



8 Artists

Wayne Emerson + Jeff McCann
Angela Coombs Matthews + Kellie Hulm
Vic McEwan + Scott Lea
Jacqui Meyers + Julia Davies

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www.8artists.net
www.easternriverinaarts.org.au
www.wagga.nsw.gov.au/art-gallery

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One [detail]



8 Artists

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Wagga Wagga Art Gallery



foreword

The Riverina is full of creative people.

On still days you can hear the hum and buzz of the collective imagination ticking and turning with new ideas. The vast horizons and clean air make this environment so conducive for creative output. In my position at Eastern Riverina Arts I have the pleasure of continual conversations with artists and arts lovers who are working to create this hum and buzz.

8Artists was born through listening and from many conversations.

It's about a deeper conversation between artists with and without disability in the Riverina. It's about artists working together to explore each others' visual language to create something new and interesting.

At the moment there is a clear shift internationally in how disability arts is being presented. Amongst this there are amazing Australian artists developing, devising and participating in professional practice who are recognised for their outstanding ability and unique insight.

8Artists is a part of this shifting movement by presenting a contemporary art exhibition with

exciting new work from emerging and established artists.

Over the past 10 months it has been a slow dance in four vignettes; a proposal, an exchange, the creation and finally exhibition.

The artists were initially brought together for their similar sensibility or complimentary practice and over the duration of the project the two artists continued working together because they liked the discoveries made through collaborating. The entire process can be viewed at www.8artists.net.

It has been a very easy journey working with Wayne, Jeff, Angela, Kellie, Vic, Scott, Jacqui and Julia, but that's not surprising.

Individually they are all very humble and live their desire to make and create. There have been many people who have supported the artists and project along the way and we thank you. But right now it's time to enjoy the beautiful art, flick through the catalogue and have a little slow dance with your eyes.

Sarah McEwan
Curator of 8Artists

“
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”

Wagga Wagga Art Gallery is proud to be presenting **8 Artists**, a project of great significance for Wagga Wagga's creative community. This exhibition breaks new ground in exploring collaboration between artists with and without disability, and it has been a pleasure, and a privilege, for us to support the artists as their works have evolved throughout the process of exchange and development.

Although the artists involved in this exhibition have all come from different backgrounds, with different styles, techniques and ways of making, their shared

passion for their work, and their commitment to the endeavour, have ensured the success of their collaboration. The Gallery congratulates the artists for their joint achievement, and we also thank Eastern Riverina Arts, the staff and supporters who have put so much into this project for providing us with the opportunity to showcase the vision and talent of these **8 Artists**.

Stephen Payne
Manager, Wagga Wagga Art Gallery



Jacqui Meyers + Julia Davies *Patterns for Sister* [detail]

on collaboration

“One of the ways I have learnt a lot of artistic processes and techniques is via collaboration, to see someone from another discipline respond to the same stimuli. I love to learn how other people work and think; sometimes you take some of what you learn with you into future projects.”¹

Many acclaimed Australian artists have chosen collaborative partnerships to produce seminal artworks. A celebrated example is the Sculptor Robert Klippel’s collaboration with the Surrealist Painter James Gleeson *No 35 Madame Sophie Sesostoris (a pre-raphaelite satire)* (1947-1948). This modernist sculpture was produced in London, and is now in the collection of the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

When viewed, the work clearly displays what benefits the collaborative process can have in the production of an artwork. It is evident that each of the artists intrinsically uses their individual disciplines in the realisation of the artwork, but stylistically we do not encounter an artwork that is pulled into equilibrium by conflicting styles, methods or concepts. It is the opposite; we view a highly resolved, well-executed artwork and by collaborating the artists produce an artwork that is ‘something more’ than what can be found as exemplar works in their individual oeuvres’.

So potent is this ‘something more’ that many contemporary Australian artists predominately only work in collaboration. Key examples are the Melbourne based painters Lyndall Brown (1961) & Charles Green (1953) who find strength “in the sharing of ideas and the blurring of the individual hand and personal identity”.² This partnership has yielded many laudable paintings. The quality of the artists’ work is evident in their 2007 commission to the Australia War Memorial as Official War Artists. Another example of contemporary Australian artists working

collaboratively over the past decade are Sean Cordeiro and Claire Healy. For this artist couple, collaboration is evident as a way of working around conceptual and technical hurdles which may discourage artists working in isolation.

