

*5 Years*

The Art Factory

Wagga Wagga Art Gallery

30 January – 4 April 2021

## Opening Speech



Isobel Lambert



Leanne Dyer



Sarah McEwan

## PAST I SARAH

Hi, my name is Sarah McEwan and I'm so pleased to be here tonight with Isobel, Leanne and the Art Factory crew to support this exhibition celebrating five years of the studio. I love that the *5 Years* exhibition is at Wagga Wagga Art Gallery because they are deeply part of the foundations of this Studio, as I will explain to you.

Back in 2010, when I worked at Eastern Riverina Arts doing Projects and Communications, I was asked to be on a local disability advisory group, with the aim of supporting local service providers to consider contemporary art practice within their day programs.

This was a wonderful group of staff from Kurrajong, Riverina Community College and Sunflower House – it was the beginning of the development towards the Art Factory.

From this group, we explored supported studios in regional environments and what that looked like. This led us to devise a project called *8 Artists* in partnership with Kurrajong, Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, IDEAS, Accessible Arts, Eastern Riverina Arts and supported by Create NSW. Four outstanding artists from Kurrajong were paired with four local contemporary artists to make new work. The exhibition at Wagga Wagga Art Gallery in 2013 featured Jacqui Meyers, Juju Roche, Kellie Hulm, Angela Coombs Matthews, Scott Lea, Vic McEwan, Wayne Emerson and Jeff McCann – it was an outstanding success. The project was actually documented by Chris Orchard, so it is a lovely circle that these exhibitions are sitting alongside each other in the gallery at the moment.

*8 Artists* demonstrated to us that a supported studio would work in Wagga Wagga and that learning disabled artists in our region needed a place to explore their practice professionally.

In 2016 the Art Factory was born.

I worked to establish the Studio with Leanne and had a fabulous two years working there alongside James Farley as Studio Supervisor and seven incredible artists. It is absolutely heart-warming for me to see the studio now supporting 36 artists in Wagga Wagga and 8 artists in Temora!!

The Art Factory has been made possible because of the web of community support that has been built over the last 11 years. The care, love and effort of so, so many people is embedded into the foundations of this place, that represents so many progressive ideas around who can make and access culture.

## **PRESENT | ISOBEL**

Welcome everybody to our art exhibition. My name is Isobel Lambert and I'm an artist in this exhibition. It makes me feel happy, honoured, proud and excited to be showing my work that I've created.

This year at the Art Factory we've got heaps of exhibitions on in Coolamon, Temora, Wagga, Canberra and online. You'll be able to see our work at the RCC Gallery, Rabbit Books, Temora Rural Museum, the Cadell Markets, the Belconnen Arts Centre and the Up-2-Date Store.

We'll be collaborating with Platform to present a series of workshops; we're collaborating with Kalinda School and Griffith Regional Art Gallery to make new work; we'll be presenting a six-part radio drama with the School of Arts and Theatre; and giving a presentation at a national conference about our work.

We'll be road tripping to Canberra, Albury, Temora and Griffith to support the work we're making this year.

Keep an eye on our Insta, Facebook, website or e-news so you know all of our adventures in 2021.

## **FUTURE | LEANNE**

My name is Leanne Dyer and I'm the Art Factory Co-ordinator from Riverina Community College. I work alongside a talented team of contemporary artists Jordy Bos as the Studio Supervisor in Wagga Wagga and Angela Coombs Matthews as Studio Supervisor in Temora; and Elaine Camlin, Kerrie Rudd and Leigh Hewitt as Arts Workers.

Sarah has spoken about the past, and Isobel has spoken about the present, and I am going to speak about the future.

Our aim for the future is to increase the visibility of the Studio to the wider Riverina Community and beyond, so that our artists have a real presence and impact within the contemporary art world.

As you know, the Art Factory is a self-directed practice, and our role is to support the ambitions of our artists.

As Sarah demonstrated, our foundations are built on deep partnerships working towards social change. We would like to build on this momentum to have a wider impact in the contemporary art world. We believe a number of our artists have prolific careers and want people to engage with them as peers.

With continued community engagement, we see how we can all build social cohesion through our shared love of the arts and arts practice.