

echoes
& *silences*



UNTETHERED FIBRE ARTISTS INC.

Acknowledgement to Country

untethered fibre artists respectfully acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of the lands and many countries our artists are based.

We respect Elders past, present and emerging and the continuation of cultural, spiritual and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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echoes & *silences*

... there is a silence that echoes so profoundly you can't ignore it.

contemporary textile
and fibre arts
exhibition

In a world brimming with noise, “echoes and silences” stands as a powerful testament to the incredible resilience and creativity of women artists. This fibre exhibition, showcasing the interplay between contemporary techniques and traditional fibre arts, invites viewers to explore profound dialogues.

Each piece in this collection tells a story, a narrative that transcends mere visual representation. The artists – remarkable women from diverse backgrounds and experiences – employ materials and methods that resonate with their unique perspectives. Their works echo the whispers of history, while concurrently forging new paths in textile art. Through weaving, embroidery, dyeing, and innovative uses of mixed media, they transform raw materials into layers of meaning, inviting us to engage with themes of identity, memory, and resilience.

In this exhibition, silence is not absence; rather, it serves as a canvas for contemplation and introspection. The voids between stitches and colours speak volumes, encouraging viewers to pause and reflect on their own experiences. Each textile exhibits an intricate tapestry of emotional resonance, reminding us that silence, too, can be a form of expression.

As we traverse this exhibition, we are called to recognise the echoes of past struggles as present inspirations. The works are imbued with the strength of generations, a silent acknowledgment of those

who have come before us, and an encouragement to those who will follow. This intergenerational dialogue underscores the importance of solidarity among women in the arts, as they amplify their voices and experiences through their craft.

In celebrating the advancements in contemporary textile techniques, “echoes and silences” honours the transformative power of art. It embraces the notion that textiles are not simply functional objects, but carriers of deep emotional and cultural significance.

As you turn the pages of this catalogue, we invite you to absorb the stories within. Let the echoes inspire you and the silences invite your contemplation. Together, let us celebrate the artistry, resilience, and voices of these extraordinary women.

Rachel Piercy
Gallery Director
Manning Regional Art Gallery

Artists

Rebecca Anne Brady
Anna Brown
Jennifer Corkish
Gemma Lee Cross
Pam de Groot
Jennifer Florey
Desdemona Foster
Cathie Griffith
Judy Hooworth
Ellen Howell

Catherine Lees
Denise Lithgow
Brenda Livermore
Helen MacRitchie
Mandy McAlister
Robyn McGrath
Rhonda Nelson
Kirry Toose
Judith Wilson
Elaine Witton

Introduction

It was the combined purpose of sharing their passion for fibre art and encouraging its recognition as an art form, that led to the formation of untethered fibre artists inc. just over 10 years ago. Those artists founded a collective that focused on building Themed Exhibitions, while encouraging individual practices to grow and flourish and offering opportunities for the artists to publicly show their innovative work.

untethered fibre artists extend the traditionally accepted boundaries of fibre-based art practice, bringing to the exploration of each theme, inventiveness and widely diverse expressions of creativity. Each artist individually interprets the theme, choosing the subject matter, employing preferred materials and techniques to make their particular concept tangible. All the while they invite audiences to consider broader social and political issues.

While some of the members in the group have changed, the ethos remains as does the essence of forming inclusive relationships that are essential in understanding each other's response to the theme and in accepting and offering critique. These elements are required in making the diverse responses, approaches and techniques work together to make coherent Exhibitions.

echoes & silences is the 3rd Exhibition in the current 5 year cycle of related exhibitions and gives the 20 artists the opportunity to delve into rich resources from the tangible of landscape and oceans, to the nontangible of silence, personal emotions, communal reflections.

In responding to the theme *echoes & silences*, the artists have chosen to produce a range of representational and conceptual fibre art works, each imbued with personal stories. In these complex responses, members explore personal and family memories, experiences of women, grief, disability, affinity with the natural environment.

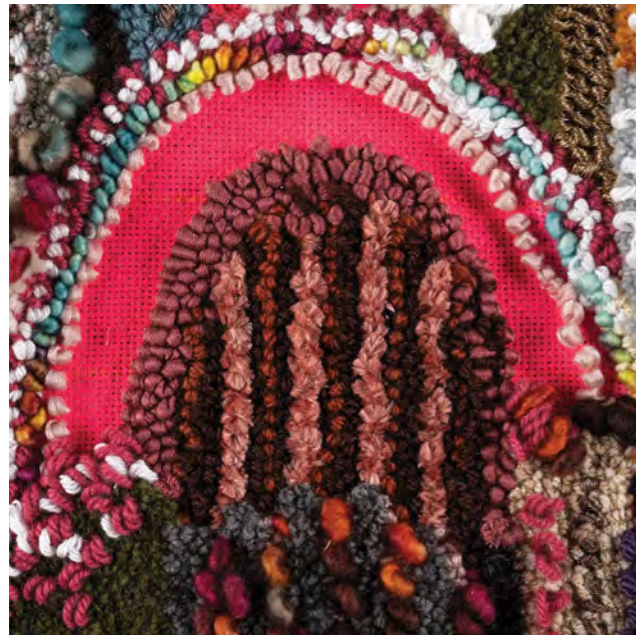
The 38 expertly crafted works presented, take countless forms, shapes, sizes patterns and connections that display the artists' ability to communicate through the vocabulary of fibre while revealing their understanding of themselves and world view. Each work keeps its identity while reflecting the theme of the exhibition and interrelates with others within the narrative, thus maintaining the cohesiveness of the Exhibition.

The two following exhibitions in the cycle: *Sustained Momentum* will explore the resonance between stillness and unstoppable forces and *Liminal Spaces* references progress to a new reality as a response to the journey taken.

Robyn McGrath
untethered fibre artist

Rebecca Anne Brady

Sydney NSW
Gadigal Country



Quiet Bliss - The Garden of Eden

Mixed Media Artwork
40 x 40 x 9cm

Mixed fibres, tufting cloth, plywood, Perspex,
oil and acrylic paint.
Hand tufting, painting

Silence is often considered a sanctuary of peace,
a precious pause in the cacophony of daily life.
However, in the realm of parenthood, silence can be
a double-edged sword.

It is in these quiet moments, often too tranquil and still,
that a subtle unease may creep in. When children are
silent, it can signal a deeper, unspoken mischief or
trouble brewing beneath the surface.

My work explores the delicate balance between
serenity and disturbance, capturing the tension that lies
within the stillness. Through various mediums, I seek
to convey how the appearance of calm can sometimes
mask the underlying chaos of childhood curiosity and
creativity.

My practice weaves together mixed media painting and fibre-based techniques to explore memory, imagination, and the layered narratives of home. I work intuitively, combining colour, texture, and form to create dreamlike landscapes that feel both familiar and magical.

Tufting allows me to paint with fibre—building rich, tactile surfaces that invite touch and spark curiosity. Inspired by the wonder of childhood and the storytelling power of fairy tales, my work plays with symbolism, emotion, and transformation.

Recurring themes include motherhood, memory, and the invisible threads that connect us across time and place. I'm drawn to materials that hold both softness and strength, using them to map inner worlds and imagined terrains. My work invites viewers to pause, feel, and journey into stories layered with meaning.



Rebecca Anne Brady

Sydney NSW
Gadigal Country



All the places she never arrived

Mixed Media Artwork
160 x 160cm

Mixed fibres, tufting cloth
Hand tufting

This work reflects on the space between choices—those moments where life edges in one direction, leaving another path unexplored. Viewed from above, the abstracted landscape reveals soft, shadow-like figures nestled into the terrain. These forms are fleeting and blurred, suggesting presences that have faded, or perhaps never fully arrived.

Tufted with intricate, map-like lines, each figure becomes a vessel for memory, desire, and divergence. Some paths are bold and sure; others dissolve into threads, incomplete. These markings trace more than geography—they map emotional detours, half-formed hopes, and choices made in silence.

Between each figure, absence becomes presence. These voids echo with things unsaid, lives un-lived, and the subtle pull of alternate futures. The silence here is not empty—it vibrates with memory, with echoes of footsteps that never fell, of stories never spoken aloud.

All the Places She Never Arrived invites the viewer to consider the emotional topography we each carry—shaped not just by where we've been, but by absence, by echoes, and by the stillness of the spaces between choices that might have changed everything, had we taken just one step differently.



Anna Brown

Forster NSW
Worimi Country



I have worked as a textile artist for 35 years, combining my love of the natural environment and natural fibres to create works illustrating the devastation of climate change on my local area.

Much of my work is abstract. I work intuitively, layering and cutting into fabric developing a design as I go along. Cotton, wool and silk are my preferred media as I can dye, print or mark the fabric as the design develops. I love the drape and texture of the textiles I use.

Raw edge reverse applique is the construction technique I favour, because it enables me to work quickly as ideas are formed. Hand stitching adds texture and depth to my work.

Abandoned

Hanging
99 x 107cm

Cotton homespun and thread.
Machine and hand stitching.

In 2019 in NSW, we had suffered a devastating drought for over a year, our tank water was very low, and the bush and the trees were dead or dying.

On New Year's Eve the winds were blowing hard, spreading the fire on the other side of the lake towards us. We watched embers raining down on the dead bush next our house. It was terrifying. The bush around us burned, the helicopters dropped water on the flames best they could, eventually by morning they had it under control. But the damage was done!

Then came the silence. That which had become muted in the drought had now disappeared completely. The birds had gone. No birdsong, no chatter echoing through the trees, no beating of wings as they flew through the canopy. The canopy burned and the nests were destroyed or abandoned. The undergrowth had burned, and the creek was dry.

The silence was profound.



Anna Brown

Forster NSW
Worimi Country



Aftermath

Wall Hanging
100 x 91 cm

Cotton homespun and thread.
Machine and hand stitching.

"A great silence is spreading over the natural world even as the sound of man is becoming deafening," Bernie Krause wrote in 2012, in his book *The Great Animal Orchestra*. "The sense of desolation extends beyond mere silence."

