHANGE

CLIMARTE is an organisation and biannual festival that uses the creative power of the arts to inform, engage and inspire action on climate change. They work with a range of partners, such as arts organisations, creative practitioners, administrators, patrons and academics to present work from across the arts sector (including the visual arts, music, theatre, literature, architecture, and cinema).

CLIMARTE’s projects started with a forum Art Climate Ethics: What role for the arts? and found that there was an overwhelming interest in the area. From these initial events the ART+CLIMATE=CHANGE festival was born (the next edition is held in 2019). As Executive Director Bronwyn JOHNSON observes, ‘How do you get people talking in a city like Melbourne when there’re so many things to see in the annual calendar? But when you get a critical mass of exhibitions and you get the art community and artists involved, then they’re all talking to each other... and all this information is being spread [through their networks].’

However collaborations such, as those fostered by CLIMARTE, need to be valuable and shared, with a well-planned programme. ‘It’s one thing to talk about an art and science nexus, but it has to be a real collaboration and you have to really unpack that...so that everybody’s got a role, a shared role, so that there’s a real cross-pollination of ideas.’ As an example, CLIMARTE put on an historical landscape exhibition in which two climate scientists examined the climate in the paintings, emphasising the regional differences in climate. This information was then added to the exhibition text, adding another layer to the interpretation and understanding of the work. As JOHNSON observes, collaborations can actually be hopeful and can lead people down new paths of opportunity and knowledge.

FOUNDED:

2013

SECTOR:

**MUSIC,
FESTIVALS**

FOCUS:

**ADVOCACY,
FACILITATION**

WHERE:

NATIONAL

SIZE:

**3 PART TIME STAFF AND A
GROUP OF VOLUNTEERS**

MORE INFO:

GREENMUSIC.ORG.AU

GREEN MUSIC AUSTRALIA

Green Music Australia is a not-for-profit organisation that facilitates musicians, organisations and festivals to reduce their environmental impact. This involves advocating on practices around energy use, packaging and waste or transport. Green Music Australia works with musicians, artist managers, agents and promoters, environmental consultants, venue and festival managers and environmentalists.

One successful programme was #BYOBottle, a campaign to phase out the use of single use plastic bottles and cups in the music scene. Green Music Australia recruited over 80 high profile musicians to act as ambassadors to promote the campaign in over 20 festivals. In this on-going program Green Music Australia estimate that they've so far prevented more than a million plastic cups and bottles from being used and thrown away and the initiative is still building momentum. Although their resources are limited, they are interested in sharing experiences with related international organisations and they are always open to working with artists touring Australia who would like to reduce their environmental impacts.

Like several organisations and artists, Green Music Australia has also paid attention to the financial structures in the creative industries, encouraging the music industry to move away from banks and organisations that continue to invest in coal, oil and gas. As CEO and Co-Founder Tim HOLLO explains, artists need to engage with these issues because they are fundamental to everyone's future. 'At heart, arts organisations and artists need to engage with environmental concerns because we all live on this one little planet. We humans and everything we have created – from roads and buildings to arts and philosophy – are all part of the natural world and rely on it entirely for our survival.'



BYOO Bottle at BIGSOUND campaign, Green Music Australia. Image courtesy Green Music Australia.

5

FOUNDED:

2012

SECTOR:

FILM,
FESTIVALS

FOCUS:

ARTISTIC PRESENTATION,
ADVOCACY,
EDUCATION

WHERE:

MELBOURNE (VICTORIA)
AND NATIONAL TOURING

MORE INFO:

TRANSITIONSFILMFESTIVAL.
COM

THE TRANSITIONS FILM FESTIVAL

The Transitions Film Festival presents feature films, shorts films and documentaries about the transition to a better world. The films cover topics such as social and technological innovation, renewable energy, community empowerment, eco-architecture, collaborative consumption, global movements and ecological economics. They aim to promote change for an optimistic future through highlighting innovations, cultural influencers and change-makers. The festival tours their films to Melbourne, Adelaide, Sydney, Brisbane and Perth.

In an interview Director Daniel SIMONS explained the importance of these festivals in inspiring change. 'Films, and film festivals, will have an enormously influential role in catalysing the transformation. The great thing about films is that – as well as having the power to transmit new ideas – they also reach people on a deeper, more emotional level, which can be crucial. We've seen the power that films like *An Inconvenient Truth* and *Chasing Ice* have had on raising consciousness, or igniting a sense of urgency on an issue...The great thing about festivals is that they allow the audience to surround themselves with like-minded people and feel empowered and connected to a larger group or community. Often it is the personal connections that are made after the films that have the most impact in the long term.'⁴⁹



Projector Bike screening of *Small is Beautiful*, City Square, Melbourne, Transitions Film Festival. Image courtesy Transitions Film Festival.

Given this importance on making connections after the film, it is not surprising that the festival also has a series of speaking events with leaders across a range of sectors. The incorporation of science, environmentally and socially related speakers in a film festival provides a diverse debate around the issues presented in the films.

⁴⁹ rightnow.org.au/interview-3/transitions-film-festival-co-director-daniel-simons/

FOUNDED:

2011

SECTOR:

**VISUAL ART,
PUBLIC ART,
CROSS-DISCIPLINARY**

FOCUS:

**EDUCATION,
ENGAGEMENT,
ADVOCACY**

WHERE:

MELBOURNE (VICTORIA)

SIZE:

1-5 STAFF

MORE INFO:

CARBONARTS.ORG



“Artists can also bring about innovation and different perspectives, particularly when working as part of multi-disciplinary teams.”

—JODI NEWCOMBE, DIRECTOR OF CARBON ARTS



CARBON ARTS

Carbon Arts presents public art commissions, events, workshops, exhibitions and research with the aim of engaging society in imagining and shaping a more sustainable future. Director Jodi NEWCOMBE highlights that the ‘ecological crises that we face are cultural crises, and we cannot move forward without addressing our culture. Art is an important engagement strategy in this regard.’ Carbon Arts actively engages in cross-disciplinary practices and it brings together governments, businesses, artists and designers in order to engage diverse sectors in the issues around contemporary environmental challenges. NEWCOMBE explains that artists have an important role in this dialogue. ‘Artists can also bring about innovation and different perspectives, particularly when working as part of multi-disciplinary teams.’

NEWCOMBE founded Carbon Arts after an international career as an environmental economist and sustainability consultant, advising government and industry on natural resource management issues. NEWCOMBE emphasises that living more sustainably needs to be something that’s appealing and mainstream in order to have a large impact. ‘When you look at the urban design solutions of the future, they’re pretty amazing. And we’re not talking about the kinds of lifestyles that are going to make you cringe or think you’re back in the Middle Ages, but the kinds of lifestyles that are cleaner, greener, cooler, more interesting, more technologically savvy.’⁵⁰

Carbon Arts has several projects that engage with climate and sustainability related data that is then transformed into an artistic experience. Some examples include Building Run⁵¹, a real-time video artwork that used building energy data; a permanent public artwork by Natalie Jeremijenko that creatively monitored estuarine health through dissolved oxygen levels below the surface⁵²; or a project with the World Health Organisation (WHO) that explored climate pollution⁵³.