So how does the process of collaboration work? What is the potential or potent essence behind collaboration? And finally, why do so many contemporary artists employ it in the creation of their artworks? In a microcosm, this essay will explore some of these themes by interrogating the collaborative process of the artists found in the 8 Artists exhibition and analysing their artistic practice.

“
**we are
going to
paint and
see what
comes out**
”

For many artists their studio can be a sanctuary. It can provide security and serenity, a place of contemplation and a place of creativity. During the 8 Artists studio residency, this is exactly how Angela Coombs Matthews and Kellie Hulm employed their studio-time. During the development of this collaborative partnership, both artists discovered that not only did they have similar styles of mark making, but also similar qualities in their personalities.

In an interview with Coombs Matthews, she expressed *“I really enjoyed the similar style of mark making we both had, and the way I responded to someone else’s marks and lines”*.³ The artists

would often generate artwork in the studio without relying on verbal communication.

“We use verbal and non-verbal forms of communication, as well as responding to each other’s marks. If Kellie asks me what we are doing today, I would say, we are going to paint and see what comes out; it’s an intuitive process”.⁴

When we view the artworks produced by this collaboration, we



Vic McEwan + Scott Lea *Remembrance Room* [video still]

can find a subtle, delicate interplay between two visual languages. The compositions have a conversational, lyrical quality. Just like conversations, there are points in time and space, of intensity and calmness. Moments when little is spoken and moments when the conversation intensifies, where people talk over-the-top of each other, expressing their views and ideas.

Studio based processes are also of interest to the collaboration between Jeff McCann and Wayne Emerson. Within this working dynamic, Emerson is the established artist with an exhibition history that covers 30 years. For McCann, a young artist, designer and post-graduate student at the College Of Fine Art, Sydney, Emerson's working methods are of an inspirational nature. McCann gives an explanation in the following statement:

*"I think it's his [Wayne's] confidence, the way he says yes, this is what we need, or no I don't like that. You can tell he is doing what he loves and what he is really good at also. In this collaboration Wayne is the professional and I am certainly the emerging artist. It's definitely a interesting connection we have."*⁵

McCann also can provide us with an articulate perceptive into the ebb-and-flow of influence and leadership that may occur within a collaborative relationship. As all artists will work towards utilising their own unique attributes and skills, they will also have their own vision on how the artworks may be resolved. This process of negotiation, cooperation and the sharing of ideas is where the exceptional forces behind collaborating are forged.

"The sway of power in our collaboration is always changing. Someone might come up with the concept and the other person might be the one to bring it to realisation. I am very good with fine repetitive tasks and designing pattern work. Wayne is very good at the finessing and putting finishing touches to works, adding minor but critical detail that completes the works. We both have our strengths and I think we are both happy to just

*work towards our strengths. Trust is important and Wayne and I both trust each other and our judgment as artists and designers"*⁶

The composite images manufactured by both McCann and Emerson have gregarious, rambling and jovial qualities. As the viewer journeys through the images we find; pets in coats, houses, mythical beasts, gold bars, postmen and Wayne in a spacesuit. All the while we find these visual anchor-points encrusted in a winding garden of intricate, brightly coloured patterns and felted flowers found in relief.

Unlike the other artists in 8 Artists, Julia Davies and Jacqui Meyers have a long and close history in regards to arts practice. This collaborative partnership is between sisters. Meyers and her younger sister Davies, not only have an intrinsic understanding of each other's arts practice, but also have been making art together both in the Riverina and Sydney. In conversation, Davies affirmed that: *"we have always practiced creative measures together, I have had a studio for the past ten years and when Jacqui comes to visit in Sydney, or when I am at home we are often painting or drawing"*⁷.

This sister duo has taken an autobiographical approach to creating their artworks for this exhibition. *"For our final body of work we have decided on a mutual concept which is a map of memories from our family life. We have painted particular memories but it's still evolving within our styles"*⁸. During a conversation with Meyers she reaffirms this foundation in their artworks. *"Our artwork is about our family: Mum;*

*Dad; Jim; Pop; Coral; Susie; Baby Jack; Mick and Kane. I have heaps of cousins, aunts and uncles from Melbourne, Geelong, Canberra and England"*⁹.