The fire damage to the bush in my local area was devastating to both flora and fauna. Even though the drought and fire threat have passed for now, and the local ecosystem struggles to rebuild. The fires will return.

Birds that we saw regularly have failed to return, as their habitat was irreparably damaged. Let's take climate change seriously before we lose all that is precious to us.



Jennifer Corkish

Illawarra NSW
Dharawal Country



I try to pursue my own style, ever learning new skills as a fibre/mixed media artist. The tactile quality when working in fibre, allows me to play with the fragility and suppleness achieved with hand and machine stitch.

Nature, life and upcycling is an integral part of my work. Sometimes I can create four pieces until I feel I have achieved the essence of what I am trying to say, but always hoping to leave the viewer with questions on how I achieved it and what techniques I used.

Echoes of Old Work - Silence in the Movement

Installation
130 x 80 x 25 cm

Cotton scrim, tulle, organza, PVA.
Free machine stitching, thread, ribbon.

Dandelions were part of my childhood I always made a wish when I came across a patch.

They were like white fluffy clouds, as my breath launched them into the universe, silently, never looking back, never knowing where they would rest.

Dandelions are known to endure most conditions. Even if they are trampled to the ground, they will be resilient and stand strong and proud, similar to people in society who are quiet achievers.

I worked with a dandelion theme previously, so this artwork demonstrates "Echoes of Old Work."

"Silence in the Movement" – one never hears them grow, move through the air or sew a seed.

Dandelions are symbols of Hope, Growth and Healing, the essence of what we wish for in our lives.



Jennifer Corkish

Illawarra NSW
Dharawal Country



Untold Stories: never to be read

Wall Hanging
45 x 130 cm, 2.45 x 90 cm

Mulberry bark, silk, linen, cotton,
assorted embroidery thread, canvas frame, paints, inks
Tissue texture, painting, distorted mulberry bark,
hand couching of threads.

Scribbly gum trees are tall sentinels, standing silently around us, watching, listening and taking it all in – not being judgemental.

The wind blows, they echo words to each other. The stories are transcribed by tiny larvae on the amazing trunks of the scribbly gums for anyone to read over the 100 or so years of the tree's life. Scribbly gum trees are so important to the native animal habitat and I believe that the life of the scribbly gum larvae record the life within each tree. Nature is amazing.

We are not able to understand their language; we just admire the markings left behind and must protect these trees.



Gemma Lee Cross

Killabakh NSW
Biripi Country



My practice of dry felting, using white fleece to create sculptures that evoke the appearance of marble, is intended to offer the viewer an illusion of timeless beauty, whilst invoking the fragility and permanence of the human form.

The process of felting is deeply personal, driven by my struggle with Basal Cell Carcinomas, affecting the skin on my hands and cause discomfort. The repetitive motion of holding needles, stretching the skin as I work, brings physical pain, mirroring the emotional weight I carry. It is through this tension — between beauty and pain, creation and suffering — that my work takes shape. The figures embody both the grief I hide and the strength I demonstrate, making visible the silent struggles beneath the surface.

Zanda Funerea - Whose funeral?

Sculpture
72 x 45 x 45 cm

Corriedale and Merino fleece, steel, foam, silk, cotton.
Wet felting, dry felting, hand stitching.

As extensive clearing of old growth forest impacts many species, the mournful call of the Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo (Zanda funerea) can still be heard. Wistful and plaintive, it echoes in the distance. It is not yet one of Australia's endangered species, but, like many native species, its population is in rapid decline. Sadly, 100 endemic species have become extinct since the European settlement of Australia. With this knowledge, I wish to portray a vision of hope, while simultaneously reflecting on destruction and anguish. Hope is the antidote to despair.

As I weep, my cries go unheard, met with deafening silences ever so painful.

The nude figure portrays the vulnerability of her emotions. The two are united in mourning the loss of our declining species. Meanwhile, the sorrowful cry of the Zanda funerea reverberates in the valley, with every tree logged, every home destroyed.

To construct the figures in the work, I have used a welded steel armature, with foam attached for a base. Fleece is wrapped around and stabbed meticulously until the wool takes the shape desired.



Gemma Lee Cross

Killabakh NSW
Biripi Country



The theme, echoes and silences, has led me to contemplate what it would be like if the very last habitat tree was felled in a forest: the tree landing on the earth, echoing throughout the valley and silence falls; forever the absence of bird song.

My art practice gives reverence to how nature is fundamental to human life and how it plays a significant role in supporting our culture, spirituality and inspiration. In my work I explore how individually and societally we overlook the beauty, value and wonder of nature. Human society has wantonly participated in the destruction of something that is inherently beautiful and valuable. We realise the loss only through its absence.

And when we lose something we value, we despair; its memory saddens us and we feel sorry for not safeguarding its existence. We sometimes do this with other things we love – our relationships, our belongings. It is through loss that we recognise the true value of things.

This piece reflects issues of neglect, loss and despair. But it also highlights the value of applied hope.

I invite the viewer to observe the female figure, lamenting the loss of beauty of nature. Symbolically, she creates a nest for species lost in her mind. She desires to preserve the beauty lost, through her memory and recognition. She reminds us that we need to honour and respect the things that we value, the things that sustain us and the things that bring us wonder and delight.

Silent Apology

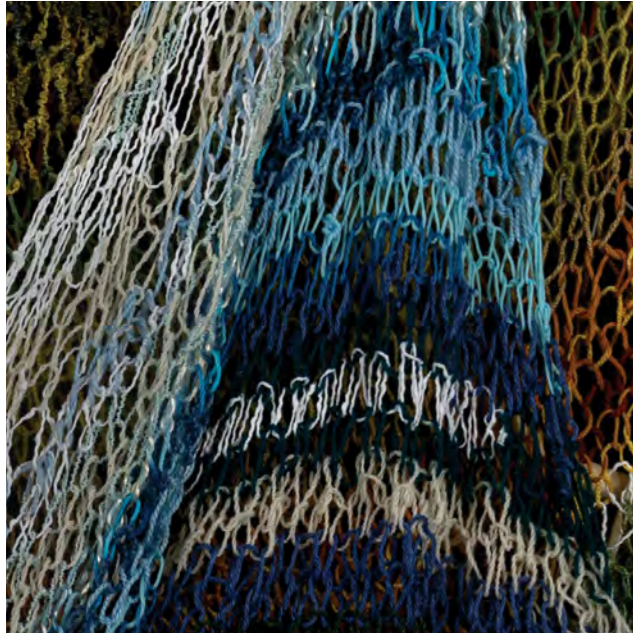
Sculpture
50 x 50 x 50 cm

Fleece, foam, plywood, silk, cotton.
Dry and wet felting, hand stitch.



Pam de Groot

Blue Mountains NSW
Dharug and Gundungurra Country



Sand Marks

Sculpture
2.5 x 2.5 x .3 m

Wool and Acrylic yarn, merino wool fibre.
Fish net knotting, knitting, wet felting.

As waves etch the shore, they mirror the imprints of memories, the tragedies, happiness, and struggles of life.

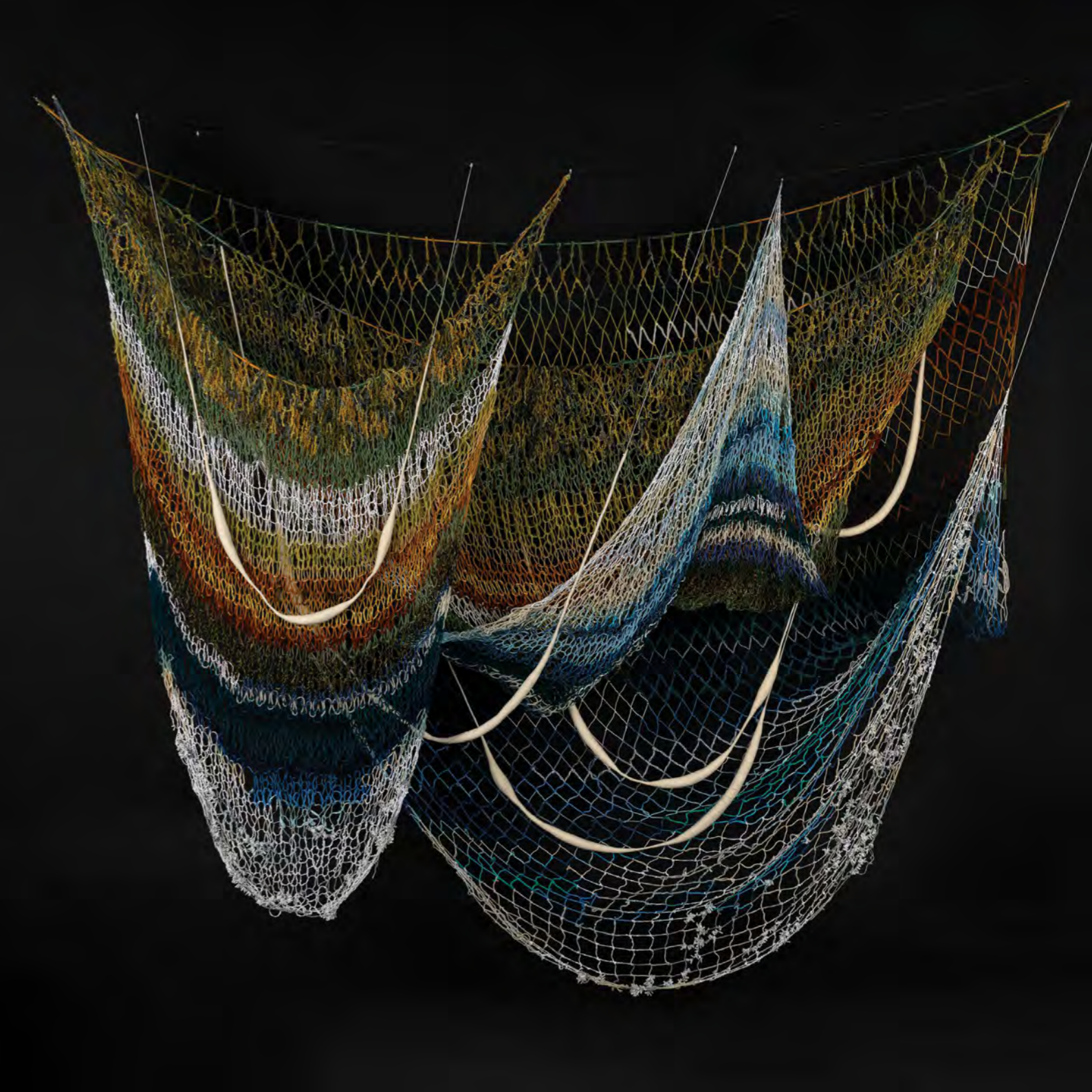
Each mark, an echo, reflecting the passage of time, layering the beach. Just as the tides persistently leave their imprints, so our experiences shape us, forming a tapestry of moments that endure through time.