⁵⁰ www.carbonarts.org/articles/how-art-is-making-sustainability-cool/

⁵¹ www.carbonarts.org/projects/building-run/

⁵² www.carbonarts.org/projects/amphibious-architecture-what-does-the-derwent-want/

⁵³ www.carbonarts.org/projects/breathe/

7

FOUNDED:

2013

SECTOR:

THEATRE,
COMEDY

FOCUS:

ADVOCACY,
EDUCATION,
ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT

WHERE:

MELBOURNE (VICTORIA)

SIZE:

A SELF-FUNDED TEAM OF
VOLUNTEERS

MORE INFO:

CLIMACTS.ORG.AU



“The reason why we use spectacle is because it can surprise and get under people’s ideological guards to potentially enable them to see environment and associated social justice issues in a new light.”

–DEBORAH HART, CO-FOUNDER OF CLIMACTS



CLIMACTS

ClimActs is a protest theatre troupe that uses spectacle, humour and satire to inspire action on climate change. Their first act was “Climate Guardians”, which used angel iconography to emphasise the importance of protecting natural resources. The “Climate Guardians”⁵⁴ intervention and subsequent widespread press attention at the Paris COP21 and at the G20 Summit in Brisbane, was a marked example of the impact of peaceful yet creative action. Co-founder Deborah HART explains that ‘the reason why we use spectacle is because it can surprise and get under people’s ideological guards to potentially enable them to see environment and associated social justice issues in a new light.’

A 2018 intervention at the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV)⁵⁵ shone the light on ethical investment in cultural intuitions. As ClimActs explained. ‘Not many Australians know that creeping around in the hallways of some of our nation’s proudest so-called independent institutions are people with long histories in manipulating public policies in order to prop up profits of highly destructive industries...Creative cultural centres deserve visionary and collaborative leaders. People who help enable the pollution and destruction of the natural world have no place in prestigious positions on the Boards of proud Australian institutions.’

ClimActs works as a loosely connected group of concerned citizens from diverse backgrounds, which include artists and writers, as well as lawyers, photographers, filmmakers, scientists, psychologists, costume and set designers.

⁵⁴ climacts.org.au/climate-guardians/

⁵⁵ www.ngv.vic.gov.au/



AUSTRALIAN NETWORK FOR ART AND TECHNOLOGY

The Australian Network for Art and Technology (ANAT) is an organisation that supports innovation and experimentation in arts, science and technology. They support artists to research, develop artwork and to collaborate across sectors. They also develop partnerships to work on projects and have collaborated with national and international organisations.

One programme that stands out is Synapse, which has supported collaborations between artists and scientists since 1997. Since it started it's supported over 100 artists and scientists. As Director Vicki SOWRY highlights, 'What distinguishes Synapse from other arts science projects internationally are their speculative focus...For us it's about the artist and their research partners being able to follow their nose as to where the research takes them.'



Keith Armstrong on The 'Re-Introduction' Project, part of the 2012 ANAT Synapse Art-Science Residency Program, collaborating with the Australian Wildlife Conservancy. All images courtesy Keith Armstrong.

Originally the programme conducted a call out for applications from hosts and then ANAT and the organisations would select artists from an open call. As SOWRY explains 'they spent the first month learning how to talk to each other, the second month wondering what on earth they might do together and then they had a month to do something.' This meant that they were quite shallow collaborations and that no one's expectations were being met. Since 2007 ANAT stipulated that applications must be submitted together, meaning that much of the initial discussions and setting of expectations is done before the residency begins.

SOWRY emphasises that the residency programme is not about science communication, but rather it's about bring two ways of thinking together. In order for this to work they 'have to be quite clear about the benefits to the science partner and as the evidence base builds that becomes easier.'



“For us it’s about the artist and their research partners being able to follow their nose as to where the research takes them.”

–VICKI SOWRY, DIRECTOR OF ANAT

FOUNDED:

2000

SECTOR:

CROSS-DISCIPLINARY

FOCUS:

**SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY,
RESEARCH**

WHERE:

PERTH**(WESTERN AUSTRALIA)**

SIZE:

1-5 STAFF

MORE INFO:

SYMBIOTICA.UWA.EDU.AU

SYMBIOTICA

Located at the School of Anatomy and Human Biology, University of Western Australia, SymbioticA is an artistic laboratory dedicated to the research, learning and critique of life sciences. The lab enables artists to engage in wet biology practices in a biological science department and artists are able to use the tools and technologies of science, not just to comment about them, but also to explore their possibilities. SymbioticA also offers workshops, courses and residencies. Since 2000 they've had 150 residents and 25 students.

SymbioticA's work is mostly international. As Co-Founder and Director Oron CATTs observes, 'Here in Australia we have major issues with venues and curators who don't really get it. Those organisations are much more conservative than the artists...There seems to be a large gap between the institutionalised arts world and the artistic practice, and that's why many of the Australian artists who are working in this field are doing most of their work internationally.' CATTs believes that venues and curators need to be more open and have a better understanding of these types of cross-disciplinary practices.

CATTs also challenges the use of biology as a tool to fix all problems. He explains that he's concerned by 'the way in which the new biology is being used to create some kind of green-washing around ecological and sustainability issues, promising those techno-fixes through the contemporary biology, which I find extremely problematic because it's being driven by the same kind of mind set that led us into the problems in the first place.' The use of science as a tool that can fix environmental problems can also be seen within the arts. 'Art in general seems to be now to be becoming more and more instrumentalised...I think art's role is to challenge...and to think about the world in different ways, but to not necessarily be didactic or explicit. It's much more powerful when it's ambiguous, when it forces the audiences to actually make their own opinion. The problem is that there's a drive towards forcing artists to either play a part in the innovation paradigm or be extremely didactic. It happens in general, but I think here in Australia it's becoming more acute.'

“I think art’s role is to challenge...and to think about the world in different ways, but to not necessarily be didactic or explicit. It’s much more powerful when it’s ambiguous, when it forces the audiences to actually make their own opinion.”

