

Michael Donnelly & Betty Russ Merinda Davies Chris Bennie Belinda Smith Peter Faulkner



SITE LAB // Small Gestures Towards Infinity took place on the lands of the Widjabul Wy-abul people of the Bundjalung Nation. We pay respects to elders past, present and emerging and extend that respect to all First Nations cultures and their continuing connection to land, waters, community, and the arts.







EX	ecutive Note	4
Int	roduction	5
Те	mporary Public Art Production	7
	Artist Selection	7
	Project Development	7
	Key Recommendations	8
Ar	tists & Selected Projects	9
	Peter Faulkner	9
	Michael Donnelly & Betty Russ	11
	Merinda Davies	13
	Belinda Smith	15
	Chris Bennie	17
	Strengths / Challenges	19
	Key Recommendations	21
Si	tes	24
	Strengths / Challenges	24
	Key Recommendations	25
Pu	blic Program & Audience	28
	Launch Event	29
	Artist Talks	29
	Community Planting	29
	Noise Xhurch	29
	Strengths / Challenges	29
	Key Recommendations	30
Βι	Idget Overview	32
	Strengths / Challenges	33
	Key Recommendations	33
St	affing	34
	Strengths / Challenges	35
Ma	arketing & Communications	36
	Print Marketing	37
	Signage	38
	Printed Program	39
	Social Media	40
	Strengths / Challenges	42
	Key Recommendations	42
Co	onclusion	44
Ap	pendices	45
	APPENDIX A - CURATORIAL OBJECTIVES	45
	APPENDIX B – APPLICATION PROCESS	46
	APPENDIX C - DIGITAL APPLICATION	47

Executive Note

ASHLEIGH RALPH, DIRECTOR OF LISMORE REGIONAL GALLERY JANE FULLER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ARTS NORTHERN RIVERS

This collaboration between Arts Northern Rivers and Lismore Regional Gallery was informed by both organisations' loss of infrastructure in the wake of the 2022 floods. At the time of writing an application to Create NSW's Visual Arts Commissioning Program, our organisations were contending with the aftermath of unprecedented and devastating flooding events.

Inspired by the creative recovery in Ōtautahi Christchurch post disaster, we saw the urgent need to create professional opportunities for artists to develop and present responsive and impactful work in the region, to uplift in times of uncertainty and to provide access to arts and cultural activity while Lismore rebuilds.

SITE LAB // Small Gestures Towards Infinity aimed to bring hope and lightness to the local community as it recovers, and sought to enhance the recovery process. This series of temporary public art projects was intended to engage audiences while there are limited cultural facilities open post disaster. Lismore Regional Gallery was devastated by the 2022 floods, damaging its collection, and disabling the Galleries program for 18 months, resulting in extensive losses to artist opportunities. The program was designed to support Lismore Regional Gallery to have a continuing presence by bringing diverse artforms and critical discussion into public spaces.

This project demonstrates excellence through having contemporary art at the forefront of creative recovery in assisting short and medium term strategies enabling communities to look forward with hope. The arts and creative industries play an integral role in shaping our regional culture and society here in the Northern Rivers. However, the viability of this industry depends on the capacity of creatives to find, sustain and access ongoing, paid work throughout their careers. This project is rooted in the conviction that the arts can indeed lead a creative recovery of resilience.

Introduction

Taking place over seven weeks, SITE LAB // Small Gestures Towards Infinity was a celebration of art, culture, community and collaboration in a regional NSW, post disaster.

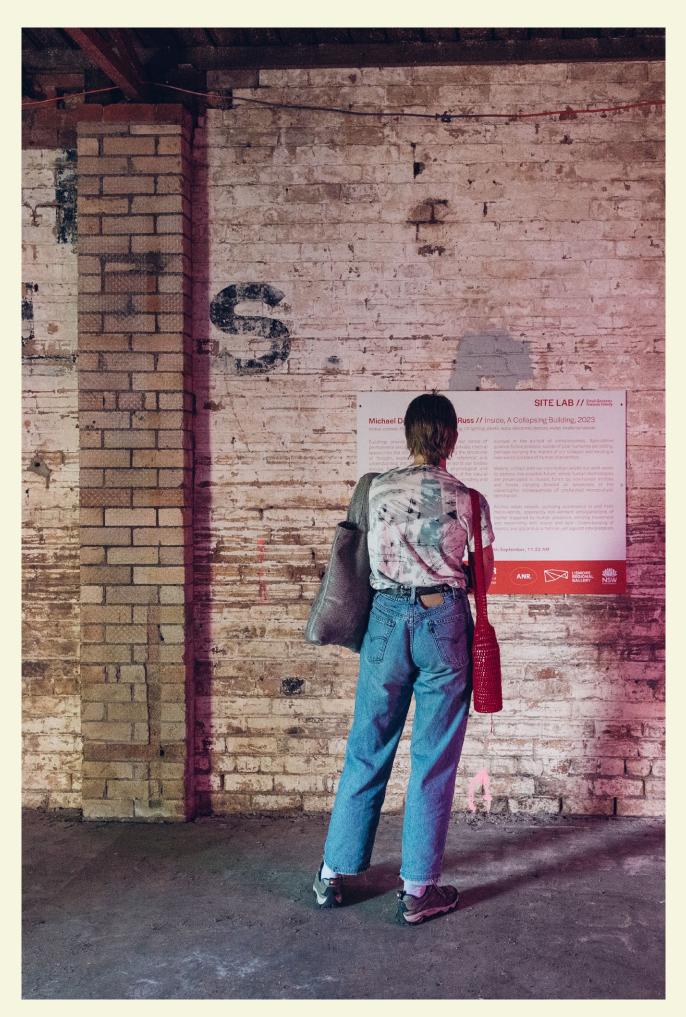
SITE LAB offered a series of temporary art projects in unexpected spaces across Lismore CBD and a thought-provoking free program of artist talks, live listening events, and sculptural activations.

Presented by Arts Northern Rivers and Lismore Regional Gallery over 29 July to 17 September 2023, SITE LAB commissioned six contemporary artists with strong connections to Bundjalung Country: Peter Faulkner, Michael Donnelly & Betty Russ, Merinda Davies, Belinda Smith, and Chris Bennie. Each artist took their contemplation of art in the Anthropocene via different media, involving installation, experimental soundscapes, Indigenous knowledge, floating sculpture, performance and community-engaged work. 'Small Gestures Towards Infinity' challenges the idea of 'getting back to normal' in the face of the collapse of biodiversity and the imminent necessity of eco-critical art.

These experimental and site-specific responses to the region's post-flood landscape invited curiosity and contemplation, addressing an urgent need for spaces for community to re-commune. The Northern Rivers has historically endured adversity with natural disasters at catastrophic levels.

SITE LAB provided temporary spaces for community connection and critical discourse, and positioned contemporary art practice at the forefront of the region's recovery.

This project was made possible with support from NSW Government through Create NSW's Visual Arts Commissioning Program to support bold and ambitious new work.