Davies also provides detail into their 'evolving style' and the power dynamic between the sisters when making art. *"When I suggest an idea to Jacqui she is fairly honest in her opinion of it. Within the collaborative process we are both leaders in different senses, the balance*

“
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”

of power is fairly even and there is a lot of humor involved".¹⁰ The artists worked tenderly on prefabricated tiles, found in many domestic environments. They used their studio-time to explore their own relationship to each other, their shared history and family life.

When asked about the artist-in-residency program, Meyers demonstrates her zeal for studio based arts practice and admiration for the project's principal partner, the Wagga Wagga Art Gallery. Meyers also gives perspective into what she considers to be the most resolved artworks the collaboration has yielded. *"I really like the mosaics that Julia and I made at the [Wagga Wagga] Art Gallery. It's a great place to work. Julia and I worked together for about 5 or 6 times"*.¹¹

The video and sound installation generated by Scott Lea and Vic McEwan may have the largest bias towards Conceptual Art of any artwork found in **8 Artists**. A

statement by McEwan exemplifies this. *"I like to work on concepts, the idea of sitting in a studio all day does not suit me, or suit my practice, but I do love experimenting"*.¹²

Unlike other artworks found within this exhibition, which have come to fruition via studio based exploration and processes, this collaboration has a very strong foundation in the message the artists intend to convey, the media chosen and the objects utilised in the installation.

The emotive intention behind the artwork is based on expressing grief. This poignant and touching installation has its genesis in the fact that both the artists, have recently lost strong male figures from their respective lives.

"The first strong connection we made was about grief. Scott had recently lost his grandfather and I, my own father. Then



Wayne Emerson + Jeff McCann *Animals* [detail]

when he sent me the sketchbook, it was full of pictures about his grandfather. I wrote back to him and said can we make a work about grief".¹³

A very tender relationship between Lea and his grandfather is presented via the digitally recorded dance performance that is superimposed on an image that contains Lea's grandfather in a domestic environment. Numinous, personal objects belonging to Lea's grandfather also sustain the conceptual basis of the installation. Lea's grandfather was a builder who had a large workshop. Lea began to draw his tools, cupboards and even his lawn bowls. The inclusion of a traditional Irish folk song *She Moved Through the Fair* (Trad.) alludes to McEwan's father, and folk-musician. This song, also based on grief caused by death, was frequently performed by McEwan's father at family functions and gatherings of friends. The artists' intention is to create an enclosed environment providing the viewer a calm and somewhat familiar environment to reflect on their own experiences of grief.

The artworks presented in this exhibition stand as testament to the perpetual fruitfulness the collaborative approach can yield. The artworks exemplify that collaboration is not a duality or binary system of creating an artwork, but more a shared singularity and vision where the artist's individual style, preferences and unique abilities are amalgamated into 'something more'.

In closing this essay, a statement by Jeff McCann perhaps sums up the totality of experiences each of the artists may have had in regards to their experiences working collaboratively on this project, developing challenging artworks and finally cultivating creative relationships.

*"I think when you are working with someone you have a fresh set of eyes looking at what you're doing and it's refreshing to have someone be honest about whether or not they like what you are doing as ultimately their ideas are for the benefit of your work. Ultimately it comes down to the relationship and respect you have with the person."*¹⁴

Raymond Wholohan

Endnotes:

¹ conversation with the Artist, Vic McEwan, April 2013.

² www.nga.gov.au

³ conversation with the Artist, Angela Coombs Matthews, April 2013.

⁴ ibid, Coombs Matthews.

⁵ conversation with the Artist, Jeff McCann, April 2013.

⁶ ibid McCann.

⁷ conversation with the Artist, Julia Davies, April 2013.

⁸ conversation with the Artist, Jacqui Meyers, April 2013.

⁹ op. cit. Davies.

¹⁰ op. cit. Meyers.

¹¹ ibid McEwan.

¹² op. cit. McEwan.