—ORON CATTs, CO-FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR OF SYMBIOTICA



10

FOUNDED:

2006

SECTOR:

**PERFORMANCE,
GAMING**

FOCUS:

**SCIENCE,
GAMING**

WHERE:

**CANBERRA (AUSTRALIAN
CAPITAL TERRITORY)**

SIZE:

7

MORE INFO:

BESTFESTIVALEVER.COM.AU

BOHO INTERACTIVE

Boho Interactive is a collective of Australian artists, performers and game designers. The collective spreads understanding of scientific concepts – such as complex systems science, Game Theory and Network Theory as well as climate and global change – with the aim of addressing misinformation and the unbalanced scientific discourse in the media. In their work Boho Interactive incorporates techniques from narrative performance, lo- and hi-fi media art, live music and audience-driven theatre.

Boho Interactive presents interactive science-theatre performances for festivals, conferences and symposia both nationally and internationally. They've collaborated with organisations such as Miljöverkstan and the Stockholm Resilience Centre in Sweden, with the Earth Observatory at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, and with theatre company Coney and NGO Forum for the Future in the UK. They are very light-weight for a performance company and can travel relatively easily.

Boho Interactive ensures that their work is scientifically accurate. In order to do this, they develop projects during residence at research institutions, work on-site, do their own research and development, and regularly meet with expert consultants to test and discuss ideas and drafts. This can be a long gestation period to ensure that the resulting creative work is well informed and based on rigorous research.



Participants of the Best Festival Ever. Image courtesy of Boho Interactive

One of their projects, “Get the Kids and Run”, is a collaboration with the Earth Observatory Singapore at Nanyang Technological University that explores natural disasters in the Southeast Asian region. These disasters include earthquakes, tsunamis, typhoons, volcanoes, floods, and various consequences of climate change. The project simulates the period from the first warnings of the disaster, to the event itself. Participants take charge of responding to the crisis, playing as local government, the media, emergency services, or members of the community itself.



From top to bottom:

Leah Barclay, Rainforest Recording Noosa, Biosphere Reserve. Image courtesy Biosphere Reserve.

Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve. Image courtesy Biosphere Reserve.

Reef Listening Project, Biosphere Reserve. Image courtesy Biosphere Reserve.

THE AUSTRALIAN FORUM FOR ACOUSTIC ECOLOGY

The Australian Forum for Acoustic Ecology (AFAE), an affiliate of the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology (WFAE)⁵⁶, is made up of people interested in the awareness, experience and study of sound and soundscapes. The wide range of fields involved includes acoustics, audiology, architecture, bioacoustics, conservation biology, digital design, education, ecoacoustics, ecosystem health, landscape, phenomenology, sound studies, sound art, sound culture and sound design.

The organisation gathers together a range of projects in order to raise awareness of issues related to listening, sound and sonic environment, as well as to encourage discussion, debate, education, practical activities and research. They collaborate with conferences, events, organisations and institutions.

AFAE President Leah BARCLAY also established the Brisbane based Biosphere Soundscapes⁵⁷ in 2011, a large-scale interdisciplinary research project underpinned by the creative possibilities of acoustic ecology and the exploration of environmental patterns and changes through sound. Biosphere Soundscapes works in partnerships with multiple organisations and institutions across Australia, Europe, the USA, Mexico, Peru, Indonesia, India and Cambodia to develop and deliver socially engaged interdisciplinary research projects in collaboration with the communities of UNESCO Biosphere Reserves.

⁵⁶ www.wfae.net/

⁵⁷ www.biospheresoundscapes.org/

12

SECTOR:

**VISUAL ARTS,
HERITAGE,
MUSIC,
PHOTOGRAPHY,
FILM**

FOCUS:

**COMMUNITY ARTS,
ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT**

WHERE:

**MULAN
(WESTERN AUSTRALIA)**

MORE INFO:

**DESERTRIVERSEA.COM.AU/
ART-CENTRES/WARRUYANTA-
ART-CENTRE**



WARRUYANTA ART CENTRE

The Warruyanta Art Centre is located in the southern Kimberley community of Mulan, bordering the Paruku Indigenous Protected Area. One of the most remote communities in the Kimberley, it's almost 300 kilometres from the nearest town of Halls Creek.

The Centre is located on Walmajarri land near Paruku (also known as Lake Gregory), an extensive freshwater lake and flood system surrounded by the Great Sandy and Tanami Deserts. The area is one of the most remote permanent freshwater wetlands in the world and it's of global environmental importance as well as deep cultural significance to the Walmajarri.

Warruyanta artists frequently paint acrylic depictions of the land, animals, plants and bush tucker. They also experiment with three dimensional art, manipulating and embellishing found materials into sculptural forms. Recently this enthusiasm for reworking existing objects translated into a collection of painted shoes.

In one project the Warruyanta Art Centre collaborated with team of scientists and artists to explore the intersections between Aboriginal knowledge systems and western scientific and artistic understandings of the region in the cross-cultural 'Paruku Project'. It involved a number of workshops including painting, screen-printing and sculpture as well as collaborating on painting large canvas maps of the lake that captured changing water levels, animal life, fire and cultural records.

The Warruyanta Art Centre is associated with the Warlayirti Artists Aboriginal Corporation and has been a part of the 'Desert River Sea' project. The project is an initiative of the Art Gallery of Western Australia (AGWA)⁵⁸, which seeks to transform the way it connects with Indigenous communities, especially in the Kimberley region of Western Australia.



⁵⁶ desertriversea.com.au/

13

FOUNDED:

2010

SECTOR:

VISUAL ARTS,
HERITAGE

FOCUS:

COMMUNITY ARTS,
ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT

WHERE:

ARNHEM LAND
(NORTHERN TERRITORY)

SIZE:

3 STAFF

MORE INFO:

KARRKAD-KANJDJI.ORG.AU



“That current and future generations of *bininj* (Indigenous People) and *balanda* (non-Indigenous people) can work together to support the sustainability of their vital land management and cultural heritage work whilst enable on-going self determination for the people of West and Central Arnhem Land.”



KARRKAD KANJDJI TRUST

Karrkad Kanjdji Trust provides reliable and sustainable philanthropic funding for natural and cultural resource management in West and Central Arnhem Land. Through their work their aim is ‘that current and future generations of *bininj* (Indigenous People) and *balanda* (non-Indigenous people) can work together to support the sustainability of their vital land management and cultural heritage work whilst enable on-going self determination for the people of West and Central Arnhem Land.’⁵⁹

Karrkad Kanjdji Trust works on a range of projects, including: land and sea management plans for Djelk and Warddeken Indigenous Protected Areas; improving natural resource management through education and technical skills transfer; sustainable preservation of natural and cultural assets, including Indigenous knowledge systems, through the maintenance of the living landscape; increasing the effectiveness of natural resource management; and supporting the conservation and preservation of endangered species.

One initiative of interest is the Arnhembrand project⁶⁰, which was an independent art, science and stories project auspiced by the Karrkad Kanjdji Trust to promote the objectives of healthy country and healthy community in the Djelk Indigenous Protected Area. Arnhembrand used new mediums and technologies to highlight the critical relationship that the Djelk clans have with their land and to tell their positive story to a wider audience.