Temporary Public Art Production

ARTIST SELECTION

A call out (see APPENDIX B – APPLICATION PROCESS) for artists based in or with a strong connection to the Northern Rivers attracted 80 expressions of interest in the program. Five projects (six artists) were selected by a panel of industry professionals based on criteria of artistic excellence, suitability of their practice in public space/temporary activations and their works connection to five curatorial objectives: First Nations, access & inclusion, creative recovery & the provision of hope, contemporary, site-responsive practices and experimentation & critical discussion (see APPENDIX A – CURATORIAL OBJECTIVES).

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Artists were required to develop concept designs and rationale, and manage and coordinate the production of their artworks in consultation with the Arts Northern Rivers Project Manager and Lismore Regional Gallery Curator. Support was available by way of securing sites for the presentation of their work, obtaining permits, public programming, marketing and professional documentation. Artists were encouraged to explore any materials that are appropriate to the artwork location and reflect the temporal or durational lifespan of their project. Sustainable options or materials with lives beyond the project were prioritised.

Arts Northern Rivers Project Manager, Grace Dewar led the development of the program including the EOI, artist selection process, concept design stage, product management of four of the five projects presented, public programming and stakeholder engagement. Lismore Regional Gallery Curator, Kezia Geddes led the project management of one of five of the projects, provided general support to the overall program and facilitated an artist talk as part of the free public events offered.

Key Recommendations

- The EOI was open to all artforms however, performance as a stand alone artform was not highly considered by the selection panel. Works with a physical presence with performance components were selected. **Future programs should provide a more detailed EOI**, specifically on the style of public art work of interest, to ensure more suitable applications and reduce administration for artists.
- There is an increasing demand for performance art to be included within the temporary public art arena. This should be taken into consideration for future projects of this nature, especially as the region has a high density of artists working in this artform.
- More support and encouragement is required to engage First Nations artists in the application process. There is potential for a different process to be adopted such as images and a paragraph or an audio file to involve Indigenous artists in an empowered way and to minimise pressures on administration.
- The artist selection called for locally based artists or national artists with a strong connection to the Northern Rivers. This project was developed as an immediate response, however more focus was needed on locally based artists. Whilst the intention was to provide diverse inspiration through the creative projects, local creative responses must be prioritised in recovery contexts.
- As Lismore is navigating ongoing recovery, the project team experienced timeline challenges, sites were difficult to confirm and some artists experienced shortages with resources/materials.
 Future programming could consider potential sponsorship arrangements to support artistic development such as materials, and local partners to confirm artwork locations.

PETER FAULKNER

About the Artwork - 'Keepers of the Fire' 2023, digital print on PVC

Country is the land and those that live on it – freshwater and saltwater systems, the animals, the birds, the plants, the winds and the mountains. Peter Faulkner comes from both freshwater and saltwater people and Islander people from the South Sea. 'Keepers of the Fire' is a series of new paintings reimagined as a large-scale site intervention under the Lismore Regional Gallery awning. This artwork reflects his ancestry and a sense of energy and vibrancy of ancestral cultural ways. His installation invites you to move through this place, connect and come together on Country.

Country talks to you. There are signs all around us. Country speaks through signs from nature, the patterns that emerge inform you of what's coming. Our ancestors speak to us too through signs and shifts in energy. Sometimes you hear them dance and sing. Country calls for more ceremony. Sharing through story, song and dance is a way to tell our dreaming story now, one that is changing rapidly. Widjabul Wia:bul means keepers of the fire. This artwork honours coming together to share knowledge.

About the Artist

Peter Faulkner is a proud Widjabul Wiabul visual artist. His artwork illustrates community togetherness, contemporary cultural expression and the value of interconnectedness of his culture. Peter uses a striking, simple colour palette and style through various mixed mediums, including painting, wood sculptures, clay and simple, bold lino prints. Peter is a visual storyteller, sharing his ancestry, history and the voices of his people. The warrior spirit is prevalent in this modern-day dreaming, originating from the ancients' knowledge and teaching. His weapon today is his art, disarming and bold.



'Keepers of the Fire' installed at Lismore Regional Gallery. Photo: Kate Holmes



'Keepers of the Fire' installed at Lismore Regional Gallery. Photography: Kate Holmes

MICHAEL DONNELLY & BETTY RUSS

About the Artwork - 'Inside, A Collapsing Building', 2023, mixed media installation

Buildings provide us shelter and foster our sense of permanence and stability. They extend our private, internal spaces into the collective network, echoing the structures of thought, exploding our systems of reference and understanding into the spatial, material world our bodies occupy. Buildings also assimilate our physiological and psychological frailties with the complexities of the natural world, providing a teleological buffer, allowing us safety and comfort in an unpredictable landscape.

What is left when we no longer maintain communion with our buildings?

On entering an abandoned building, the sense of post-human intervention is evident. Amongst the remnant material utterances of human activity, hybrid forms and systems develop, cybernetic and cellular mutations coalesce and evolve, adapting new ways and means of survival in the pursuit of consciousness. Speculative science fiction predicts worlds of post humanity persisting, perhaps carrying the imprint of our collapse and rending a new world laid bare of human intervention.

Making contact with our non-human selves our work seeks to address this possible future, where human technologies are perpetuated in mutant forms by non-human entities and forces carrying forward an awareness of the catastrophic consequences of unchecked monocultural dominance.

Ad-hoc water vessels, pumping sustenance to and from micro-worlds, apparently non-sentient amalgamations of matter triggered by human presence, sensing movement and responding with sound and light. Understanding of objects and apparatus is familiar, yet against interpretation. Timbers, cement, pvc tubing, plaster, paint, wiring, UV lighting, plastic tarps, electronic devices, water, and incidental weeds creep through the space like mimetic ghosts, improvising possible futures.

About the Artists

Michael Donnelly and Betty Russ are artists and arts workers living on Widjabul-Wyabul land of the Bundjalung Nation (Lismore), New South Wales. Michael's practice is a broad investigation of abstraction and transcendence through multiple mediums including painting, assemblage, performance and sound. Working across sculpture, assemblage, installation, sound, and embodied research, Betty's practice ferments between and around the philosophies and renderings of eschatological terror, speculative+/science fiction, hauntology, spirituality, the-weird-and-the-eerie. Material manifestations protrude from hypnagogic fantasy, searching for psychological mitigation to the abject shock of the past, and sweaty white-knuckled fear of the future. Betty and Michal are co-founders of Elevator ARI, an emerging artist-run gallery and studio space.



SITE LAB opening event. Photography: Kate Holmes



SITE LAB opening event. Photography: Kate Holmes

MERINDA DAVIES

About the Artwork – 'Breathing Space, Moving Space, Resting Space ' 2023, Native Violets (Viola hederacea), slate, soil, sound score, mosses various species

'Breathing Space, Moving Space, Resting Space' is a three part living installation connecting us to our shared breath through care, reflection and emergence.