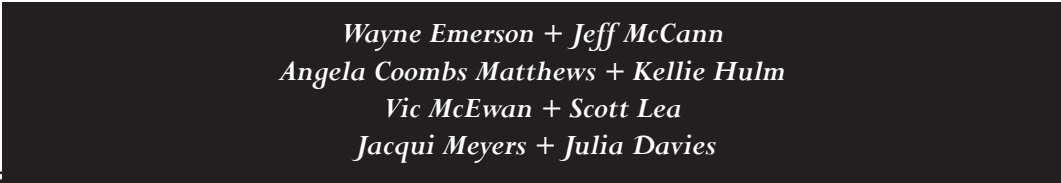
¹³ op. cit. McCann.








the artists



Wayne Emerson + Jeff McCann
Angela Coombs Matthews + Kellie Hulm
Vic McEwan + Scott Lea
Jacqui Meyers + Julia Davies



wayne and jeff

W: I met Jeff down in your office when we were swapping the book back and forward. He has good ideas for drawing and how to make flowers out of egg cartons. He talks about dogs and I talk about cats.

It's very good because Jeff knows I need to get up and walk around so my legs don't cramp up. It was good to work with Jeff, he has different ideas on how to put things together.

j: When I agreed to be a part of the 8 Artists project I was told that the person I would be collaborating with, Wayne, was an incredible artist and a wonderful storyteller. I remember our first meeting when we exchanged stories of where we had grown up, family anecdotes and our back catalogue of works. I distinctly remember thinking that we had a lot of parallels creatively, which excited me.

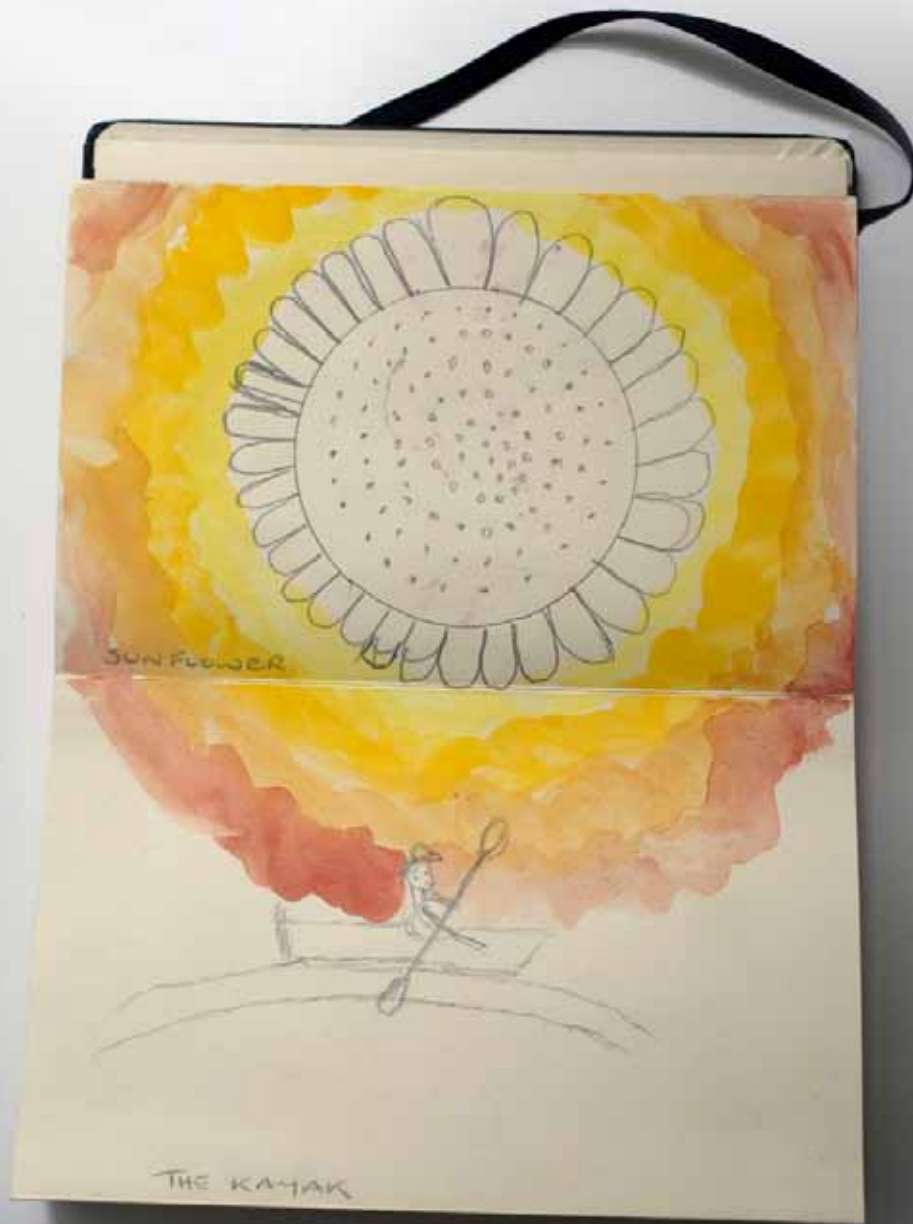
Since then, our relationship has grown and developed into a friendship; I no longer see Wayne as another fellow artist, maker and collaborator, but rather a mentor. As an emerging creative myself, I can only hope to have as long and successful career as Wayne does.