⁵⁹ www.karrkad-kanjdji.org.au

⁶⁰ arnhembrand.com



BUKU ART CENTRE AND MULKA PROJECT

The Buku Art Centre and Mulka Project aims to sustain and protect Yolnu cultural knowledge in Northeast Arnhem Land under the leadership of community members. The Mulka production house and archive is managed by Yolnu law, governance and culture. The Mulka Project is actively involved in partnerships with academia, museums and individual researchers with collections and projects significant to the region.

As the Mulka Project explains, 'The sacred art of this region details the spiritual forces behind the on-going Creation and continuing identity of the fresh and saltwater country of the Miwatj region.'⁶¹ Under Yolngu Law the 'Land' extends to include sea. Both land and sea are connected in a single cycle of life for which the Yolngu hold the songs and designs. The art of the Yirrkala region has been developing an appreciative audience since the township was founded as a mission in 1935 and work from Yirrkala was amongst the earliest commercial Aboriginal art marketed overseas.

To demonstrate their rights and responsibilities over specific areas of both coast and sea, and to protect those same marine environments from abuse by outsiders, the landowners combined to make the Saltwater Collection of Yirrkala Bark Paintings of Sea Country in 1997. The collection of 80 bark paintings made by 47 Yolngu artists toured nationally (1998-2001) and is now held at the Australian National Maritime Museum in Sydney. It formed part of the Yolngu legal case for recognition of these rights. After a lengthy court case which went through every level of the court system, the High Court determined in 2008 that the Yolngu were the owners of sea estates covering Aboriginal land.



⁵⁹ yirrkala.com/culture-and-environment

15

FOUNDED:

1997

SECTOR:

**PUBLIC ART,
VISUAL ART,
FESTIVALS**

FOCUS:

**ADVOCACY,
EDUCATION,
ARTISTIC PRESENTATION**

WHERE:

SYDNEY**(NEW SOUTH WALES) AND****PERTH****(WESTERN AUSTRALIA)**

SIZE:

10-20 STAFF

MORE INFO:

SCULPTUREBYTHESEA.COMNicole Larkin, *Dynamics in Impermanence*, Bondi, 2016. Image courtesy Sculpture by the Sea.

SCULPTURE BY THE SEA

Sculpture by the Sea is a three-week open-air exhibition along the coast of Bondi in Sydney. There is also a second initiative, which has been held in Cottesloe Perth since 2005. The well-established Sydney edition presents over 100 sculptures by artists from around the world and attracts approximately 520,000 visitors (while Perth presents over 70 sculptures seen by 260,000 visitors). Established by Founding Director David HANDLEY after being inspired by an outdoor sculpture park in Klatovy in the Czech Republic, the first exhibition had the modest budget of AUD 11,000 and was pulled together in 10 weeks.

Since these humble beginnings, Sculpture by the Sea has initiated several changes such as increasing the financial support to the artists, developing ties with overseas sculpture organisations, developing the exhibition's sales, developing an educational programme and encouraging more engagement with environmental themes, either through engaging with the location of sun, sea, wind and rain or through the Environmental Sculpture Prize.

⁶² www.lornesculpture.com/⁶³ www.swellsculpture.com.au/



David Ball, *Orb*, Bondi, 2017. Photo: Jessica Wyld. Image courtesy Sculpture by the Sea.

Sydney Water has been involved with the exhibition from the beginning and the partnership has supported artists exploring themes such as the improvement of deep water ocean outfalls, ocean water quality, high standards of drinking water and the reduction of water bottles. A recent project supported by this partnership was the work 'Inconvenience Store' by Marina DEBRIS, in which the artist constructed a mock convenience store made from rubbish found on the beach.

Given Australia's large coastline and beach culture, it is not surprising that there are several coastal open-air exhibitions, such as Victoria's Lorne Sculpture by the Sea (first exhibited in 2007)⁶² or SWELL (founded in 2002)⁶³ based in Queensland. Lorne in particular has a sustainability focus, with the 2018 edition taking the theme 'Landfall', which explores issues of nature and endangerment.



Norton Flavel, *Just Another....*, Bondi, 2016. Photo: Clyde Yee. Image courtesy Sculpture by the Sea.

16

FOUNDED:

1984

SECTOR:

**VISUAL ARTS,
PERFORMING ARTS,
FILM**

FOCUS:

**ARTIST DEVELOPMENT,
ARTISTIC PRESENTATION,
COMMUNITY ARTS**

WHERE:

**ALICE SPRINGS
(NORTHERN TERRITORY)**

SIZE:

10 STAFF

MORE INFO:

**ARALUENARTSCENTRE.
NT.GOV.AU**

THE ARALUEN ARTS CENTRE

The Araluen Arts Centre operates as the visual art and performance hub of Central Australia, presenting an annual programmes of exhibitions, performances, and film. Known as the keeping place of stories, Araluen holds within its spaces some of the most significant works of art in Central Australia and invites artists from all over the world to present at the centre.

The centre was opened in response to the Alice Springs community's lack of a central hub for artistic achievement and experimentation. Built around a culturally significant 300-year-old corkwood tree that now sits in the centre of the Sculpture Garden, the Araluen Arts Centre is the heart of the Araluen Cultural Precinct. The Precinct includes the Galleries and Theatre, the Museum of Central Australia including the Strehlow Research Centre, the Central Australian Aviation Museum, Central Craft and a number of significant public works of art and Arrernte sacred sites. The Araluen Cultural Precinct is set amongst important Arrernte sites significant to the local *Arlyerre* (Dreaming) including *yaye* (big sister hill), *yaye akweke* (little sister hill) and a sacred 300-year-old corkwood tree.

One of the core initiatives of the centre is Desert Mob, a yearly exhibition, symposium and marketplace that gathers together Desert⁶⁴ member art centres from across the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia. For over 25 years it has been an interface between Aboriginal art making in remote desert communities and the wider world.



⁶⁴ desart.com.au/



THE UNCONFORMITY

The Unconformity is a three-day biennial arts festival inspired by the geological environment and the cultural influences of Queenstown, a small mining town on Tasmania's west coast. Previously named the Queenstown Heritage and Arts festival, the event presents experimental art across a range of disciplines and explores the local landscape, communities and industries, including mining which has heavily impacted the region socially and environmentally.