Weaving together a life.

My dominant medium is wool, sometimes combined with other natural fibres and mediums.

My work gravitates to sculptural pieces. I enjoy the challenge of working in a medium that begins amorphous. Planning is everything. I need to think it all through to control shrinkage, strength and form. I am never totally sure of the outcome till the end. Innovations, using the qualities inherent in wool, are a result of my 25 years working with this medium.

I like to explore themes such as human relationships and our association with ideas and beliefs in this modern era. I continue to explore new ideas, methods, and techniques to coax the wool to express my thoughts and bend to my will.



Jennifer Florey

Newcastle NSW
Awabakal and Worimi Country



My artworks to tell the stories of people I know, particularly those of women. They are often about the ways in which the lives of ordinary people caught up in the bigger social and emotional issues that touch all humanity. The choices of image and materials activate memory and entice the viewer to connect with the stories presented.

Words, literature and research underpin the development of the concepts that drive the work. The story comes first and then a process of selection of images, materials and techniques ensues, to best tell the envisaged story. I like working in series, exploring a concept in depth. I find I return to an idea repetitively over many years adding new insights.

I have been collecting objects that stir memory or connect with a story that resonates with me. Personal histories, gender politics and social issues and connections to places I have been drive my practice. Incorporating found objects in my work is not a new thing but it does add a layer of meaning to the works, of connections to past and present.

I am a Golden Vessel

Sculpture
90 x 35 x 35 cm

Vintage sheeting and woollen blanket, quilt padding, wire armature, thread, cord.
Eco dyeing, rusting, machine and hand embroidery, twining.

Witnessing the falling birth rates and the choices about bearing children made by young women today in comparison to the expectations and outcomes of childbearing on women of my generation, it is obvious that women today have an explicit understanding of the negative impact that choice will have on their future selves: physical, financial, career, relational.

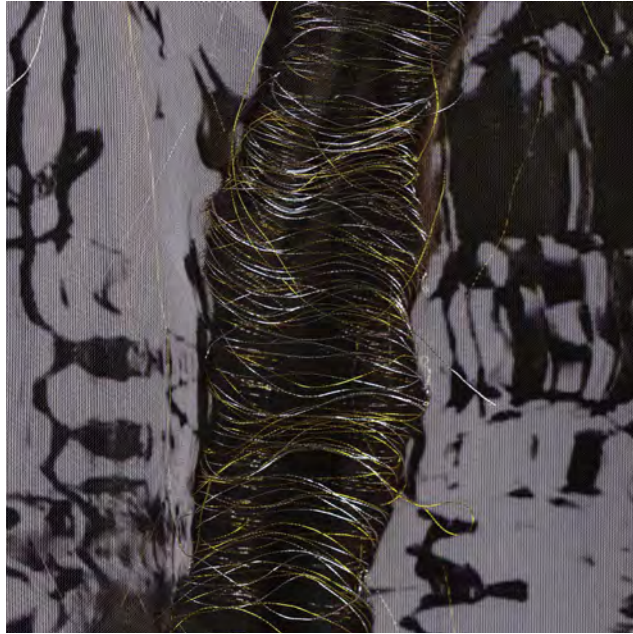
By comparison, older women believed that they could have it all, career, motherhood, loving marriages, only to find, as time went on, it was all smoke and mirrors. Women remained a vessel, to be the mother of their husband's children, making compromises for the sake of marriages, parenting and financial stability.

Discussing this with my daughters, one responded, "But Ma, you are a golden vessel". The work takes the form of a vagina, a vessel containing forms that evoke teeth, sperm or spikes. One golden vessel speaking out.



Desdemona Foster

Sydney NSW
Gadigal Country



waterprint

Banner
140 x 140 cm

Digital print, polyester, polyester metal thread,
metal rings, soundscape.
Hand stitching.

Revisiting *waterprint* with thread, I treat the surface as other than historically static. My senses engage again as witness to a faceless evocation of past lives.

waterprint is an echo of a memory once silenced by time but now rebounding as a haunting illusion where nothing is as it seems, and feelings and emotions cannot be trusted. A mark is evident, but existence is disrupted, absent in the echoing non-silence as I stitch.

My works for echoes & silences combine material, technique and process choices intrinsic to concept and reading to investigate themes of time and memory.

The phenomena of reflection and refraction are central in these works. lightprint and waterprint explore haunting memories of change.

Space, light and sound create reverberating echoes and silences.

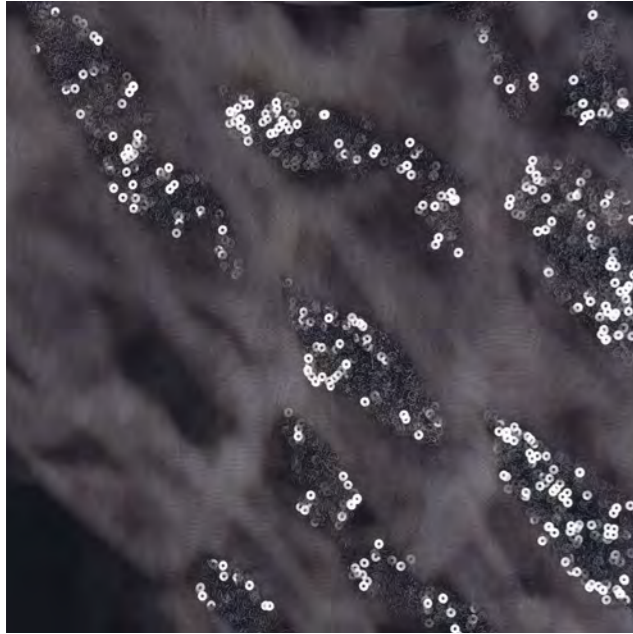
Photography and sound underpin these works to express ease and yet uneasiness even disquiet within these explorations. Stitch and imagery highlight and negotiate 'pathways' avoiding the too personal to invite and encourage dialogue and exchange.

I hope to leave 'space' in works for viewers to insert themselves.



Desdemona Foster

Sydney NSW
Gadigal Country



lightprint

Banner
140 x 140cm

Digital print, polyester, sequins,
monofilament, metal rings, soundscape.
Hand stitched.

Light echoes as a silent shadow.
Water echoes the silence of light.

Overlapping forms located one in relation to another
allude to space and atmosphere in a 2D plane. Spatial
recession and motif play with perspective.

If non-human, but natural phenomena refract, replicate,
reflect or oscillate when interacting with a built
environment is 'the trace' an echo or a silence?

Are these illusive traces of a presence or an absence of
what was or what I thought was?

lightprint echoes the silence of the impermanent.

Postscript: During the making of lightprint my sight
failed. My vision suddenly diminished to 'seeing'
through sequins. Sensory loss was fear filled but a
surgeon's quick action restored a lot of what was lost.



Cathie Griffith

Sydney NSW
Gadigal Country



I am a maker working with a wide variety of media which often includes fibre. I select media that best expresses the idea I have for each artwork.

Recycling objects and materials that others have discarded is fundamental to my practice. I enjoy the challenge of combining a variety of materials to make something useful or beautiful.

Is it the material that guides my making or is it the idea or concept that sends me looking for materials to bring the idea to fruition? A little of both...

I am an explorer, a watcher, a finder and drawing what I see crystallises my ideas.

My work practice may combine drawing, print making, painting, collage, construction and stitch.

Bellbirds

Installation
28 X 100 X 30 cm

Paper, ink, tulle, recycled hand-painted and dyed fabric, assorted threads.
Printing, hand stitched.

Inspired by Henry Kendall's iconic Australian poem "Bell-birds", written in 1869, my work conjures the sights, sounds and atmosphere of bellbird country. My memories of reciting this poem in my country schoolroom are as vivid as the landscapes I travelled through as a child, listening to the echoes of the bellbird's call in the Australian bush.

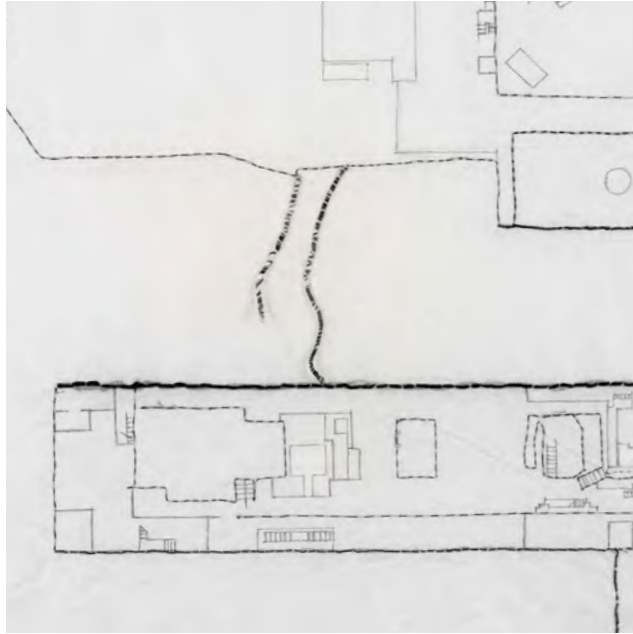
"By channels of coolness the echoes are calling,
And down the dim gorges I hear the creek falling:"

"And, softer than slumber, and sweeter than singing,
The notes of the bell-birds are running and ringing."