As collaborators I think it is our creative process and way of thinking that binds us together. We are both hands on people who like to try a broad range of art making practices (painting, drawing, textiles.) Wayne has a confidence with his mark and media that I love. He has the ability to understand when an artwork is finished before it's overworked, something that I can struggle with at times. He also has a great eye for finishing touches. I would often hear Wayne say, "You know what this needs to finish it off?" and more often than not he was spot on.

A collaborative process can be hard if you don't have trust in the other person, but very quickly I developed a trust in Wayne that allowed our work to flourish. During this process we would bring photographs into the studio to show each other places we had been or pets we have had. Week after week we would share new stories and get to know each other a little better through our craft.

Looking back over these past few months I couldn't have asked for a better collaborator. Being able to share ideas and stories with an artist like Wayne is an invaluable lesson, one that I will reflect upon for years to come with great fondness.





angela and kellie

a: It was through the Exchange phase of the project in November 2012 that I first met Kellie. After casual conversations, showing photographs and a creative workshop together, I knew that our collaboration would be an enjoyable, exciting and enriching experience.

The nature of our work individually and our quiet, easy-going personalities allowed us to connect through this special creative process. By collaborating on works at the same time, we responded to each other's marks and the way the marks were made.

We created work that portrays our contentment and being in the moment as well as our local Junee/Temora surroundings.

The large landscape diptychs and the portrait digital pieces represent a binding for Kellie and me. There is a coming together through two sheets of paper with layers and marks made by the two of us. There is a second coming together with the digitally merged, layered and abstracted drawings made by Kellie of me, and drawings made by me of Kellie.

Through collaborating with Kellie I really enjoyed seeing how she made marks, the qualities in her marks and how she responded to the marks I made. When I observed her painting or drawing over the top of my marks I felt that we were in a successful collaboration feeling at ease in each other's presence.

Apart from the collaboration time with Kellie, I appreciated the time we spent together shopping for art materials, having lunch and talking over coffee.

k: Through coming to work I met Angela. She is my friend.

I like painting and drawing with her.

I've learnt about drawing lines.





Angela Coombs Matthews + Kellie Hulm *Artist Book*

vic and scott

V: Scott and I first met in the office of Eastern Riverina Arts to discuss working on this project together. Before that we hadn't met although I had seen Scott perform in his Butoh dance group.

On our first meeting we discovered that we had both just lost someone important to us ... Scott having lost his grandfather and me having lost mand kept saying "Sorry...Sorry".

That is when we decided to make an artwork about this shared experience of exploring grief for a loved one.

Spending time with Scott has allowed me to learn about his idiosyncrasies. He likes lunch, and he likes dinner and he will often tell you what time it is and how long it is to his next meal. He is also a very busy person and each time we meet he is talking about the play he is in or a project he is doing.

Scott and I have worked very efficiently, and that is often how I like to work. We defined what it was that we wanted to make and then Scott did his thing and I did mine, and together they form this installation. Scott and I met a number of times to make this artwork and I look forward to seeing more of Scott's other activities such as performing and exhibiting his prints and paintings in the future.

S: We met here, yeah that's where it was.
Vic is alright.
Yeah dance, we dance at the gallery, it's fun.
Dance for Pa and he's gone.





Pa's Hammer



Jig Saw



Pa played lawn bowls



Pa's House

jacqui and julia

ja: Julia is my sister. Julia and I have a good relationship, like a good sister, good friends. We have a big future together and will make work together again. It was fantastic, joyful, excellent and wonderful working together with my sister.

ju: Jacqui and I are sisters who grew up together on a farm 22kms out of Wagga Wagga. We have an older brother and have always been close siblings. Jacqui will always be the older, more experienced sister and she'll remind me of that if she thinks I'm getting ahead of myself!