The festival presents works that interact directly with the unique land, and include events such as a participatory performance at an open-cut mine, a journey through the geological features of Queenstown or a documentary of the 2014 closure of the Mt Lyell copper mine from the perspective of a small group of locals. As Director Travis TIDDY observes in an interview on the festival, 'Every event is created from the ground up and is site-specific and can only be held in Queenstown.'⁶⁵

In her review of the 2016 festival Josephine ROWE observes the artistic ambition of the programme. 'One of the festival's greater successes is much of the program's calibre and tenacity. The Unconformity does not suffer from the underestimation of audience that so often undermines regional arts festivals.'⁶⁶ In line with this, TIDDY emphasises the importance of taking risks and being adventurous. 'There is unemployment on the west coast, there's a search for a for a diversified economy, so for us the status quo is no longer reliable for the west coast...We should be chasing bold ideas and new thinking, and we are not afraid to say that.'⁶⁷ Due in part to the economic uncertainty the region the festival has garnered a lot of support from the corporate sector.



⁶⁵ www.abc.net.au/news/2016-08-31/unconformity-festival-drilling-down-to-heart-of-west-coast/7801626

⁶⁶ www.theguardian.com/culture/2016/oct/21/the-unconformity-devastation-and-beauty-collide-in-isolated-tasmanian-mining-town

⁶⁷ www.abc.net.au/news/2016-08-31/unconformity-festival-drilling-down-to-heart-of-west-coast/7801626

Left: Huon Pine logs in the main street of Queenstown, Tasmania at The Unconformity, 2016. Photo: Glenn Mead. Image courtesy The Unconformity.

Right: Lighting installation by Tasmanian artist Jason James in an abandoned limestone quarry in Queenstown, Tasmania, project by Liquid Architecture and Unconscious Collective at The Unconformity, 2016. Photo: Keelan O'Hehir. Image courtesy The Unconformity.

18

FOUNDED:

2010

SECTOR:

**ARCHITECTURE,
ART**

FOCUS:

**GENERAL PUBLIC,
FILMMAKERS**

WHERE:

**SYDNEY
(NEW SOUTH WALES)**

SIZE:

6 PERMANENT STAFF

MORE INFO:

CAVEURBAN.COM

CAVE URBAN

Cave Urban is a collective that explores the nexus between art, architecture and sustainability. They explore lightweight structures and investigate the use and capacities of quick growth materials such as bamboo, which source and harvest from local producers. Given that there is not a long tradition of using the non-native bamboo in Australia, Cave Urban often looks to traditional and contemporary practices in Asia and Latin America.

Cave Urban often works with a large group of volunteers to construct the structures and collaboration is at the heart of their practice. As Co-Founder and Project Director Jed LONG states, 'it's about knowledge sharing through building. I guess it's a very egalitarian way of looking at building where it doesn't matter if you have a skill set or not...the process of making is probably as important as the object itself.' One example of skill sharing was the 2013 project Woven Sky⁶⁸ where Taiwanese artist Wang Wen-Chih worked with 40 workers and volunteers to build an entrance at the Woodford Folk Festival⁶⁹.

Golden Hour by Cave Urban, Sculpture By The Sea, Sydney, 2016. Photo: Mercurio Alvarado. Image courtesy Cave Urban.



⁶⁸ www.caveurban.com/art-1/#/wovensky

⁶⁹ woodfordfolkfestival.com



Bower, Sculpture at Barangaroo Sydney, 2017. Image courtesy Cave Urban.

Since much of their work is ephemeral it can be a challenge to find people to buy their pieces. As a result much of their work is undertaken through commissions and competitions. LONG emphasises that they're 'very interested in ideas of impermanence and bamboo fits into that narrative quite well in that we create works that decay. We look at how a work can be created and the energy that goes into creation and so that's part of the artwork.' Many of their works are designed to decay in three years, the time it takes to grow bamboo, reflecting the ephemeral nature of the material as well as the impermanent nature of contemporary society.

Hammock Hut, Woodfordia QLD 2017. Image courtesy Cave Urban.



ADVOCACY,
EDUCATION,
ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT,
RESIDENCY,
CUSTODIAL RESPONSIBILITY

ILLAROO
(NEW SOUTH WALES)

MORE THAN 23 FULL TIME
EMPLOYEES

BUNDANON.COM.AU



“Siteworks is a project that invites us not only to apprehend, but also to experience the interconnectedness of nature and culture, art and science, history and geology; to appreciate the wonder of the world.”

–SARAH MILLER, PROGRAMME PUBLICATION

BUNDANON TRUST

Bundanon Trust supports arts practice and engagement with the arts through its residency, education, exhibition and performance programs. Well-known artist Arthur Boyd originally purchased the site in the 1970s, and he immediately saw it as a place to be shared, at first with fellow artists and later with a wider public. Arthur and Yvonne Boyd gifted the property in 1993. Boyd believed that ‘you can’t own a landscape’, and he wished that others could draw inspiration from the place. Bundanon now hosts 350 artists every year through the Artist-in-Residence programme, many of whom have responded to the unique environment.

Bundanon Trust places care for the landscape at the centre of its mission, especially through its Landcare Living Landscape programme, an environmental and educational initiative to increase biodiversity, capture carbon and reconnect native habitat⁷⁰. The programme involves multiple partners across the environmental, agricultural, Indigenous, scientific, government and non-government sectors and has seen the restoration of large parts of the Bundanon properties since 2012.

Since 2008 Bundanon Trust has also organised Siteworks⁷¹, a yearly site-specific, multi-disciplinary, programme that brings scientists, artists and community voices together to share knowledge and ideas arising from the Bundanon sites through a series of discussions, presentations and experiences. In the programme publication Sarah MILLER explains that ‘Siteworks is a project that invites us not only to apprehend, but also to experience the interconnectedness of nature and culture, art and science, history and geology; to appreciate the wonder of the world... It’s an experiment in collective thinking and doing that without hubris seeks to develop new ways of living, making and working together.’

⁷⁰ bundanon.com.au/place/landscape/land-management/living-landscape/

⁷¹ bundanon.com.au/siteworks/

20

FOUNDED:

2010

SECTOR:

SOUND,
CROSS-DISCIPLINARY

FOCUS:

RESIDENCY,
RESEARCH,
EDUCATION,
ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT

WHERE:

BOGONG VILLAGE
(VICTORIA)

MORE INFO:

BOGONGSOUND.COM.AU



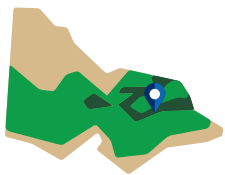
THE BOGONG CENTRE FOR SOUND CULTURE

The Bogong Centre for Sound Culture (BCSC) investigates the relationship between industry and the natural environment through projects that focus on acoustic ecology and environmental sustainability. BCSC supports cultural initiatives investigating the history and ecology of the Australian Alps including research, site-specific festivals, commissioned artworks, masterclasses and Artist-in-Residency programmes.