Cathie Griffith

Sydney NSW
Gadigal Country



White Bay Power Station

Hanging
110 x 180 cm

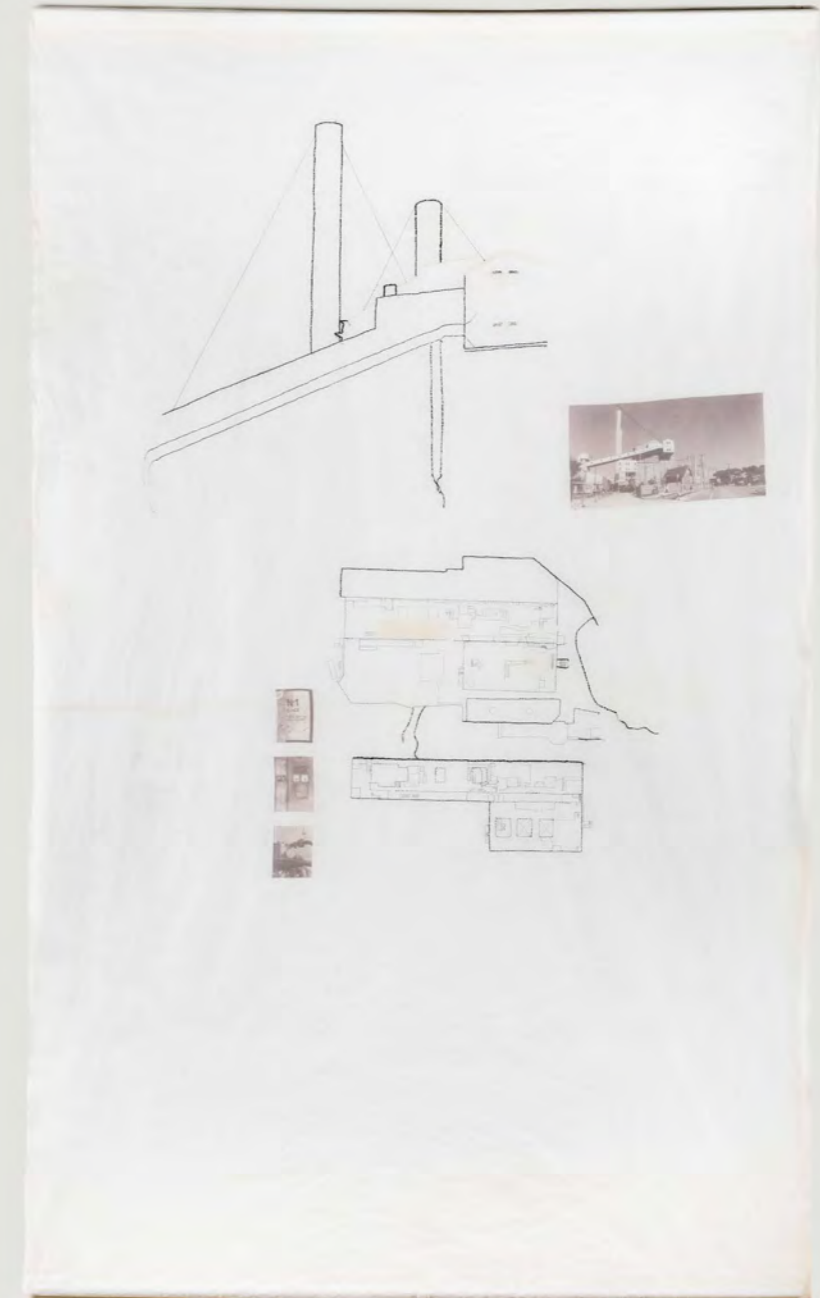
Cotton organza, paint, thread, recycled fabrics.
Painting, hand stitch, photographs on fabric.

The White Bay Power Station, a building that had been closed for 40 years, has come to life with a renewed purpose and vigour. The soaring walls are the shell of the long closed coal fired power station that ran the tram and later the train systems in Sydney and eventually powered homes as well, right up until the end of 1983.

The thoughtful conservation of the heritage building preserves not only the immense structure but the minutia of its everyday working life.

Cranes swing from the gantries and levers wait to be pulled. Gauges read zero waiting for steam and valves are ready to open and close. The footsteps and the voices of the men and women who once worked there, echo through the empty spaces of the building that is finding a new purpose.

Today the building is once again resounding with people's conversations and laughter, music in its vast halls, art hanging from its walls and gantries. Life is once more pulsing within its walls.



Judy Hooworth

Morisset NSW
Awabakal Country



Echoes of Summer

Wall Hanging.
98 x 169 cm

Commercial cottons, batting, thread
Discharge, drawing, painting, piecing, machine quilting

Walking the Wyrabalong track
through paperbarks savaged by fire
slender black trunks like sticks of charcoal
stand in verdant grass
no birdsong disturbs the cluster of burnt dead trees
the bush is hushed in remembrance

Connection to place is the focus of my creative practice.

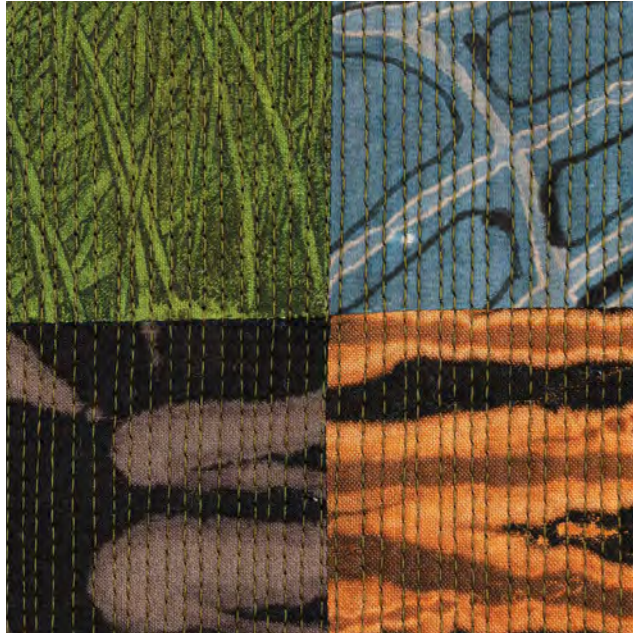
I'm influenced by the surrounding natural landscape of Dora Creek and the Lake Macquarie area near my home. I'm a keen bushwalker and photographer and enjoy exploring and documenting my surroundings. Drawing underpins my design process. I am intrigued by linear motifs and the ever changing patterns in nature along with the colours and moods created by seasonal variations in the weather.

My work has its roots in the quilt making tradition of layered and stitched textiles. Creating my own fabrics using various surface design techniques combined with the challenges of composition are stimulating and rewarding processes. The many hours spent in quilting each work allow time for reflection, completing the creative cycle.



Judy Hooworth

Morisset NSW
Awabakal Country



Sentinels

Wall Hanging.
121 x 89 cm

Cottons, fabric inks, Procion dye, batting, thread.
Discharging, wax resist, mono printing, drawing,
applique, piecing, quilting.

After the savagery of fire recedes, echoes of turmoil remain. Remnant incinerated trees stand sentinel in the darkened landscape.



Ellen Howell

Tasmania
Litarimirina Country



I describe myself as a visual artist. I work with natural fibres and wherever possible use sustainable products. Mediums are used with a "why not?" attitude rather than in a "this is the way to use them!" manner. Weaving, embellishment, drawing, painting are used as needed.

The ocean, the way it explodes or caresses landmass, the colours of both, playing off each other, has always found a home in my work.

I walk through life having to touch. The sensuality, roughness, cool, heat and colour filed away to live again through my creations. I work on multiple projects and move between them.

"You can paint or draw with thread, you can wear the landscape and you can see a feeling."

Under the Pier

Hanging.
190 x 225 x 4 cm

Cotton, spun and unspun jute, dyes, textile paints.
Weaving, hand stitching.

The painted warp and irregularly dyed weft fuse together and imply a watery landscape. Hand spun jute has been dyed using blue, teal and navy blue, and bleached to create a mixture of tones you might see in sand. I water the textile paint down to a watercolour consistency and paint the warp, creating shadows, then weave the mainly blue weft through to create layers of water.

The hanging invites you to remember the sensation of being underwater that you felt as a child. People play above but you are quiet below. That moment when everything becomes nothing and you're weightless.

The echoes and silences of being encased in a liquid. You were a water baby.

In between the echoes and silences, there is imagination.



Ellen Howell

Tasmania
Litarimirina Country



Broken Rings

Silk Hanging
120 x 170 x 2 cm

Tussar silk, cotton and silk thread, natural dyes, textile paints and pastels.
Tea/walnut/rust dyed, block printed, painted, drawn, hand stitched.

The circle, and its representation in a ring, is a potent symbol that has resonated throughout various cultures and eras. It embodies concepts of eternity, wholeness, unity, and the cyclical nature of life. The absence of a beginning or end in a circle, along with its continuous form, makes it a fitting representation of enduring love, commitment, and spiritual connection, particularly in the context of a wedding ring.

I have suggested that the ring is broken and have used this as a symbol of the echoes and silences that develop when a relationship is broken. The gentle, sweet echoes of what has been, as we remember the reasons we had a relationship and the longing for what could still be. The silences that have been created become the cause of the breakage. The silence widens the gap.

The base design is the wedding ring quilt pattern, a powerful metaphor for the unbreakable bond between husband and wife. The design has been blocked printed.

Nostalgic silk flowers have been block printed and "painted" with textile pastels, cut out and attached with gold embroidery. They recall gentler emotions.

Four golden rings tumble into oblivion. Painted and drawn on the silk gives them a three-dimensional feel. Are they broken or ready to be caught? The gold implies a wealth of possibilities.



Catherine Lees

Sydney NSW
Darramurragal Country



Restitution I

Wall Hanging
100 x 140 cm.

Photography on polyester fabric, polyester,
cotton and silk thread. Machine and hand stitch.