Jacqui is an inspirational woman. She's independent, clever, witty, loving, creative and incredibly caring and generous. She can make people laugh (or tear up with joy) with very few words. Jacqui has a reality about her that few people have... she speaks the utter truth.

These characteristics transfer across to her art which makes her works intriguing, and often humorous.

Collaborating together on 8 Artists has been the perfect excuse to hang out more. We feel very lucky to be part of this project and have enjoyed our time together, which has included trips to Wagga and Sydney to create this body of work. The process has been evolving and we've spent many hours on the phone and working individually as well as setting aside many weekends to get together to nut out the finer details. I think this map of images that represent us is a great way to express our memories and shared lives.





Jacqui Meyers + Julia Davies *Artist Book*





works

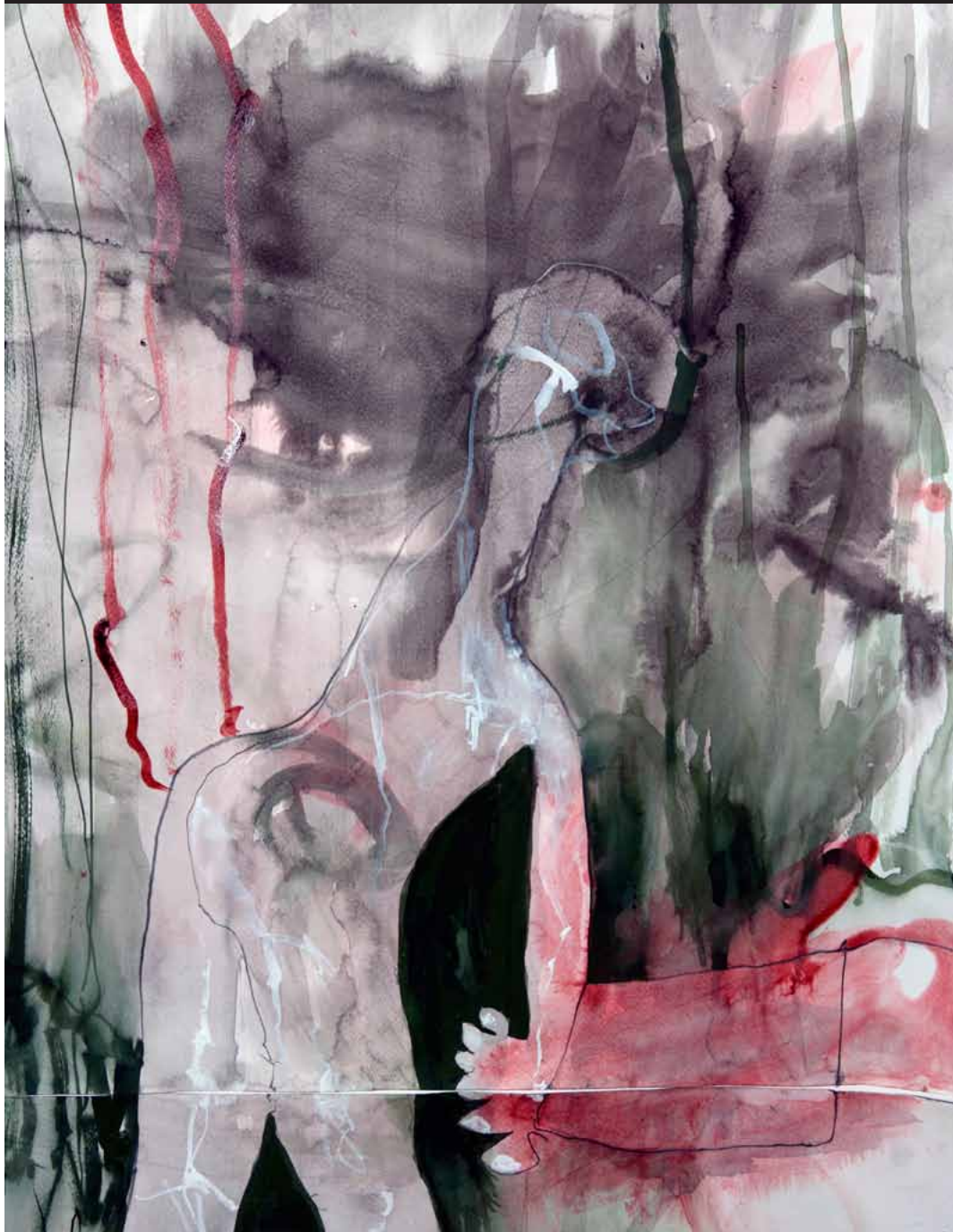




Wayne Emerson + Jeff McCann *Pets* [detail]