Breathing Space – invites us to consider our collective grief – human and non-human. You are invited to leave memories and messages with moss which will be digested into an audio score. Moss are ancient prehistoric beings, with histories dating back to 450 million years. Moss have survived and thrived through severe climate changes, from ice-ages to heat waves. What can learn from the moss, so that we too might thrive within collapse. How can we enter into a dialogue with the moss? How can we co-create new spaces of emergence? Moss acts as one of the best air filtration systems in existence, consuming pollutants, carbon and fine dust particles and breathing out oxygen. In this work the moss is an active agent in both filtering the air and our personal reflections – creating a breathing space for human and non-human refuge.

Moving Space – is an audio guided walk taking us through the city between the two sites, shifting our view to a more-than-human perspective, reorienting our experience of the cityscape.

Resting Space – is a place for resting and dreaming of the future of this place, a field of native violets, an earth intervention. Viewers will be invited to rest in the patch of flowers. A space for resting, listening and considering future visions and imaginations of this place. Community will also be invited into a relationship of care, through a public planting process and invitation to water the flowers over the installation period.

About the Artist

Merinda Davies (b.1991) is an artist using performance, movement, installation, text and conversation to ask how we might reorient ourselves towards deeper care and intimacy.

Her work is inspired by the environment, human and more-than-human social and ecological structures and the possibilities available to us in future imaginings. Her practice aims to find clarity and connection in the external world through deep listening, observation, and research into the emotional and physical states in our internal worlds. She grew up in Bundjalung Country, Northern NSW, and is currently living and creating on Kombumerri Country, in South East QLD.

Merinda's solo and collaborative work has most recently been commissioned by; HOTA, Home of the Arts, Metro Arts, ANAT – SPECTRAvision, Performance Space – Liveworks Festival, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, Blue Mountains Cultural Centre, Outerspace and The Walls. She is currently an artist in Generate GC, an initiative between City of Gold Coast and Situate Art in Festivals.



SITE LAB opening event. Photography: Kate Holmes



SITE LAB opening event. Photography: Kate Holmes

BELINDA SMITH

About the Artwork - 'Learning to Float' 2023, PVC, rubber, nylon, steel

The catastrophic events of 2022 have made us all rethink and reimagine our connection to land, water and home. Northern Rivers communities bloomed in their resilience and kindness, forging a path forward that is focused on healing and recovery. Belinda's work utilises flowers as symbols of growth, joy and sorrow.

Learning to Float' 2023 is a daisy chain of flower pontoons presented as an intervention of the Wilson River, Lismore. This artwork superimposes a vision of joy and healing on the landscape creating happier memories of our riverine landscape.

About the Artist

Belinda Smith lives and works in Murwillumbah NSW, on Bundjalung Country. Her diverse practice includes public art, ceramics, textiles, wood, and paper. Belinda has a diploma of Interior Design from RMIT (1998) and a Bachelor of Design from Queensland College of Art (2004).

Belinda's artworks are an abstract expression of ideas sourced through her research and interest in people and place. Graphic and sculptural, Belinda's works express her curiosity and wonder of the world. Her works are joyful and playful, and acutely site specific. Belinda's catalogue of projects span a wide variety of sites and materials. She chooses fabrication processes and materials that complement the context and meaning of the artwork. The thread that connects them all is their articulate response to the situation and site.

Smith has exhibited work at galleries Nationally and internationally including Artisan and Adderton House in Brisbane, Tweed Regional Gallery, Noosa Regional Gallery and the Textile Art Center in New York. Belinda co-founded Plummer & Smith in 2012 with Landscape architect, Dan Plummer.



SITE LAB opening event. Photography: Kate Holmes



SITE LAB opening event. Photography: Dom Sullivan

CHRIS BENNIE

About the Artwork - 'Holden Viva', 2023, IBC tanks, DMX lights, sound

I remember when life had a daydream quality to it: carefree, sunny, light, a little bit romantic, playful even - not that long ago, in fact. But something has changed, and those days seem now gone. They have been replaced with a doldrum that permeates the majority of corporeal activity. A stench, like labour, frames quotidian activity when once an effluent of grace radiated through all things banal and commonplace. As an artist, I used to trade in that economy - making artworks that represented the familiar, beautiful, maybe even sublime, even if that is impossible or foolish.

More than the martyred musings of the heartbroken, I sense this feeling might be universal. A zeitgeist of sorts, in which geographical events mirror personal ones, and their combined enormity continue to overwhelm. I'm a big fan of creating contrast and tension in my work, and over my career have learnt that I can achieve this by simply combining a few things together. For SITELAB these things are a Holden Viva family station wagon and five IBC tote tanks.

While a domestic family car and IBC tanks represent motifs for the region's mobility and industry, their combination constructs a tension in which their unique functions are thwarted. More intriguing, however, is the future-oriented dimension their combination invites: a proposal for future flood events, a hovercraft, a spaceship or even a time machine.

In that sense, and despite the shared uncertainty of our times, I'm hoping Viva acts as an escape from the quagmire of everyday experience to offer a moment of make-believe, play, and daydream at a time when it seems scant.

About the Artist

Chris Bennie was born in Invercargill, New Zealand. He attended the Otago School of Art from 1995-97 and the Queensland College of Art from 2001-2004. He earned a Doctorate of Visual Art from Queensland College of Art in 2009 for research titled Video Art, Authenticity and the Spectacle of Contemporary Existence. Bennie's work can be characterised by the representation of quotidian subject matter (including objects that have been affected by disasters) in ways that signal new meaning.

He has exhibited nationally and internationally in major exhibitions including: Revolutions: forms that turn, The Biennale of Sydney (2008); +Plus Factors, Australian Centre of Contemporary Art, Melbourne (2006); Ecstasy: baroque and beyond, University of Queensland Art Museum, Brisbane (2018); SafARI, Alaska Projects, Sydney (2012); Contemporary Australia: Optimism; Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane (2008); sculpture at Scenic World, Blue Mountains (2017); and Control Rooms, Youkobo Artpsace, Tokyo (2014). Awards include: the Clayton Utz Art Prize, Brisbane (2014); Gold Coast Art Award (2012) and highly commended at the inaugural John Fires Art Award, Sydney (2013). He is the only artist to win the Swell Sculpture Festival twice (2013 and 2019).



SITE LAB opening event. Photography: Kate Holmes



SITE LAB opening event. Photography: Dom Sullivan

Strengths / Challenges

- Temporary public art was successful in terms of providing a renewed confidence in the CBD post flood and instilling a sense of curiosity and encounter in our civic spaces. The works encouraged discussions about art in public spaces among broad audiences through everyday interactions including interesting topics such as: what is art, what is good art.
- Of the six artists involved in the program, three were from Lismore, one was from Murwillumah and two were based outside of the Northern Rivers. **One of the non-local artists encountered challenges in having access and time with their site** to develop work on the ground.
- The post flood environment meant some artists encountered difficulties in securing materials and resources for their projects. For example, Chris Bennie's work required sourcing large scale materials locally such as a specific style of secondhand car. Making work in this way during a time of recovery meant needing to adapt his making processes to what was readily available.
- Peter Faulkner's work was powerful in its impact and location for engagement. It brightened up the Gallery site during its period of rebuild, referenced culture, and used imagery that provided hope. The material of the artwork had potential to be confused as advertising or a marketing space. This artist was supported with production of the artwork banners and coordination of the installation and deinstallation of the work. **Due to the timeline, existing paintings were rescaled to fit the parameters of the site. In the future, it would be encouraged that new work is made in direct response to the site.**
- Merinda Davies was conceptually strong, inviting the community into practices of care and reflection. She invited local artist Mitch King (Yaegl Bundjalung) to collaborate on the sound component of the work. The artist grew up in Kyogle and has a strong local network, which she intentionally extended during the development of her project.