In the year 1930, Harry Charles Smith and Elva Isabel Smith married in a traditional celebration, formally photographed wearing a beautiful gown and stylish suit. After several years, there was completely different ideas for both around their marriage, and marriage rights. The traditional concepts around divorce, judicial separation and the restitution of conjugal rights are complex and began when in ancient times marriage was based on the proprietary right of the husband. Within common law, there was a concept that wife had no independent legal existence from her husband during their marriage.

This image is the initial wedding ceremony of Harry Charles Smith and Elva Isobel Smith, and the presentation of couple cooperation during their initial marriage.

My approach has been to explore many historical documents, and research how many of these types of legal scenarios have been managed in different ways, particularly that women's divorce rights were changed with veracity.

For instance, 1930s divorce laws were based on the Matrimonial Causes Act, 1899 – and only slightly changed during these three legal cases. The first case in 1936 was Harry Charles Smith initiating his claim for restitution of conjugal rights, despite living with another woman. The second and third cases was Elva Isobel Smith seeking to divorce her husband and request financial support for their two sons.



Catherine Lees

Sydney NSW
Darramurragal Country



I enjoy creating art that expresses ideas and feelings, through colour and texture. For me, colour can be bright and strong, or delicate. In a similar way, texture can be expressive whether subtle or granular.

My work is often a representation of how we combine thoughts and experiences, or explore ideas in a variety of ways.

When young, I began playing with hand and machine stitching, and later woodworking and metalsmithing, and found this a simple way to explore making items creatively. As an adult, I began silversmithing and loved the way a metal that was hard and solid became soft and fluid to form new three dimensional objects. In a similar way, textiles can be light and floating, or structured with new shape.

Restitution II

100 x 145 cm
Hanging

Photography on polyester fabric, polyester thread.
Machine and hand stitching.

The legal concepts around divorce, judicial separation and the restitution of conjugal rights are complex and began when, in ancient times, marriage was based on the proprietary right of the husband. Within common law, there was a concept that the wife had no independent legal existence from her husband during their marriage.

In 1936, Harry Charles Smith filed a petition in court for the Restitution of Conjugal Rights with his wife Elva Isabel Smith, despite him living with another woman.

Thankfully, in 1937 divorce law around Australia began to reflect the many changes that occurred throughout WW1 and the emerging concepts of women's rights.

In 1939, Elva Isabel Smith filed a petition for the dissolution of their marriage, and for financial support for their two children. And in 1944 the final Smith vs Smith case for the Request for Decree Absolute was successful.



Denise Lithgow

Sydney NSW
Gadigal Country



My work revolves around 3D felt sculpture and 2D textile art, using felt combined with free machine stitching and found objects and building up the layers with colour and texture. My inspiration comes from an emotional response to the surrounding landscapes.

The sculptural vessels are created by hand rolling and using the Gentle Roller machine. I also like working tonally using black, greys and whites with strong, simplistic lines, which give the work strength.

With this piece I have enjoyed combining my medical background with my artist practice. This title "echoes & silences" has allowed me to explore impaired hearing after working in ENT (Ear, Nose & Throat) surgery for many years.

Working with wool requires technical knowledge and patience. The finished work must inspire.

I exhibit my work widely in Australia and Internationally.

Cochlear Triptych

Sculpture

No1 White & Grey Strips 40 x 40 x 14 cm

No2 White Grey hand-stitch 37 x 48 x 13cm

No3 Grey & hand-stitch (on stand) 30 x 44 x 12cm

Merino wool, yarn, matt varnish, metal stand.

Felting, paddock to process- hand washed & carded wool, hand stitch.

My inspiration for 'echoes & silences' comes from previously working in the Cochlear Implant Program at RPAH, where we operated on the first hearing impaired recipient for the Cochlear 24 Electrode Implant. The twenty-four electrodes are inserted inside the cochlea and they connect to a speech processor to transmit sound.

This breaks the silence that changes a recipient's life. Suddenly being able to hear is profound and so much pleasure is expressed when this happens.

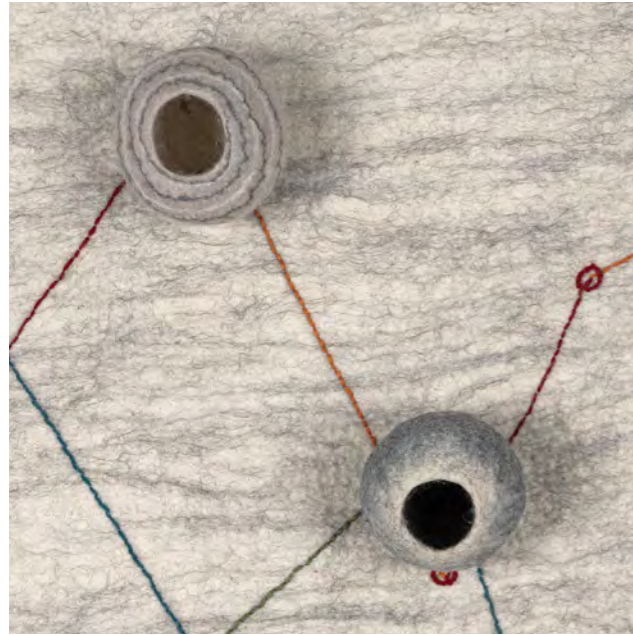
In response to this, my aim was to create three non-representational sculptures which relate to the workings of the inner ear.

After many trials I decided to use spiral shape which echoes the shape of the cochlea. I have used many layers of wool in monochromatic tones and then I cut down to a resist layer exposing the different shades and to create the ridges.



Denise Lithgow

Sydney NSW
Gadigal Country



Echo Chamber (Reference to an Audiogram)

Sculpture
84 x 118 x 10 cm

Merino wool fibre, angora fibre, embroidery yarn,
hand stitch, matt varnish.
Felting, paddock to process- hand washed
& carded fleece.

An Audiogram is the universal way to represent someone's hearing in the form of letters and symbols. Each symbol (X's and O's) on the chart represents your threshold for a given frequency.

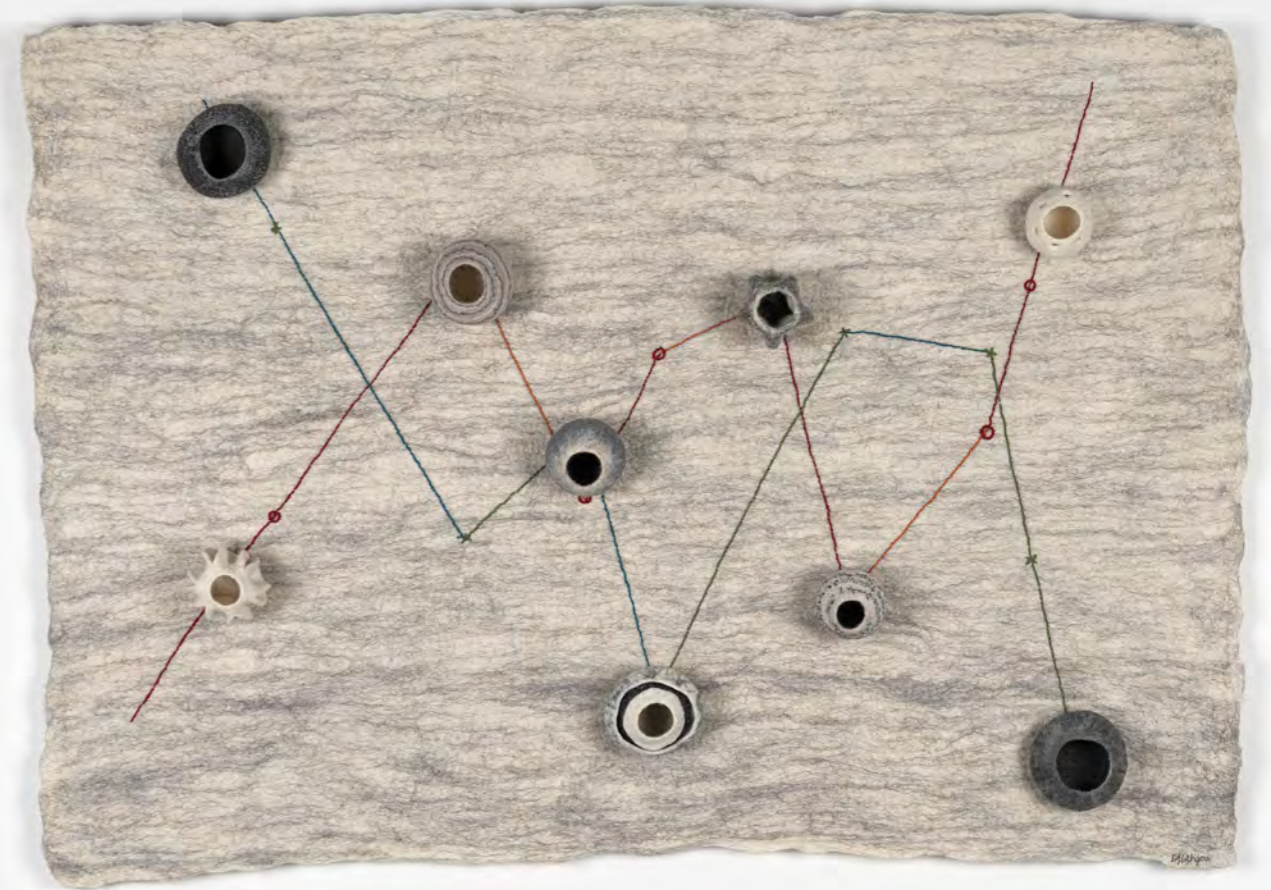
The lower symbols on the graph shows the greater the hearing loss at that frequency. This means you would need more amplification to get as close as possible to normal hearing. The degrees of hearing loss are typically classified as mild, moderate, severe or profound.

This graph plots the sounds of human speech on an audiogram and the vessels are placed on the O which shows the right ear and the X the left ear.

This Audiogram shows a hearing, impaired graph. Red & Yellow thread represents the Right Ear. Green & Blue represent the Left Ear in this work.

Small round felted vessels will be place on some of these points. These represent the capturing of sound where the sound revibrates into the hollow round vessel like an echo chamber.