Wayne Emerson + Jeff McCann *Garden* [detail]



Angela Coombs Matthews + Kellie Hulm *Bush Moves* [detail]

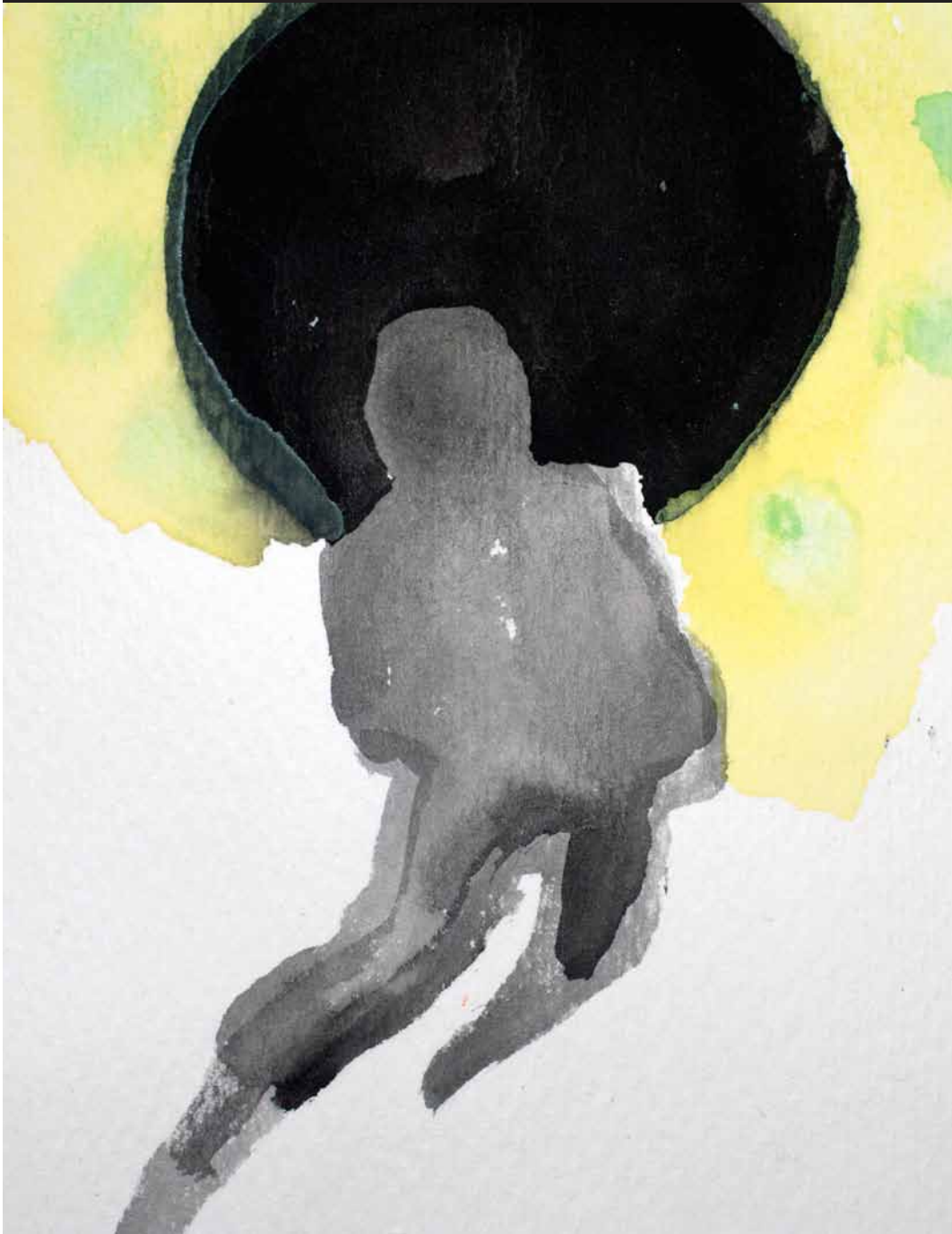


Angela Coombs Matthews + Kellie Hulm *Facescape Five*





Vic McEwan + Scott Lea *2 Dances* [video still]



Jacqui Meyers + Julia Davies *Patterns for Sister* [detail]



Jacqui Meyers + Julia Davies *Patterns for Sister* [detail]

list of works

Wayne Emerson + Jeff McCann

Animals, 2013, mixed media on cardboard, 157 x 96 cm.