In explaining the reasons for the Centre, Co-Founder Philip SAMARTZIS pointed out that when conducting field research for a creative project ‘often you go somewhere, document the place and then take back that fieldwork to a different location; a studio, a city or urban context...and you become disassociated or disconnected to the context, culture and environment in which you were operating.’ With BCSC SAMARTZIS and co-founder Madelynne CORNISH wanted to set up a space where it was possible to respond directly to the environment, and where the centre was located in the place of interrogation.

The residency programme is at the heart of what BCSC, is trying to achieve and since 2010 they’ve hosted around 75 artists in the centre. BCSC is intended as a collaborative venture where artists share their knowledge, but also broadcast the unique characteristics of the Australian Alps to audiences outside the region.

BCSC has a 20-year vision for the Centre, in which they aim to engage with the region through collaborative, socially engaged practice, and this broad aim is not going to manifest itself in one project or in a short time frame. As SAMARTZIS comments, ‘The reward for us will be in ten years time when we collect the output of two, three, four hundred artists who have all engaged in the region in different ways and have examined how a place can be represented.’



Left: Geoff Robinson project at Bogong High Plains. Image courtesy Bogong Centre for Sound Culture.
Right: Bogong High Plains. Bogong Centre for Sound Culture.



FOUNDED:

1970

SECTOR:

**CRAFT,
DESIGN,
RESIDENCY**

FOCUS:

**ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT,
PROMOTION,
EDUCATION**

WHERE:

**NAMADGI GUDGENBY
(AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL
TERRITORY)**

SIZE:

8 EMPLOYEES

MORE INFO:

**[CRAFTACT.ORG.AU/PAGES/
COPY-OF-2019-ARTIST-IN-
RESIDENCE-EXPRESSIONS-
OF-INTEREST](https://craftact.org.au/pages/copy-of-2019-artist-in-residence-expressions-of-interest)**

CRAFT ACT: CRAFT AND DESIGN CENTRE'S ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAMME

Craft ACT: Craft and Design Centre is a not-for-profit membership based organisation that supports artists, craft practitioners, designers and makers. As well as a retail space, they also manage exhibitions, events and a membership program and collaborate with arts organisations, educational institutions and national cultural institutions, and industry. Other than the Artist-in-Residence programme and international speakers at the annual DESIGN Canberra festival, Craft ACT tends to focus on supporting local artists as they are a regionally focussed membership organisation.⁷²

Since 2006 Craft ACT and the ACT Parks and Conservation Service have offered a residency for artists that explores nature and the contemporary world through a craft practice. Based at Namadgi Gudgenby, the residency culminates in an exhibition at Craft ACT: Craft + Design Centre in Canberra. The national and international residents have access to national cultural, tertiary and research institutions, collections, curators and researchers. The art forms have ranged from textiles, wood and weaving to engraving and sculpture.



ACT Marilou Chagnaud at opening of her exhibition Functional Shadows. Image by Fivefoot photography

⁷² There are several similar state-wide craft and design focused organisations based around Australia, see for example Craft Victoria, Craft NSW, Artisan (Queensland), Design Tasmania, Guildhouse (South Australia) and Central Craft (Northern Territory).



Nils Desperandum at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. Photo by Andrew Sikorski

Part of the aim of the Artist-in-Residence programme is to reconnect with nature. As Research Partner Brett McNamara from ACT Parks and Conservation Service observes, ‘People are not separate from nature, but a part of it. The best medicine to come from nature; is nature itself...Through the Artist-in-Residence programme the tangible physical and emotional benefits of connecting with nature have been creatively explored, captured and articulated. An engaging narrative of artistic interpretation has been woven inviting us to consider and protect the world’s two most important assets – nature and humanity.’



2017 Open Day with AiR Marilou Chagnaud. Photo by Edge Light Photography



Blanche Tilden (Ring and Bracelet)
 FINK (vases and earrings)
 Made3 (chopping board)
 Alison Jackson (necklace)
 and Susan McGuinness (studs)

FOUNDED:

1966

SECTOR:

CROSS-DISCIPLINARY

FOCUS:

**RESEARCH,
EDUCATION**

WHERE:

**FOWLERS GAP
(NEW SOUTH WALES)**

MORE INFO:

**ARTDESIGN.UNSW.EDU.AU/
RESEARCH/COLLABORATIONS-
RESEARCH-GROUPS/ILIRI**

IMAGING THE LAND INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

An initiative of the University of New South Wales (UNSW), the Imaging the Land International Research Institute (ILIRI) focuses on facilitating, investigating and promoting contemporary dialogue relating to imaging and imagining the land. The Institute works across a range of disciplines and incorporates visual, conceptual and theoretical approaches. ILIRI provides residency opportunities for Australian and international artists, researchers in the arts and students at their Fowler's Gap Research Station in the semi-arid area of western New South Wales.

As ILIRI observes, this region in Australia faces a number of challenges related to the lack of rehabilitation of former mining sites, particularly in relation to water pollution, soil contamination and vegetation impacts. In regional NSW some environmental problems also include derelict land, lead-contaminated soil, discarded mining equipment and unwanted tailings dams in the urban area. In addition, the 38,000-hectare property at Fowler's Gap is far from major permanent water sources and the area has a history of soil degradation through over use in the pastoral industry. The Institute focuses on these challenges, conducting artist led transdisciplinary programmes in consultation with local communities and experts. One of the aims of the research and residencies is to inform future state and Commonwealth initiatives in mine rehabilitation in order to achieve a more sustainable environment.

ILIRI also has a teaching programme centred around engagement with the landscape at Fowlers Gap for undergraduate, postgraduate and research students in both UNSW Science and the College of Fine Arts.



23

FOUNDED:

2005

SECTOR:

CROSS-DISCIPLINARY

FOCUS:

ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT,
ARTFORM DEVELOPMENT,
ADVOCACY AND EDUCATION

WHERE:

BIRREGO
(NEW SOUTH WALES)

SIZE:

1-5 PERMANENT STAFF

MORE INFO:

CADFACTORY.COM.AU



“At the Cad Factory we have a fundamental belief that in order for people to explore complex situations practically, they must first learn to explore them emotionally. It is through this emotional navigation that Contemporary Arts practice can play an effective role.”

–VIC MCEWAN, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND ARTIST OF THE CAD FACTORY



THE CAD FACTORY

The Cad Factory is an artist led, multi-disciplinary organisation that creates an international program of new, immersive and experimental work guided by authentic exchange, ethical principles, people and place. The idea first began as a recording studio and an informal performance space in Sydney in 2003. In 2007 The Cad Factory purchased a remote old school house in The Riverina in Regional New South Wales, with the intention of it being a retreat for artists. But they were impressed by the landscape, the access to space, the giant structures and machinery used in primary industry and moved there permanently in 2010.