With this piece I have enjoyed combining my medical background with my artist practice. This title, "echoes & silences" allowed me to explore impaired hearing after working in Ear, Nose & Throat surgery for many years.



Brenda Livermore

Sydney NSW
Gadigal Country



My practice is steeped in exploring and experimenting. Often beginning with drawing, a language of marks and shapes emerge that may develop further to sculptural forms that hold this history.

I am interested in the beauty of ageing, recording and championing the passage of time, the history contained in people and places and the ability of an object to hold story.

I trust this creative process. There is a rhythm to the making, in the repetition of action and a recognisable pulse in the finished work. Working in this way is an immersive experience; paying attention to the work, feeling for the direction it is moving, looking for balance and a connection between the space contained within the sculpture and the space it occupies.

Shared Terrain

Sculpture
75 x 30 x 5 cm
5 rings

Paper, printmaking, mark making collected papers,
fabric, thread -cotton, linen, silk.
Armature, wrapping.

This work begins in my connection to the landscape of rolling farmland where I grew up. A landscape where lives were very much in tune with the seasons and in the changes in colour/texture and even the shape of my surroundings.

Collecting these colours and shapes, from lush green grasses ready for cattle, dried yellow grasses waiting to be harvested for hay, the alternate furrows and ridges in rich red soil, blue skies, frosts, starry nights, rolling fog.

Memories that live deep in my being and echo through to my understanding and perception of all other landscape that I have experienced. It springs from my own personal experience and narrative but it speaks to a wider, 'public' landscape.



Brenda Livermore

Sydney NSW
Gadigal Country



Walking Between Worlds II

Sculpture 5 pieces
60 x 45 x 10 cms

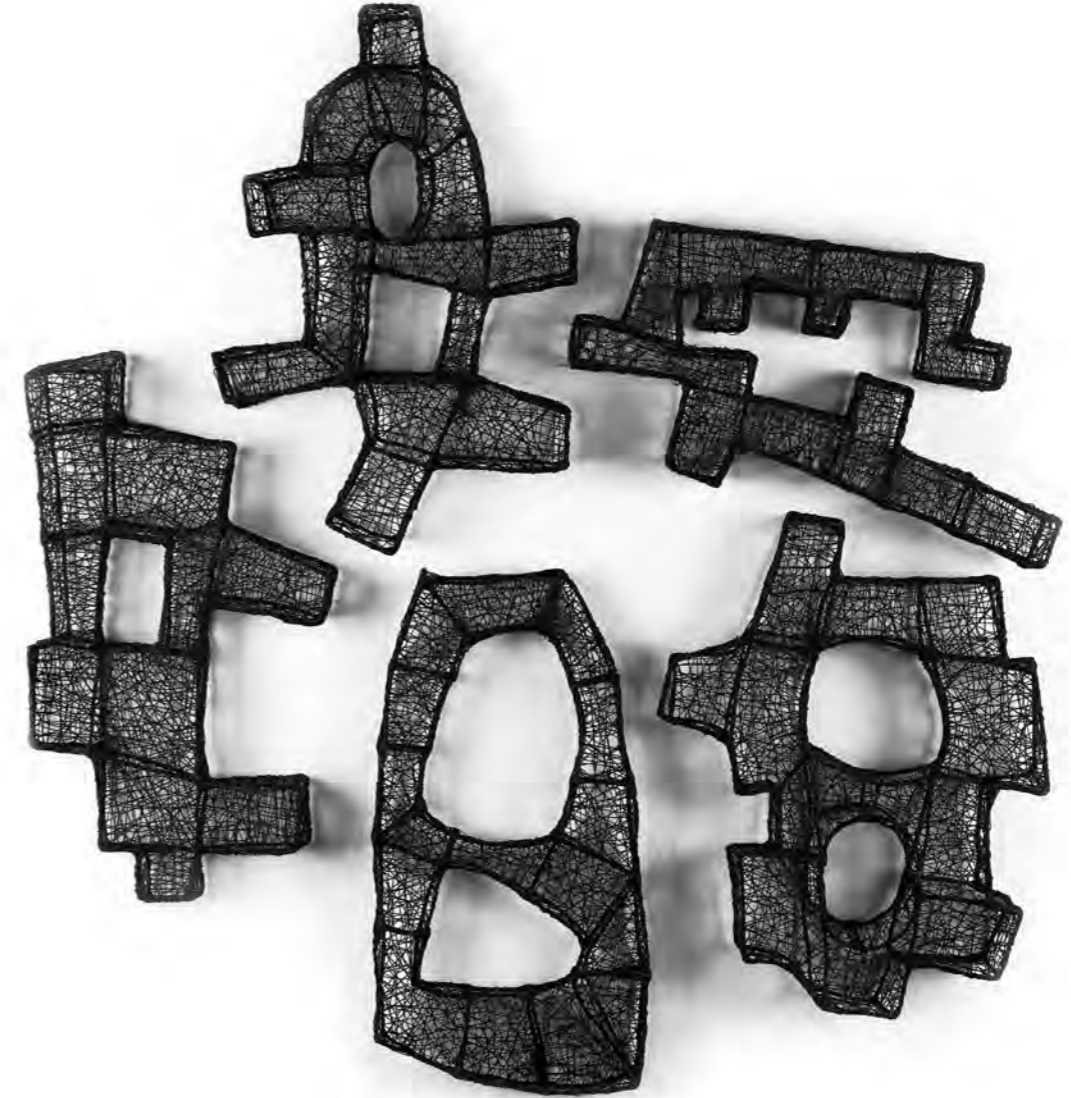
Paper over armature, weaving.

Without realising it at the time, this work began more than 10 years ago when I photographed the huge farm shed of my childhood. This shed saw many generations of my family and neighbours working together. It was the place where I learned about creativity from a seemingly unlikely source, my father. He was a multi generational farmer trained as a fitter and turner in his youth. In this shed he would create machines, ideas and solutions from steel and ingenuity (alongside the usual farm activities).

Over the years, like an artist's studio, you could 'read' the potential in piles of steel, lathes, hand tools, welding equipment etc. I can feel his presence there, and that of previous generations. I have come to understand that this exposure to material and creation was extremely formative for me.

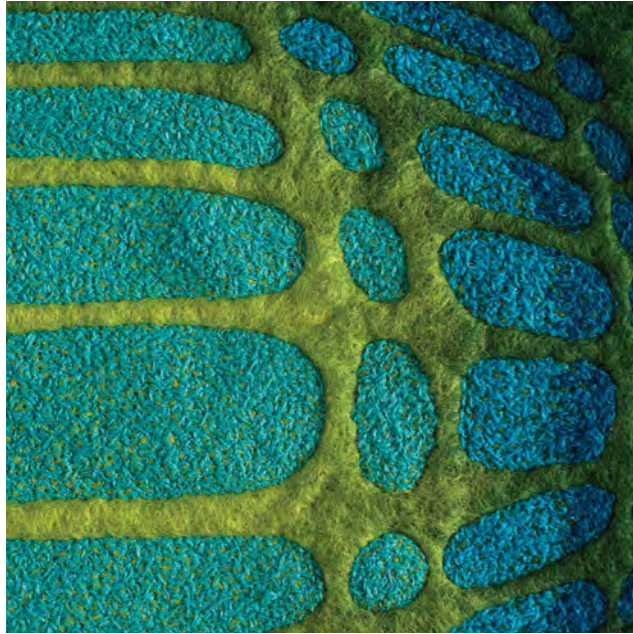
I responded to these photographs with drawing and then printmaking. The etchings explored recurring shapes and core elements of the drawings and over time became a familiar language. Developing now as sculpture, these forms encapsulate the mechanical, industrial and creative nature of this formative place.

Using paper, over an armature reminiscent of welded forms, the lines accumulate as drawing until the form is achieved. I am playing here with the notions of weight and solidity - at once both concrete and airy; strong, and delicate. The nature of the weave and the intricate lines of the cast shadows capture the idea that you are at once here present and yet touching the past.



Helen MacRitchie

Oxfordshire UK. Sydney NSW
Terramerregal Country



With an academic pharmacy background, I often use scientific and medicinal subjects as inspiration in my work. I explore personal connections with these subjects focusing on the detail, be it marks, shape or even associated text.

Wet felting of wool play a significant part in my work. I love its connection with land and place, and its feel in my hands as it organically transforms from loose fibre to structural fabric. Free machine or hand embroidery then adds texture and layers of detail relevant to the design narrative.

The design themes of Morse code and coding in my work for this exhibition appeal to my mathematical leanings. The versatility of felted wool is highlighted, creating hangings with depth and opacity, or with fragility and translucency.

Perceived

Wall hanging
80 x 65 cm

Merino wool
Wet felting, free machine embroidery

Morse code is sent in a form perceptible to the human senses, e.g. sound waves or visible light, such that it can be directly interpreted by a person trained in the skill. The specific lengths of the dots and dashes and of the spaces between them are vital for the accurate transmission of the message. So what happens to the message if our auditory or visual senses are influenced?

Optical artists such as Bridget Riley and Victor Vasarely present us with dynamic patterns that challenge our visual interpretation. More than simply fooling the eye, they question our perception. In challenging our senses they connect us to a world of emotion and nuance.

In this work the horizontal Morse coded message 'Perceived' is optically manipulated in a manner reminiscent of the Op Art movement.

How do you perceive this message now?
How do you make sense of the world before you?



Helen MacRitchie

Oxfordshire UK. Sydney NSW
Terramerregal Country



Banburismus

Installation - 2 hangings
290 x 50 cm, 390 x 50 cm

Wool, cotton, paper, modelling paste.
Wet felting, monoprinting, natural dyeing,
free machine embroidery.

During WWII, Bletchley Park housed the secret headquarters of British Intelligence. Selected service men and women were tasked with deciphering German military communication encrypted using electromechanical devices such as the Enigma machine. The Enigma used a daily changing system of rotating wheels (rotors) and electrical wiring to encrypt messages by polyalphabetic substitution.