Strengths / Challenges

- Betty Russ and Michael Donnellys reclamation of a disused bank, still vacant post disaster, was extremely well received with strong engagement, especially among young people. As a non-traditional art venue, it is recognised that a council organisation would have encountered significant barriers to activate this space. This artwork took you to another place and made you think of other places, however it did not engage with public art. It's a temporary exhibition and the shopfront was not visible. This encouraged a sense of discovery and direct engagement was needed.
- Belinda Smith's floating installation was a considered work, however, as the main viewing point for the work was the riverbank, it was difficult to experience the sculpture from a distance.
 The positioning of the work at the back of the North Coast Canoe Club built a relationship with the paddle community who were able to encounter the work in a unique way, out on the water.
- Chris Bennie's installation in the Quad evolved significantly from his initial concept. There was a need from the project team to support and further interrogate his idea at an earlier stage, specifically, the use of water in a public space and the potential for this to negatively alter how the space is used by the public. Conceptual in nature, the work instigated discussion and debate with general audiences. Disappointingly, the installation encountered an act of vandalism in its final week of presentation, with the window of the car being broken.

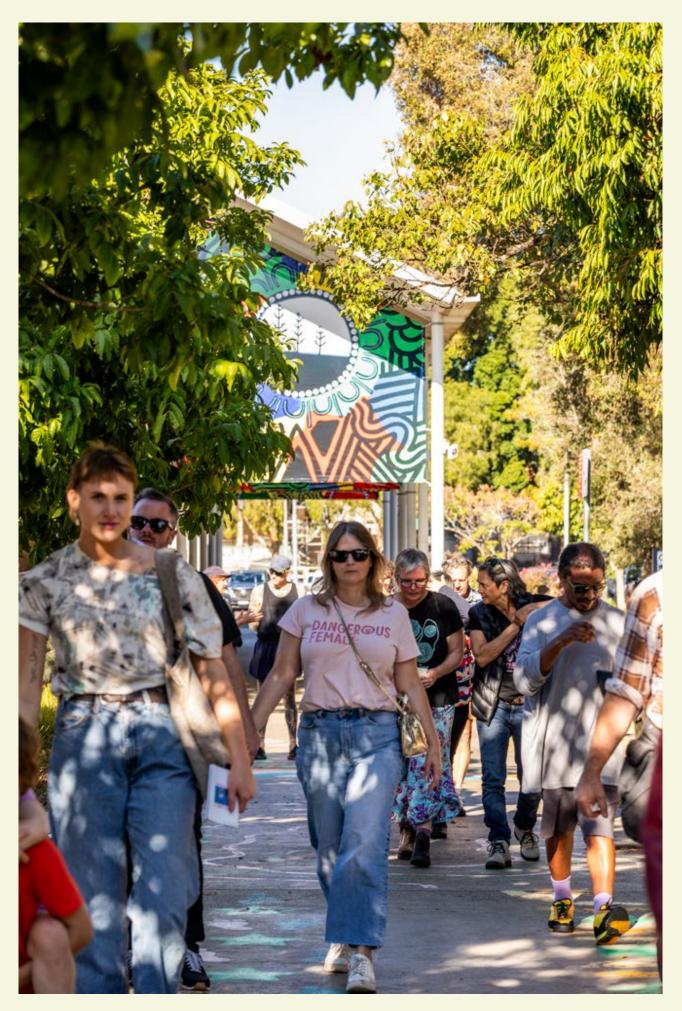
Key Recommendations

1. Temporary art projects are necessary to generate a sense of pride and ownership of public spaces. In the context of disaster, projects such as these bring a new sense of hope to the community and invite collaboration on how we want our civic spaces to look and feel. Audience development is needed to encourage a relationship to experimental art in civic spaces and continue to build an appetite for activating non-traditional spaces. Different art forms such as performance should also be considered.

2. When working with visiting artists, longer development times and dedicated support is required to help them navigate community relationships.

3. Public art projects that invite community to engage in the making of the work or that provide meaningful entry points into developing a relationship to the work should be prioritised.

4. More consideration is needed on how works can be secured in public spaces.



"The Arts Northern **Rivers & Lismore Regional Gallery project** SITE LAB // Small **Gestures Towards** Infinity allowed me the space and time to collaboratively create and test experimental ideas. To make works in response to the site and expand my potential as an artist. The team were excellent at supporting my experimental ideas and problem-solving when inevitable issues came up with the public spaces we were working with. This was a really amazing project to be part of, thank you for curating a space and trusting in my ideas."

Merinda Davies

"SITE LAB provided an invaluable platform for regional artists - a unique opportunity that empowered us to explore uncharted territories. With the support of Arts Northern **Rivers and Lismore Regional Gallery we** delved into unexplored ideas, experimented with diverse materials, and crafted siteresponsive work that resonated with the region. Thank you for this enriching and

meaningful experience."

Belinda Smith

Sites

SITE LAB activated three locations in Lismore CBD; the Lismore Quadrangle, a vacant building at 86 Woodlark St (previously the Commonwealth Bank) and the Wilsons River behind the North Coast Canoe Club. Sites were selected based on pedestrian traffic, ability to house temporary artwork and in response to the conceptual interests of the artists involved in the program.



STRENGTHS / CHALLENGES

- There were many unknowns in a post flood environment that made it challenging to program and support the development of new work, such as the confirmation of sites and what we can provide to artists i.e. power, water, a site for the full period of presentation. In addition, both Lismore Regional Gallery and Arts Northern Rivers were working from temporary offices outside of the CBD and beyond Lismore at the time of developing the project and confirming project locations.
- Relationships are crucial to the development of programs such as these. Many conversations where navigated with independants and real estate agents to confirm locations. The project developed a relationship with North Coast Canoe Club, who became quasi custodians of Belinda Smith's work on the Wilson's, caring for her inflatable sculpture by removing floating debris during their weekly Saturday morning paddles.
- The three locations were easy to walk between using a hardcopy or digital map, which invited new experiences of the CBD.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is an urgent need for local government bodies, in particular those navigating disaster recovery, to reduce the barriers for utilising public spaces. The DA process was lengthy and costly. It is acknowledged that this process is a deterrent to artists and community groups eager to play a role activating our civic spaces.
- There is potential for a program such as this to be hosted at one site with multiple activations. The Lismore Quadrangle is an versatile and adaptable community asset, and a known site for public art and other temporary projects. Utilising a different site would offer a further sense of curiosity for the Lismore community and visiting audiences. Hosting all temporary projects by the Wilson River could have made for a more conceptually rich theme for the project, inviting more engagement with the river with less focus on the CBD. However, collaborative public programming and long-form marketing would be needed to attract visitation to new and/or underutilised locations.
- The projects were presented simultaneously to provide a collective sense of activity and activation of the CBD. There is also potential for the work to be staggered over a longer period of time, which would build momentum and potentially attract a wider audience through prolonged marketing.
- Public art that responses to the site it is presented in is non-negotiable.
- There is a proven appetite for large-scale public activations of public space, particularly in Lismore. Audiences at the Woodlark St site were fascinated by the use of an empty space and there was extensive encouragement of more activations of unused spaces like this in the future.