The Cad Factory approaches environmental challenges through contemporary arts practice in a number of ways. As Artistic Director and artist Vic McEWAN explains, ‘At the Cad Factory we have a fundamental belief that in order for people to explore complex situations practically, they must first learn to explore them emotionally. It is through this emotional navigation that Contemporary Arts practice can play an effective role.’

Since moving to Birrego, The Cad Factory has engaged with the land through varied artistic projects. One such example is ‘On Common Ground’⁷³, a 3 day festival of textiles, performance, video projection, installation, story telling and music cantered around the contested site of the Murrumbidgee river. Over its recent history the site has experienced colonisation, the development of agriculture, species extinction, continuing environmental changes and resource management initiatives such as the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

⁷³ www.cadfactory.com.au/on-common-ground

FOUNDED:

2002

SECTOR:

VISUAL ARTS

FOCUS:

**PRIZE,
ARTISTIC PRESENTATION**

WHERE:

**ADELAIDE
(SOUTH AUSTRALIA)**

MORE INFO:

**WATERHOUSE.SAMUSEUM.
SA.GOV.AU**

WATERHOUSE NATURAL SCIENCE ART PRIZE

The Waterhouse Natural Science Art Prize is a biennial competition for artists to investigate the world around them and present their perspectives on natural science. Run by the South Australian Museum, the prize is named after the first curator, Frederick George Waterhouse, who studied the natural history in Australia. The prize includes a number of mediums, such as works on paper, sculpture and paintings.

The most recent edition was awarded in 2016 to Melbourne-based New Zealand artist Julia DEVILLE. She was chosen out of 81 finalists and was awarded AUD 30,000. Her work involved taxidermied chicks in an antique silver spoon, commenting on the use of caged chickens for products such as ice cream, mayonnaise, cakes and breads. As the artist observes, 'This work is a comment on industrialised animal agriculture, one of the biggest causes of environmental devastation'⁷⁴.

The emerging artist prize was awarded to Canberra artist Dan Power, a draughtsman and street artist who illustrated a bull's skull with endangered animals. As POWER said about the work 'To understand the underlying machinations of nature and evolution is to understand where we come from, how we got here, our place in the world and how our actions affect the future of every living thing'⁷⁵.

For the 2016 prize there were 627 entries for four non-acquisitive prizes: the Open Prize Award of AUD 30,000, an Emerging Artist Award of AUD 10,000 and People's Choice and Scientists' Choice awards each of AUD 5,000.⁷⁶



⁷⁴ www.abc.net.au/news/2016-06-09/taxidermy-artist-wins-waterhouse-natural-science-art-prize/7496180

⁷⁵ www.abc.net.au/news/2016-06-09/taxidermy-artist-wins-waterhouse-natural-science-art-prize/7496180

⁷⁶ www.smh.com.au/entertainment/art-and-design/waterhouse-natural-history-art-prize-2016-disappoints-20160927-grp45d.html

Left: Emma Kelly, Lichen world—golden moonglow, Pencil on paper, digital colour.

Right: Louise Feneley, Bouquet—natura morte, Oil on Belgian linen.

Images courtesy South Australian Museum.

25

FOUNDED:

2011

SECTOR:

CROSS-DISCIPLINARY

FOCUS:

DISASTER SUPPORT,
COMMUNITY ARTS,
EDUCATION,
ADVOCACY

WHERE:

BRISBANE
(QUEENSLAND)

SIZE:

5-10 STAFF AND
MANAGING COMMITTEE

MORE INFO:

CREATIVERECOVERY.ORG.AU



“It is also the sense of community that enables people to rebuild their lives and be optimistic about their future – this is the social infrastructure that keeps a community strong.”

–IAN WALKER



CREATIVE RECOVERY NETWORK

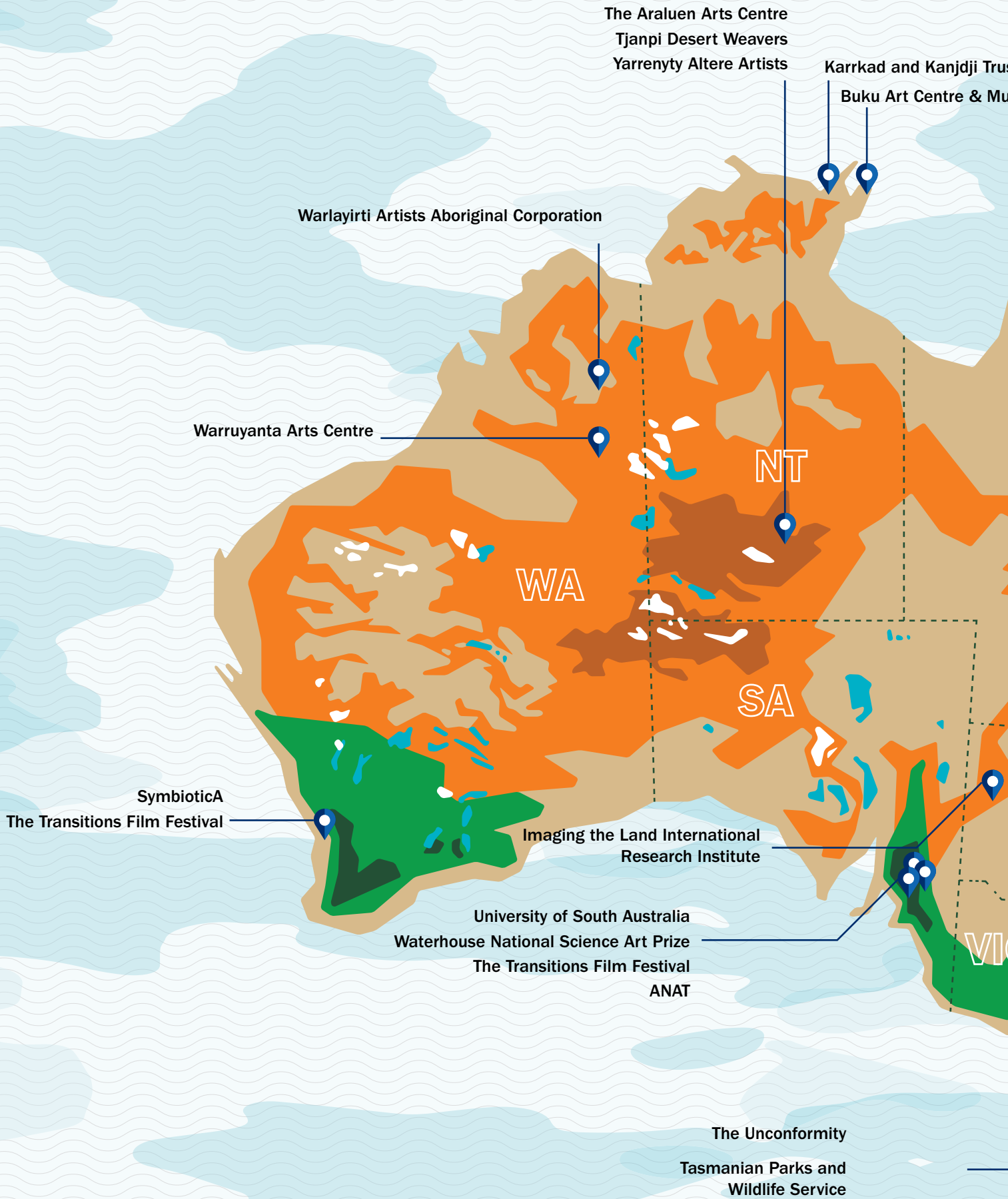
Creative Recovery Network focuses on community disaster recovery through the arts and works with professional artists, cultural workers, community members, arts and non-arts organisations, community-based workers and humanitarian workers. It's a member-based network and platform that originally began as a pilot project in Queensland, but has since expanded nationally and internationally. They work with communities in the development of high level and locally relevant projects and activities to build capacity and drive social change.