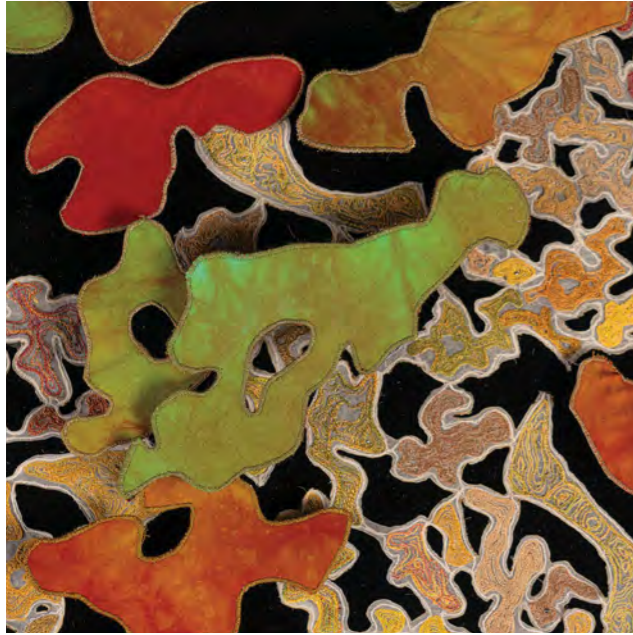
The leading cryptologists at Bletchley Park devised the Bombe machines. These helped to automate the process of finding the daily key settings of the Enigma machine. But demand on the Bombes was high and, to reduce the amount of processing that these machines had to do, Alan Turing, the leading mathematician, devised a manual cryptanalytic process called Banburismus. The process used long sheets of repetitive alphabets and numbers with strategically placed punched holes to overlay German Naval coded communication. These sheets were secretly ordered and delivered from a publisher in Banbury, Oxfordshire, and so named Banbury sheets. Their existence is only known today after a few examples were discovered crushed in the walls of hut 8, Bletchley Park, put there in an attempt to improve the building's poor heat insulation.

This work is comprised of two hangings – one created from hundreds of fabric and paper fragments, like the numerous servicemen and women employed in this deciphering task, and a second overlaying Banbury sheet. The first bears signs of cipher notes, Enigma machine pages, maps, machine parts and outlines of Bletchley Park. Both have been marked with natural dyes, tea stains and rust in subtle gradations of tone and colour.



Mandy McAlister

Blue Mountains NSW
Dharug and Gundungurra Country



Radiata

Installation
52 x 80 x 3 cm

Fabric, paint, dye, guitar strings, print board.
Machine stitching, printing, dyeing.

This work explores the intricate connection between nature and abstraction, drawing inspiration from my daily walks. Each component of the piece is inspired by a particular tree I encounter, its bark rich and textured, telling stories of time. The organic forms that inhabit this work echo the fallen pieces I collect, each one a fragment of the tree's narrative.

My goal is to explore the echoing of the bark - inspired forms and their surrounding voids

Blending traditional fabric manipulation techniques with a contemporary approach, my art practice centers on creating highly textured works that invite viewers to engage with their intricate, synthesised surfaces. I explore both geometric and organic forms, echoing the diverse shapes found in the natural and built environments around us. My creative process is informed by a response to the present moment, drawing inspiration from the richness and beauty of my immediate surroundings.

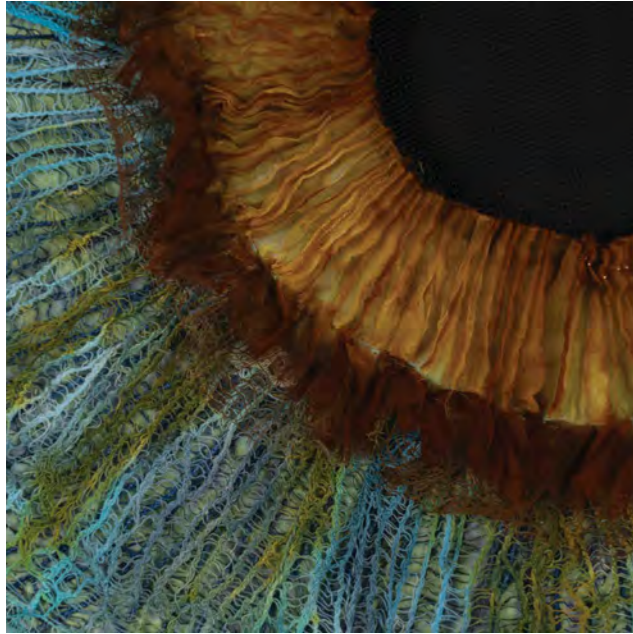
Each piece often emerges as a personal reflection, or as a direct response to the natural world, capturing experiences and the subtle interplay of texture and form.



Mandy McAlister

Blue Mountains NSW

Dharug and Gundungurra Country



Macro Vision

Wall hanging
54 x 54 x 5 cm

Fabric, thread, felt.
Shibori, embroidery, machine and hand stitch.

"Macro Vision" delves into the silent language of the eyes, where emotion finds its most immediate expression. Eyes silently echo our emotions, they soften with love, harden with anger, widen with fear, narrow with suspicion, roll in exasperation, glaze with boredom and weep with both joy and sadness.

I encourage the viewer to pause and reflect on the ways our eyes communicate, in a manner that words cannot. As the saying goes "The eyes are the window to the soul" they reveal our innermost feelings. Each glance, each flicker is a silent conversation.



Robyn McGrath

Forster NSW
Worimi Country



My art practice is predominantly based on working with fibres and textiles. I choose these materials because they lend themselves to alteration by dyeing, painting, printing, manipulation, stitch and embellishment. This allows me to select from a wide range of elements and techniques that suit my intent in the making of a particular artwork.

I like to invite the viewer to look inside my work for deeper meaning, so layering, 3D and sculptural pieces with wire armatures, often define my work.

In exploring the theme of Echoes and Silences, I draw on physical and spiritual connection to place, guided by the colours, patterns and textures of the location. These link to the memories of shared activities

Solace

Hanging
195x100cm, 195x 45 cm

Silk, cotton, tulle, fusible and synthetic fabrics,
string, wire, threads.
Hand and eco dyeing, marbling, machine stitching.

While the bush may whisper with the wind, rustle with small creatures and echo with birdsong, being immersed there can silence the noise of daily life and dispel, for a time the cares of the world.

Just being there among the trees, in tune with their beauty and wonder, gives me solace; refreshes my mind; and restores my soul.

I interpret the experience of being immersed in the bush with the tall hangings of tree trunks and leaves on a curved frame. That the panels can be looked through gives the impression of the depth of the natural world where I go to "lose my mind and find my soul".



Robyn McGrath

Forster NSW
Worimi Country



Silent Traces: sand prints of memory

Hanging or plinth
18 pieces.
7, 17 x 17 cm, 4, 17 x 34 cm, 7, 17 x 28 cm

Industrial medical felt, cotton fabric,
frost cloth, thread, found objects.
Dyeing with botanical dyes,
hand and machine stitching.

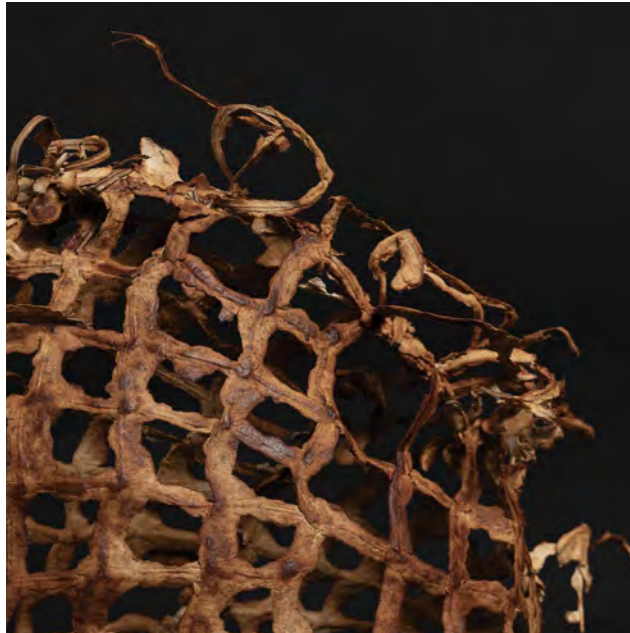
I have walked on sands in many locations in my lifetime from the beaches of the east coast of Australia, to the light red sands of the Liverpool Plains and the red sands of the Pilliga and further inland.

On all I have left my prints and followed the prints of birds, animals, vehicles and other humans. Some prints have left echoes, that remain etched in my memory. Each set of prints encapsulates a story and each brings a smile when I think of them and relate them to people and places.



Rhonda Nelson

Sydney NSW
Cammeraygal Country



I spend a lot of time thinking about my take on an exhibition theme. It's a slow process. However, in the end my work often relates to environmental issues, emotional states or the passing of time.

For this exhibition I focused on the transience of life forms, extinction and our vastly incomplete knowledge of all that has come and gone. I hope to stimulate people to pause, question and wonder.

My vision for the work evolves through trial and error and experimenting with materials. In effect it's playing with purpose. This helps crystallise my vision and my intention can shift wildly. I am surprised by how often this process exposes thoughts I have not previously vocalized or recognized.

My go-to materials for Untethered Fibre Artist exhibitions are handmade paper, paper pulp, string, wire and stitch. Printmaking techniques almost always find their way into the work.

Remnant Species

Installation

5 pieces

50 x 58 x 24 cm, 50 x 30 x 24 cm, 40 x 38 x 24 cm

40 x 38 x 24 cm, 40 x 38 x 24 cm

Paper pulp, raffia, rust, wire, cotton.

Hand weaving, pulp dipping, rust printing.

I always enjoy reading about newly discovered ancient species. They remind me how incomplete our knowledge is and to be more open-minded about our understanding of our planet.