SITE LAB opening event CBD tour. Photography: Kate Holmes

"Having the opportunity to develop and install our work in such a beautifully destroyed space, responding to the character and nuances of the desolation, provided both of us a unique and valuable experience. Further to that the positioning of the space within the Lismore CBD allowed us the luxury of connecting with our local audience and receiving real time, genuine critiques. Most interestingly, as a public work, the ultimate impact extended beyond the materials contained within the building and generated a dialogue with the city centre as a space of recovery and cultural perseverance."

Michael Donnelly & Betty Russ



Installation by Immortal Soil for 'Dark Science: New Moon', Lismore Regional Gallery. Photography: Natsky



SITE LAB opening event. Photography: Dom Sullivan

Public Program & Audience

SITE LAB // Small Gestures Towards Infinity offered a free program of artist talks, live listening events and sculptural activations, designed to invite diverse engagement with the temporary public artworks. Due to being a temporary, outdoor project, audience demographics were not collected.

DATE & LOCATION	ACTIVITY	AUDIENCE
Thursday 20 July 3-5 PM Lismore Quadrangle	Community Planting: Merinda Davies	24
29 July - 17 September Lismore CBD	SITE LAB // Small Gestures Towards Infinity ft. five temporary public artworks	6469
Saturday 29 July 2 - 4 PM Lismore Quadrangle	*OPENING EVENT* Welcome to Country, discussion, artwork tour & cake cutting	72
Thursdays 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 August & 7, 14 September 86 Woodlark St	*WEEKLY EVENTS* 5-7 PM NOISE XHURCH	106
Saturday 19 Auust 11.30 AM start Lismore Quadrangle	Artist talks & sculpture activation: Chris Bennie & Belinda Smith	5
Saturday 2 September 11.30AM start Lismore Quadrangle	Artist talk & live listening: Merinda Davies	19
Saturday 16 September 11.30 AM start 86 Woodlark St	Artist talk & sound performance: Michael Donnelly & Betty Russ	27

SITE LAB was delivered over 51 days, commissioning six artists to make five public artworks. The project reached 6,722 people and engaged 253 participants at 11 public programs. SITE LAB had an economic benefit of an estimated \$235,270 to Lismore, with a daily spend of \$35 per visitor.

LAUNCH EVENT

The SITE LAB opening event featured a Welcome to Country by Widjabul Wiabal man, Peter Faulkner which included a warrior song in language. This was followed by a summary and discussion of the project, a cake-cutting celebration and a tour of the public art projects. Community gathered and walked through the CBD together to share in the artworks, generating a sense of community and pride in the program.

ARTIST TALKS

Artists Talk were hosted over three weekends which invited audiences to hear directly from the artists about the work they had made and why they had made it. These engaging talks connected audiences with the works and the artists, both local and visiting. Merinda Davies' talk included a tour and live listening component with sound collaborator, Mitch King. Michael Donnelly and Betty Russ's talk included a live sound performance responding to the site and installation.

COMMUNITY PLANTING

Merinda Davies invited the community to come together for an afternoon of planting native violet flowers in the Quadrangle for her work, 'Resting Space, Moving Space, Breathing Space'. This two-hour open invitation was complemented by facilitated conversation on slowing down, resting, dreaming and imagining during urgent times in the larger context of the Anthropocene.

NOISE XHURCH

Facilitated by Michael Donnelly, Noise Xhurch is a loose collective of Lismore based artists and musicians who gather sporadically to engage in improvised, experimental musical happenings. Anchored within the idea of collective play as a form of compositional detournement, Noise Xhurch processes the act of noise making, creating a social platform wherein the willful lack of skill and intentional outcomes resituates the performance and its intent against the expectations and quantifiable residues of the form.

During SITE LAB, Noise Xhurch delivered weekly sound activations at the Woodlark St space, engaging in a dialogue with the work and expanding upon the material and conceptual ideas the work presents. The production of sonic structures amongst the bodies and cavities of the work will provide the backdrop for audiences to experience the work as a living, generative organism.

STRENGTHS / CHALLENGES

- The Lismore / Northern Rivers community is active and eager to engage with arts programming, especially when it is linked with existing events such as the local produce market. The community planting event was extremely well received, highlighting that Northern Rivers audiences have both an understanding of and appetite for this style of programming. It also shows the need for more than listening approaches to learning and arts engagement such as workshops or a dance party.
- Artist talks were hosted the same day and time is suitable for continuity however it didn't leave room to test other timeframes. Artists that were not local to Lismore had low attendance at their talks, whereas local artists brought an audience.
- All projects ran for a 7 week period, which is appropriate to static public art projects. However there
 is potential for this to be shorter for projects such as the Woodlark St activation which required
 invigilation.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Public programming is best received and attended in Lismore during late afternoon on weekdays, as weekends are currently quiet in the CBD. There is a need to support non-local artists by pairing them with local artists for events such as artist talks or better communicate the need to bring a network and co-promote activities.
- There is a need for more partnerships to co-present programming and attract further attendance.
- Future programming with more resourcing could consider weekly or fortnightly tours and direct engagement with schools and community groups.



Welcome to Country by Peter Faulkner. Photography: Kate Holmes

"Public art is a really important part of placemaking. SITE LAB artworks added vibrancy and interaction to the Quad and enhanced the communities connection to place, in a location that had been impacted by the floods. I witnessed people of all ages engaging in both Merinda **Davies and Chris Bennie's** works, with seniors laying their head to rest by the violets, and children climbing across Bennie's installation. The function of these works invited the community to drop in, play, connect with each other and themselves."