Gardens 2013, mixed media on cardboard, 150 x 102 cm.

Pets 2013, mixed media on cardboard, 152 x 101 cm.

Vic McEwan + Scott Lea

Remembrance Room, 2013, video and found objects, dimensions variable.

2 Dances, 2012, video.

Jacqui Meyers + Julia Davies

Patterns for Sister, 2013 wall installation of mixed media on tiles and paper, dimensions variable

Angela Coombs Matthews + Kellie Hulm

Facescape One, 2013, giclée print, 36 x 23 cm.

Facescape Two, 2013, giclée print, 36 x 23 cm.

Facescape Three, 2013, giclée print, 36 x 23 cm.

Facescape Four, 2013, giclée print, 36 x 23 cm.

Facescape Five, 2013, giclée print, 36 x 23 cm.

Facescape Six, 2013, giclée print, 36 x 23 cm.

Reviving, 2013, mixed media on paper, 100 x 140 cm.

Mudmap, 2013, mixed media on paper, 70 x 200 cm.

End of Day, 2013, mixed media on paper, 140 x 100 cm.

Bush Moves, 2013, mixed media on paper, 200 x 70 cm.



Angela Coombs Matthews + Kellie Hulm *Facescape One* [detail]



the artists

Angela Coombs Matthews is a painter, printmaker and photographer who has exhibited across the Riverina and Canberra. Most recently she was the 2011 winner of the Casella Art Prize, Griffith Regional Art Gallery.

Kellie Hulm is a painter, photographer, performer and ceramic artist who has exhibited work for the past three years in Art to Crow About. Kellie has been involved in the All Abilities Theatre Company as a performer.

Jeff McCann is an emerging contemporary product designer and illustrator who has his own label, Cardigan Threads Collective which focuses on handmade, sustainable design and craftsmanship, utilising discarded or recycled material, cardboard, fabrics and old clothing.

Wayne Emerson is a painter and textile artist who has exhibited work for more than 30 years in Wagga Wagga.

Vic McEwan is a performance maker, musician and sound artist who is interested in site-specific installation and performances in unusual spaces. He is also artistic director of The Cad Factory, an artist-run space in Birrego.

Scott Lea is a dancer and member of the Butoh inspired Twilight Dance Group.

Julia Davies is a visual artist who works with paint, collage, ink and drawing. Julia also works in jewellery design and installation, predominately with resin. In 2011 she held a solo exhibition Elements at Wagga Wagga Art Gallery.

Jacqui Meyers is a multi-disciplinary artist who is interested in painting, drawing, textiles, paper craft and performing. Jacqui has played leading roles in the All Ability Theatre Company productions and is featured in the short film, Love Ability created by Zeb Schulz, Real Art Works.

acknowledgements

8 Artists is a partnership between:



Eastern Riverina Arts is one of fourteen Regional Arts Development boards in NSW providing strategic direction for sustainable arts and cultural development. Eastern Riverina Arts aims to connect artists, communities and Councils to foster a vibrant and creative region.

Wagga Wagga Art Gallery is a cultural facility of Wagga Wagga City Council, providing integrated visual arts and cultural services to the community of Wagga Wagga and the Riverina by helping to promote a rich and diverse regional culture.

Skills Options is a division of Kurrajong Waratah providing support to adults with disability to explore and develop their creative expression.

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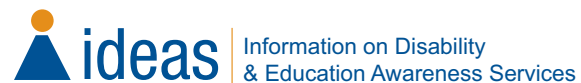
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Eastern Riverina Arts is the peak body for arts and cultural development across the Eastern Riverina. We acknowledge the support of our member Councils, Bland, Coolamon, Cootamundra, Harden, Lockhart, Temora, Tumbarumba, Tumut, Urana, Wagga Wagga and Young.

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