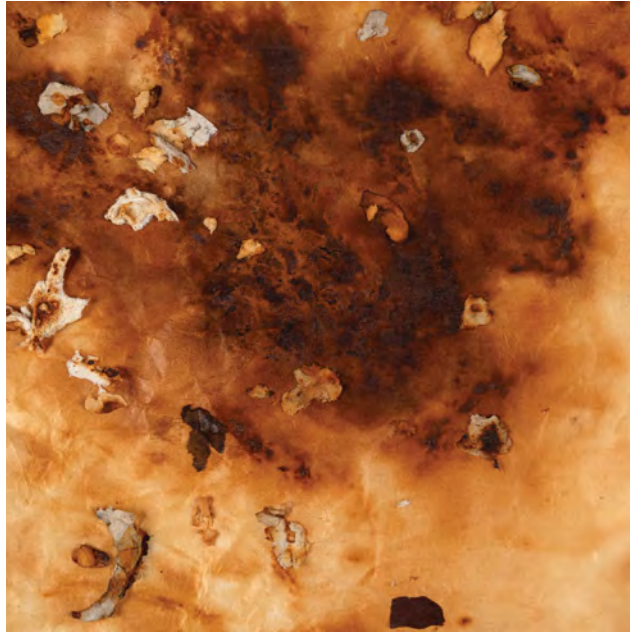
What life forms have come and gone? We know more about animals with bones and hard shells but what about the squishy ones? What secrets of survival and adaptation did they employ? What might they have looked like? Were they social? Are pockets of them still around?

These imagined 'remnant species' ask us to take a moment to ponder and appreciate the extent and nature of creatures that have existed that appear to have left barely a trace of themselves. Unobserved, uncatalogued, silent. But not insignificant.



Rhonda Nelson

Sydney NSW
Cammeraygal Country



Life on Earth

Wall hanging
93 x 126 cm

Paper, paper pulp, string, rust, cotton.
Rust printing, collage, assemblage, hand weaving
and looping.

I am inviting you to spend a moment letting your imagination wander and wonder about our place on the planet.

Every day we walk on land which holds the remnants of life forms that have come and gone. We are oblivious to the existence of many millions of undocumented species that survived for short or long periods and may have dominated a time and space for a while or might have always struggled to survive.

Being in nature, observing life, fossils and ancient footprints – the signs of species come and gone - can remind us of our own transience and the interconnectedness of all life. It can place us on a more equal footing with other life forms and motivate us to lead less bloated lives.

Like life, rust thrives on oxygen and water. I was attracted to the symmetry of using rust printing for this work as it illustrates and embodies the processes of entropy, breakdown and transformation.

This is a companion piece to Remnant Species, my other work in the Echoes and Silences exhibition.



Kirry Toose

Sydney NSW

Darug and Guringai Country



I am currently revisiting my past methodology, what has made me 'me'... my narrative in the textile and fibre arts.

I am trying to rediscover my identity.

My art practice has been both traditional and intuitive, often the personal reaction to the subject matter or theme. Each artwork is often a reflection of a singular concept, working at the intersection of art and design. My signature, my comfort zone, is the attention to the detail - exploring processes from the traditional to new technologies, products and materials; with the personal dialogue and debate within each artwork, emotionally and creatively.

Currently, my work seeks to challenge the way realism can push into the contemporary.

Louder than Words

Wearable Installation
180 x 120 x 100 cm (variable)

Ex Army Coat, cotton drill, industrial felt, metal hoop.
Dying, appliqué, digitizing, hand and machine stitching.

Our so-called 'civilization' ricochets from one conflict to another in the futility of war and its continuous cycle of fighting, the intermittent silences of mourning, the small lulls of peace, before it all starts over again...

The brutality inflicted on each other bombards us in the news every day; we are drowning in this despair as mothers. I am the generation that protested against Vietnam, in the Moratorium, and yet it all continues!

When does this annihilation become louder than words?

...Sneak home and pray you'll never know
The hell where youth and laughter go...

Siegfried Sasson



Kirry Toose

Sydney NSW
Darug and Guringai Country



In Search of Silence

Installation, dual sided
125 x 88 cm hanging
40 x 30 cm

Cotton drill, industrial felt, tulle, wire, acrylic,
war memorabilia.
Silk Screen Printing, appliqué, hand and
machine stitching.

There is nothing as distressing as the unknown identity of the young soldier photographed on an Edwardian glass slide acquired at auction, about 10 years ago. The concept was there in the abandoned collection. Part of this process has been the search for his identity, the only identification being his collar badge, which places the young man in the Military, Australian Rifle Regiment. 1900 -1912

The desolation we all feel about the current world climate, now adds another layer of hopelessness and complexity. When I first saw the image, I had a need to venerate these young heroes, the innocent victims of government and religious conflicts. Little could I predict, how prophetic my artwork's subject matter of the innocent, albeit loyal, lives caught up in the self centeredness of government's justification to invade, kill and maim in the name of power and greed.

These young men were the optimists, believing this to be 'the war to end all wars' ... and well over a century later, conflicts still dominate our world. The list of wars embroidered on one side of the hanging are those that are regarded in comparable category as 'World Wars'. As the audience we continue the universal search for silence.

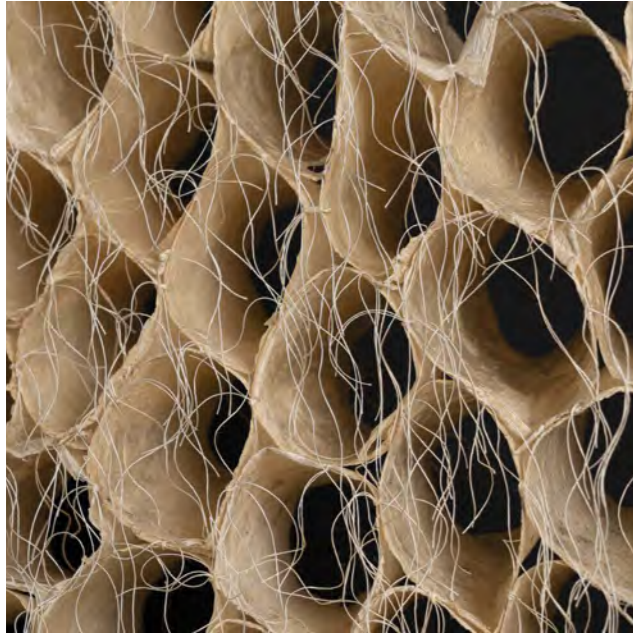
Making this artwork honours his memory, this unidentified soldier, and all others who were/are involved in the subsequent carnage of war.

The symbolic Peace Dove has well and truly been slaughtered!



Judith Wilson

Sydney NSW
Gadigal Country



While studying fine arts I was constantly drawn to the medium of paper. Paper is an incredibly versatile medium, often delicate but also surprisingly strong.

Paper holds memories and has long been the means by which human history is recorded, whether it be officially or simply an individual's diary or letters. In that respect it sits well with my practice which largely draws on familial history and the everyday minutiae of existence.

My choice of techniques is informed by my history with and attraction to the handmade. I employ processes historically used in Asian cultures such as paper felting and spinning yarn from paper and immerse myself in the repetitive processes of spinning, felting, knitting and hand sewing. Time slows and I find the work induces a form of meditation.

Déjà vu

Hanging
60 x 40 x 10cm

Paper, silk thread, acrylic medium.
Paper felting (Joomchi), hand stitching.

Déjà vu can be described as a haunting sensation that the present situation has been experienced before.

In this work I have used the Korean method, Joomchi, of felting mulberry paper to shape fragile forms, which I have stitched together lightly with silk thread.

I have referenced the lives of insects that form and grow in an enclosed cocoon, emerging transformed from larvae to winged beauties. The empty shells that sustained their growth and development remain, open and disintegrating, a metaphor for what was, a reminder of what has passed. The hollow forms now echo with the sounds of silence, the winds of time pass through them carrying the threads of memories, elusive and incomplete.

Briefly, we might catch a glimpse of those past lives.



Judith Wilson

Sydney NSW
Gadigal Country



Remains

Hanging
100 x 35 x 15 cm

Paper yarn, acrylic medium.
Looping, hand stitching.

We are only visiting this plane, our time is short and we all consciously or unconsciously work to leave a mark, proof that we existed. At the end all that is left are memories held by those who knew us, photos, writings and objects that will over time disappear. We have no control over what will remain of us in the minds of others.

Those who have made a mark, famous scientists, heads of state, artists and authors etc. will be remembered long after the majority of us. For most, all that will remain over time will be a grave containing bones, the framework that supported our flesh.

Visually a skeleton is simply a reminder of the species but it can hold a multitude of information. With scientific analysis it can release its secrets, such as age at death, gender, lived location and sometimes diet, occupation and cause of death. The silence can be broken, the echoes of its past heard.

In this work I have used the looping technique which is traditionally used in basket making. The open, hollow forms reference skeletal structures or bones. The use of fine paper yarn and the open loops suggests fragility, bones that are breaking down with time and exposure to the elements.



Elaine Witton

Sydney NSW
Wallumedegal Country



A calligraphic artist with a background in textiles, I work in diverse formats and use a variety of media to approach individual concepts. By using stitch and or pen, on both fabric and paper, I am able to create fusion between different materials. As a calligrapher, the techniques of formal lettering and freely-made marks provide me with the means to express the spirit and the sentiments relevant to my art pieces.

The artists Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee have inspired my art practice, particularly in these two artworks. As Kandinsky's states, "Form itself, even if completely abstract, has its own inner sound."

Conversations

Wall Hanging
21 x 76 cm, 21 x 50 cm

Ink, pencils, ruling pen, cotton yarn, silk fabric, hand-made paper, oil crayons, paints.
Collage, mark making, hand and machine stitching, painting.

How do we perceive silence; does it have colour?
Does it have 'weight'; can we say the lightness of silence?
I see it as a gradual progression, as though a brightness pales and eventually becomes still and peaceful.

This work conveys the impact that the gradual progression of sound, here seen as conversations, makes to the silence that follows.

Displayed in two sections, it shows the contrast between sound and silence. Each is just as important in its own right and relies on the other. The smaller panel shows the sound gradually disappearing into the paper, until eventually the paper and the silence become one, illustrating that there is just as much impact in the silence that follows as the sound itself.





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echoes & silences 2025/26

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produce and exhibit art using fibre and textile materials and processes.

The group provides a forum for members' expression and development of fibre art practices.