Mykaela Baillie, Lismore Quadrangle Placemaking Officer

Budget Overview

ITEM (Income)	ACTUALS	IN-KIND
Create NSW	\$100,000	
Arts Northern Rivers	\$7,500	\$20,000
Lismore Regional Gallery	\$7,500	\$12,000
IVAIS	\$6,000	
Signarama (printing support)		\$1,600
TOTALS	\$121,300	\$33,600

TOTAL PROJECT COST (ACTUALS & IN-KIND)

\$33,600

ITEM (Expenditure)	ACTUALS	COMMENTS
Artist fees (5 x commissions, 2 x shortlisted concept designs that did not progress) & artwork production	\$91,870	Artists self-managed their project production and budgets
Other production expenses	\$19,127	Project management, venue hire, assessment panel fees, signage, launch event, permits (DA), artist contracts (Arts Law)
ANR wages (reflected as in- kind)	\$20,000	Project management
LRG wages (reflected as in- kind)	\$12,000	Project support
Marketing & comms	\$11,309	Design, printing, signage, posters/postcards/programs, distribution

TOTAL EXPENDITURE

\$154,306

STRENGTHS / CHALLENGES

- As a co-commissioning project, both organisations contributed to the development of the concept and funding application to realise the inception of the project. **ANR held and distributed the funds to the artists, contractors and suppliers. It was efficient for one organisation to financially manage the project.** ANR has easier processes for distributing funds in comparison to Council finance procedures.
- Four out of the five projects were self managed by the artists. They each received three milestone payments (concept design, production and project completion) and independently produced their own work. This reduced administration for the commissioning bodies and allowed artists to directly manage their materials, processes and contingency plans.
- The five projects were each allocated \$15K-\$20K, which presented limitations around what can be achieved. **Budgets of this scale kept the projects within the realm of temporary and experimental.** Projects which require longer development or larger production would not have been feasible.
- The project required significant in-kind support in resourcing of staffing from both organisations, which was far greater than anticipated in the original application.
- Venue hire for the Woodlark St activation was \$5K for a 3-month temporary use and was paid from the overall project contingency. This project would not have been possible had the artists had to use their production budget on venue hire, as it would have significantly reduced the funds available to make the work.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Commissioning bodies to **make it a requirement that artists include a contingency** within their self-managed budgets.
- Whilst the goal was to provide opportunities for as many artists as possible, reducing the amount to four projects would have provided more comprehensive support to the artists engaged.
- With more time, there is potential to seek sponsorship or partnership arrangements to contribute to a project such as this.

Staffing

ANR Staff	 Executive Director – Jane Fuller (project development and support, assessment process) Project Manager – Grace Dewar (production support for 4 x temporary projects, program development and delivery, stakeholder engagement) Marketing & Comms Manager – Ingrid Wilson (marketing, comms, stakeholder engagement) Transitional Projects Coordinator – Holly Ahern (design)
LRG Staff	 Director – Ashleigh Ralph (project development and support, assessment process, stakeholder engagement) Curator – Kezia Geddes (production support for 1 x temporary project, artist talk host) Placemaking Officer – Mykaela Baillie (Lismore Quadrangle support, Council liaison, marketing)
Contractors	 1 x Installation Technician – Joey Ruigrok 1 x Photographer – Kate Holmes 1 x Videographer – Dom O'Sulliovan
Service Providers	 Lismore City Printery (printed materials) Key Witness Media (distribution) Signarama (banner printing) Lismore City Council (signage printing and installation)

STRENGTHS / CHALLENGES

- At the time of application, Lismore Regional Gallery had more time and resources. As the temporary pop-up space became operational, the rebuild got underway for the Gallery and with flood anniversary events, there was not a person in the team available to be designated to project management for SITE LAB. Meaning Arts Northern Rivers held a larger majority of the project development and delivery and the ambition of a collaborative project was not realised to its full potential. The additional staffing needed was not reflected in the budget which then required additional in-kind support from Arts Northern Rivers.
- The project was a great opportunity for staff of both organisations to work in new ways in delivering temporary public art projects. This broadened the experience of local arts workers and holds project learnings across the two organisations.
- The project employed three local, highly skilled contractors to install and fabricate rigging, and document the project with videography and photography. This provided additional income to the local sector.



SITE LAB opening event. Photography: Kate Holmes

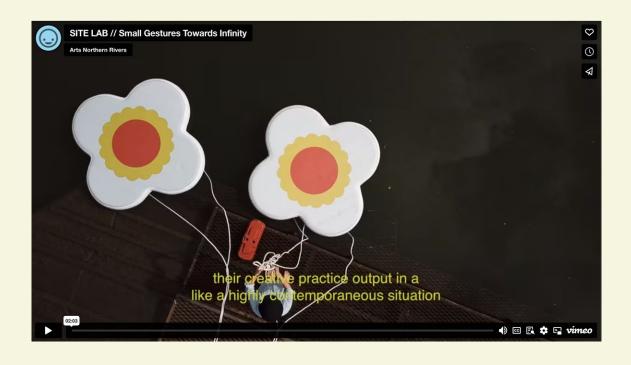
Marketing

Promotion for SITE LAB // Small Gestures Towards Infinity was achieved through a multi-layered approach through social media and print media including posters, postcards and signage. Social media proved to be an extremely valuable advertising channel, with low expenditure and high audience reach (31,386) and engagement.

Stakeholders and audiences were engaged in the project via direct invitation, press releases and via regular EDMs. The project is currently being reviewed by Sydney based writer, Anna Westbrook, who is exploring publication via Artslink's upcoming eco-critical issue.

Collateral followed the brand identity established for the project by Holly Ahern. The design incorporated elements from the EOI marketing image of a temporary public artwork by acclaimed Australian Artist, Sebastian Moody. The cloud motif carried through the project to be in keeping with this image stylistically and the concept of 'small gestures towards infinity'. These branding assets were implemented post the EOI process through to event completion, throughout stakeholder communications, marketing collateral/promotion and event signage.

View the project video below, as documented by local videographer Dom Sullivan.



Print Marketing

PLATFORM	SPEND		
Design	\$2,300		
Postcards & posters (postcards x 500, poster A3 x 50, poster A4 x 200)	\$516		
Signage	\$1,382		
Program (500)	\$938		
Distribution	\$460		

Signage

A0 corflute signs were installed at each artwork location, giving context to the project and what each artwork was about, as well as information about each artist. Public programming corflutes were installed at the Quad and Woodlark St sites, detailing the free community events available over the seven week period.

SITE LAB // Small Gestures Towards Infinity

Merinda Davies // Breathing Space, Moving Space, Resting Space, 2023 Native Violets (Viola hederacea), slate, soil, sound score, mosses various species

'Breathing Space, Moving Space, Resting Space' is a three part living installation connecting us to our shared breath through care, reflection and emergence.

Breathing Space - invites us to consider our collective grief - human and more-than-human. You are invited to leave memories and messages with moss which will be digested into an audio score. Mosses are ancient prehistoric beings, with histories dating back to 450 million years. Moss have survived and thrived through severe climate changes, from ice-ages to heat waves. What can learn from the moss, so that we too might thrive within collapse. How can we enter into a dialogue with the moss? How can we co-create new spaces of emergence? Moss acts as one of the best air filtration systems in existence, consuming pollutants, carbon and fine dust particles and breathing out oxygen. In this work the moss is an active agent in both filtering the air

ARTIST TALK // Saturday 2nd September, 11.30 AM VIEWING TIMES // Sunrise - Sunset and our personal reflections - creating a breathing space for human and non-human refuge.