The Creative Recovery Network has three key principles: first peoples first, arts-led and carbon neutral. Led by these principles, they work across a range of disaster initiatives, from developing a framework for Creative Recovery practice to delivering training to support artists, arts workers and community members interested in working creatively in communities affected by disasters and providing a platform for knowledge sharing.

As the then Queensland Arts Minister Ian WALKER explained in 2013, ‘Recovering from a flood, drought or a cyclone is not just about making sure the bricks and mortar are back in place – it is also the sense of community that enables people to rebuild their lives and be optimistic about their future – this is the social infrastructure that keeps a community strong.’⁷⁷ Given the effects of climate change and that more communities will be at risk of disasters, resilience and recovery will become increasingly important.

⁷⁷ [placestories.com/story/141812](https://www.placestories.com/story/141812)

AUSTRALIA GREEN GUIDE



The Araluen Arts Centre
Tjanpi Desert Weavers
Yarrenyty Altere Artists

Karrkad and Kanjdji Trus
Buku Art Centre & Mu

Warlayirti Artists Aboriginal Corporation

Warruyanta Arts Centre

NT

WA

SA

Symbiotica

The Transitions Film Festival

Imaging the Land International
Research Institute

University of South Australia
Waterhouse National Science Art Prize
The Transitions Film Festival
ANAT

The Unconformity

Tasmanian Parks and
Wildlife Service

New South Wales (NSW)

Tasmania (TAS)

Northern Territory (NT)

Victoria (VIC)

Queensland (QLD)

Western Australia (WA)

South Australia (SA)

Australian Capital Territory (ACT)

st
Ilka Project

Indigenous Art Centre Alliance

Biosphere Soundscapes
Creative Recovery Network
Flying Arts Alliance
The Transitions Film Festival

QLD

Australian Council for the Arts
Australian Society of Authors
Climate Council
Red Room Poetry
Royal Botanic Garden Sydney
Sculpture by the Sea
The Sydney Biennial

NSW

Charles Sturt University

The Cad Factory

Cave Urban

The Transitions Film Festival

ACT

Bundanon Trust

Boho Interactive

Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)

Craft ACT: Craft and Design Centre's Artist in Residence Program

Green Music Australia

Murray Art Museum Albury

The Bogong Centre for
Sound Culture

The Australian Forum for Ecoustic Ecology

Carbon Arts

ClimActs

Environmental Film Festival Australia

Tipping Point Australia

The Transitions Film Festival

CLIMARTE

Plumwood Mountain:
Australian Journal of
Ecopoetics



Conclusion

“Be much more directly involved and engaged with all sorts of decisions and decision-making and planning. So whether it’s science or business or property development or infrastructure, I think the creative mind can see things in a very different way and I think that it’s really important to have that input in a lot of the discussions and decisions that go on in society.”

—GUY ABRAHAMS, CO-FOUNDER OF CLIMARTE

There is not just one solution or just one way to respond to the environmental challenges of our times, and the diversity of creative practices in this Guide attest to the varied ways in which the creative sector is taking action. What is evident is that it is time to adjust our mind set if we want to change the current unsustainable way of life.

But art isn’t just a tool to communicate the environmental challenges of our time. As can be seen in this Guide, artistic expression has the potential to pose difficult questions, reframe our knowledge systems, bring together people of opposing opinions, be ambiguous, challenge audiences to think for themselves, bring us closer to remote and fragile environments, challenge our perceptions of permanence, bring communities together, build resilient communities, inform, expose unethical practices, question our daily habits and inspire us to change. What stands out in the organisations, initiatives and artists represented in this Guide is the dedication, diverse approaches and capacity to foster meaningful discussion.

This Guide represents a small but vital selection of initiatives that are working in the arts and sustainability nexus. It is heartening to note that although the environmental challenges we face are grave, organisations, artists and audiences are responding with innovative rejoinders. This is not just visible in the arts organisations dedicated principally to sustainability issues, but rather it can be seen across the arts sector. Throughout festivals and arts programmes there are more and more creative practitioners exploring diverse facets of sustainability.

S.O.S by Cave Urban, Sculpture by the Sea, Sydney, 2014. Image courtesy Cave Urban.



But this can go still further. Guy ABRAHAMS for example calls for artists to ‘be much more directly involved and engaged with all sorts of decisions and decision-making and planning. So whether it’s science or business or property development or infrastructure, I think the creative mind can see things in a very different way and I think that it’s really important to have that input in a lot of the discussions and decisions that go on in society.’⁷⁸

⁷⁸ culture360.asef.org/magazine/can-artists-make-difference-climate-change-debate

The creative practices shown here can inspire through alternative visions of the way we live and work. There are so many ways to embed sustainable practices in our creative and everyday lives, and the initiatives in this Guide present a few innovative ways that are already creating change.

Claire Rosslyn WILSON is a freelance cultural writer, researcher and poet, with particular interests in cultural diversity, experiences of place and creative expression for social change. She has international experience working in the arts and resource development in Thailand, Singapore, Spain and Australia, and has worked with organisations such as the Asia-Europe Foundation, International Organisation for Migration, Diaspora Action Australia, Multicultural Arts Victoria, RMIT Design Archives and Deakin University, among others. She co-wrote *Freelancing in the Creative Industries* (Oxford University Press, 2015), and is an editor for the human rights journal *Right Now*. Claire is a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Arts and Design at the University of Canberra, Australia, and is a co-editor of the academic journal *Coolabah*, of the Transnational and Australian Studies Centre in the University of Barcelona. She has also presented her creative work at a number of writer's festivals and in 2014 she undertook a creative writing fellowship at the Wheeler Centre Melbourne.

www.clairerosslynwilson.com