Moving Space - is an audio guided walk taking us through the city between the two sites, shifting our view to a more-than-human perspective, reorienting our experience of the cityscape.

Resting Space - is a place for resting and dreaming of the future of this place, a field of native violets, an earth intervention. Viewers will be invited to rest in the patch of flowers. A space for resting, listening and considering future visions and imaginations of this place. Community will also be invited into a relationship of care, through a public planting process and invitation to water the flowers over the installation period.

The audio work for this work is made collaboratively with sound artist, Mitch King. To listen to the geolocated, audio download the free Echoes app linked here.





Printed Program

The SITE LAB printed program included a catalogue of each of the five commissioned projects, a map of the artwork locations and the information about the free community events. 500 copies were distributed by Arts Northern Rivers and Lismore Regional Gallery.

Thursday 20th July | 3 - 5 PM Community Planting with Merinda Davies | The Qua

Saturday 29th July | 2 - 4 PM Opening Event | Welcome to Country, Discus Artwork Tour & Cake Cutting | The Quad

Thursdays from 3rd August | 5 - 7 PM NOISE XHURCH | 86 Woodlark Street

Saturday 19th August | 11.30 AM Artist Talks with Chris Bennie & Belinda Smith | The Quad

Saturday 2nd September | 11.30 AM

Saturday 16th September | 11.30 AM Artist Talk & Sound Performance with Michael Donnelly & Betty Russ | 86 Woodlark Street

// PROGRAM

Belinda Smith

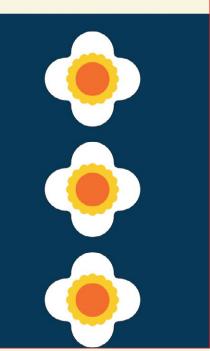
Learning to Float, 2023

ARTIST TALK // Saturday 19th August, 11.30 AM

The catastrophic events of 2022 have made us all rethink and reimagine our connection to land, water and home. Northern Rivers communities bloomed in their resilience and kindness, forging a path forward that is focused on healing and recovery. Belinda's work utilises flowers as symbols of growth, joy and sorrow.

Learning to Float 2023 is a dalsy chain of flower pontoons presented as an intervention of the Wilson River, Lismore. This artwork superimposes a vision of joy and healing on the landscape creating happier memories of our riverine landscapes.

SITE A // Wilsons River, 29th July - 19th August SITE B // Wilsons River, 19th August - 17th September



Small Gestures Towards Infinity

Social Media

CREATIVE	PLATFORM	SPEND	REACH	ENGAGEMENT	BOOSTED
SITE LAB Unrail Classes Towards (Hrive	Instagram Advertising	\$20	12,669	Interactions: 274 Profile Activity: 664	
SITE LAB Grid Centrer Devisit Inter	Instagram Advertising	\$20	3,309	Interactions: 91 Profile Activity: 72	
	Instagram Organic		1,360	Accounts Engaged: 134 Profile Activity: 8 Impressions: 71,792	YES Impressions: 1,526 Reach: 1,288 Engagement: 154
SITE LAD	Instagram Organic		539	Accounts Engaged: 39 Profile Activity: 3 Impressions: 710	
SILELA	Instagram Organic		569	Accounts Engaged: 44 Profile Activity: 3 Impressions: 732	YES Impressions: 438 Reach: 417 Engagement: 18
SHE AR	Instagram Organic		928	Accounts Engaged: 55 Profile Activity: 3 Impressions: 1,021	YES Impressions: 219 Reach: 206 Engagement: 10
OLONIZ	Instagram Organic		682	Accounts Engaged: 40 Profile Activity: 1 Impressions: 748	YES Impressions: 2,181 Reach: 1,967 Engagement: 697
SITE LAB	Instagram Organic		886	Accounts Engaged: 38 Profile Activity: 8 Impressions: 976	YES Impressions: 442 Reach: 430 Engagement: 14
SITE LAB // ktdtmtxp OPENING EVENT Exceeding 2010. aby (2 - 4 RK	Instagram Advertising	\$20	2,772	Interactions: 82 Profile Activity: 64	

CREATIVE	PLATFORM	SPEND	REACH	ENGAGEMENT	BOOSTED
	Instagram Organic		1,378	Accounts Engaged: 136 Profile Activity: 4 Impressions: 1,714	
Interest Activities SITE LAB // Scilled OPENING EVENT Sates (250 Aby) 2 - 4 PM Streeting 250 Aby) 2 - 4 PM	Instagram Advertising		608	Accounts Engaged: 33 Profile Activity: 1 Impressions: 687	YES Impressions: 322 Reach: 286 Engagement: 16
	Instagram Organic		495	Accounts Engaged: 43 Profile Activity: 4 Impressions: 662	YES Impressions: 889 Reach: 762 Engagement: 60
SITE LAB // Artisr Take	Instagram Organic		507	Accounts Engaged: 27 Profile Activity: 2 Impressions: 665	
	Instagram Organic Reel		1,227	Reel Interactions: 68 Plays: 1,535	YES Impressions: 3,750 Reach: 1,988 Engagement: 934
	Instagram Organic		80	Accounts Engaged: 62 Profile Activity: 4 Impressions: 985	YES Impressions: 2,016 Reach: 1,867 Engagement: 346
SITE LAB/// Norda Davis	Instagram Organic		441	Accounts Engaged: 36 Profile Activity: 5 Impressions: 593	
SITE LABY Hard Table Band Standard Same Table Same	Instagram Organic		430	Accounts Engaged: 22 Profile Activity: 2 Impressions: 498	YES Impressions: 449 Reach: 434 Engagement: 5
	Instagram Organic Reel		1,013	Reel Interactions: 82 Plays: 1,172	
	Instagram Organic Reel		1,006	Reel Interactions: 61 Plays: 1,114	YES Impressions: 0 Reach: 153 Engagement: 0
	Instagram Organic		487	Accounts Engaged: 46 Profile activity: 5 Impressions: 526	

TOTALS:

\$60

STRENGTHS / CHALLENGES

- Project signage had **recurring issues with vandalism** and there is a need for contingency to replace signs.
- More marketing support and consideration of traditional advertising channels was needed.
- Council engagement was limited outside of the involvement of the Gallery team. Councillors
 and Council staff members in planning and CBD activation were invited to attend the opening event.
 It is an ongoing challenge to attract Councillors and Council staff to attend arts and
 culture events.
- Lismore Regional Gallery Administration Support Manager took unexpected leave through the project, meaning the gallery team were understaffed and artists at the Woodlark St site received no volunteer support to invigilate this site.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Stronger **relationships are needed with education partners** such as with SCU and TAFE, to attract student audiences to local arts and cultural events.
- More consideration is needed around vandalism and securing temporary signage.
- More consideration of traditional media such as print (including online print) and radio is needed for diverse marketing avenues and opportunities. Projects like these in the future could consider a publicist or specialist in traditional media to advise or take on the project. Moving forward, Arts Northern Rivers will offer professional development to their Marketing and Communications Manager in this space to have these skills in house.

NOTES ON SOCIAL MEDIA:

Reach: number of unique accounts that have seen your content on screen at least once

<u>ADS</u>

Interactions: likes, comments, direct messages, shares, saves, poll responses, visiting your profile, clicking links, mentions, tagging

<u>Profile Activity:</u> number of actions people take when they engage with your profile. Includes profile visits, website taps, business address taps, call button taps, email button taps

ORGANIC

<u>Accounts Engaged:</u> number of unique accounts that have interacted with your content and demographic information on the accounts you've engaged, including top countries, top cities, top age ranges and gender breakdown.

Impressions: number of times content was shown to users



Conclusion

Public art continues to play a crucial role in how communities connect, respond and engage in our civic spaces.

SITE LAB // Small Gestures Towards Infinity made public contemporary practices that prioritise experimentation, care, storytelling, Indigenous knowledge and collaborative risk taking.

These practices or 'small gestures' invited curiosity and discussion and ultimately, encouraged a renewed sense of connection to place and speculation of our shared futures. It is these types of projects that are needed in times of increased uncertainty.

The projects presented in this program were a direct response to the 2022 flooding events that changed the lives of many in the Northern Rivers.

In this way, these temporary artworks contribute to a chorus of eco-critical art that reflects the challenges of our time. In the context of disaster recovery, projects such as these invite creative and collaborative approaches to rebuilding and bring a sense of hope to the community. They challenge us to reconsider the need to 'get back to normal' and ask us to be active participants in the communities we are engaged in.

SITE LAB was delivered over 51 days, commissioning six artists to make five public artworks. The project reached 6,722 people and engaged 253 participants at 11 public programs. SITE LAB is testament to the need for non-traditional commissioning models, especially in recovery contexts, to present contemporary art practices that prioritise experimentation and to share diverse public programming beyond the 'come and listen' model to attract meaningful engagement.

There is a clear appetite in the regions for temporary public art and audiences want more activations of unused spaces like the Woodlark St site in the future. There is an urgent need for local government bodies, in particular those navigating disaster recovery, to reduce the barriers for utilising public spaces. Temporary public art is a successful avenue for providing a renewed confidence in the CBD post floods, as it has the potential to instil a sense of a renewed curiosity and encounter in our civic spaces.

SITE LAB encouraged new ways of working in public space and invited communities in recovery to be active participants in how our shared spaces look and feel.

Projects of a similar nature in the future need to consider how our communities interact and create impactful and meaningful connections with the artists, artworks and sites that are presented in.

Appendices

APPENDIX A – CURATORIAL OBJECTIVES

Arts Northern Rivers and Lismore Regional Gallery developed and delivered this program in alignment with the following Curatorial Objectives:

First Nations

Support First Nations artists and communities to celebrate Indigenous stories, histories and culture. Strengthen self-determination, promote presence and support the cultural continuation of Bundjalung, Yaegl and Githabul storytelling, language and practices.

Access & inclusion

Commission artworks that reflect our communities by supporting artists of diverse abilities, races, genders, cultures and backgrounds. Develop artworks and arts experiences that are accessible to broad audiences.

Creative recovery & the provision of hope

Offer a non-traditional, open-brief commissioning model in the wake of creative recovery to build the capacity of the local arts and cultural sector. Deliver contemporary art as a conduit for hope and assist in the imaginative recovery of our flood-affected communities. Prioritise care practices and nurture the creative ambitions of artists via flexible project development, mentorship and direct support. Provide opportunities for artists to connect with and develop new audiences through collective experience.

Contemporary, site-responsive practices

Support Australian artists to critically respond to the site, situation and circumstance of public space. Develop spatial encounters and creative experiences that physically and conceptually intervene in non-traditional presentation spaces. Connect with the cultural, social, environmental, contemporary and/or historical contexts of our region.

Experimentation & critical discussion

Consider public space as a LAB/testing ground for real-time experimentation, creative collaboration and site-based research. Engage audiences in everyday life and invite critical discussion via new spatial encounters. Commission dynamic and innovative artworks in public space that pushes boundaries across development and presentation methods, research, community engagement, material choices, digital outcomes or intangible mediums such as sound or smell.

APPENDIX B – CURATORIAL OBJECTIVES

Artists and collectives were invited to submit an expression of interest (EOI) via an online application form, which will include:

- 6-10 examples of previous work i.e. images (up to 10mb total), video work (up to 10 minutes total) and/or hyperlinks to digital platforms
- Up to 800 words about your practice, how it extends to public space and how it aligns with at least one of the SITE LAB Curatorial Objectives
- Brief outline of site interests i.e. indicate your interests in public space. This may include a location in the Northern Rivers and/or any specific presentation interests i.e. a green space, an unused building, a billboard
- Indicative budget
- Artist CV

Deadline – 28 September 2022

For application support or any questions regarding the program, please contact Arts Northern Rivers Project Manager, Grace Dewar: grace@artsnorthernrivers.com.au

SELECTION PROCESS

A panel of respected arts professionals with local connections and experience in art in public space will assess the EOI applications in response to the selection criteria.

#	SELECTION CRITERIA	WEIGHTING
1	Artistic experience and excellence and ability to create contemporary artworks	40%
2	Suitability of practice in public space/temporary activations	30%
3	Connection to the Curatorial Objectives	30%

APPENDIX C – DIGITAL APPLICATION

1. Contact Details

Name Address Email Address Phone Number

2. Which commissioning stream are you applying for?

Mentored Projects (up to \$15,000) Open Projects (up to \$20,000)

3. Please indicate any target group/s you identify with

First Nations Person with a disability Culturally and linguistically diverse person Young person (under 30 years) None of the above

4. Which of the Curatorial Objectives do you align with?

First Nations Access & inclusion Creative recovery & the provision of hope Contemporary, site-responsive practices Experimentation & critical discussion

5. What is your primary art form? (up to 50 words)

List the discipline/s you work in i.e. sculpture, installation, digital media, socially engaged practice.

6. Outline of your practice (up to 800 words)

Give an overview of your practice, how it extends to public space and how it aligns with at least one of the Curatorial Objectives.

7. Describe your connection to the Northern Rivers as a place to develop and present new work. If you are a visiting artist, please demonstrate links/ understandings of the experience of the Northern Rivers context. (up to 200 words)

8. What are your site interests? Indicate your interests in public space. i.e. a green space, an unused building, a billboard. This may include a location in the Northern Rivers and/or any specific presentation interests. (up to 200 words)

9. Budget

Provide a brief indicative budget showing how the commission fee will be expended i.e. concept design, professional artist fees, production/presentation costs, insurances etc.

10. Artist CV (up to 2 pages)

11. Examples of your previous work. 6-10 images (up to 10mb total) or video work (up to 10 minutes total).

12. Please list your website, hyperlinks to relevant projects and/or social media channels, if applicable.