

# ARTFORM

SUBIAGO / 2025/26



culture / creativity / connection

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## Welcome to ARTFORM Subiaco, a showcase of arts, culture and design in Subiaco, Western Australia.

Uncover the narratives behind recently commissioned public artworks and delve into the lives of local creators, makers and producers.

'ARTFORM' surveys the people, places and stories redefining Subiaco's cultural landscape.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT *of* COUNTRY

The City of Subiaco acknowledges the Whadjuk Noongar people as the traditional custodians of the area.

We recognise their cultural connection to the land and waterways of Subiaco, and their continuing contribution to our City.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people should be aware that this publication contains names and images of deceased persons.



# SEE SUBIACO

#### COVER IMAGE

*Space of Peace* by Wild Drawing, 2024 | 36 Rowland Road

#### ARTIST STATEMENT

With 92 countries currently involved in conflict across their borders - the highest number since World War II - it is time to recall that real peace is more than the absence of war; it is an absence of the causes of war.

#### ABOVE IMAGE

*Checkers* by Sofles, 2024 | Sagar Lane

# ARTFORM

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*Flaming Galahs, Curtis Hylton 2024*



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# Art for the PEOPLE

**The No More Blank Walls Subi project has opened the public's eyes to the transformational possibilities of murals in unexpected urban spaces. Mark Naglazas takes a stroll around Subiaco.**

When we think of an artist at work we usually imagine them happy in their solitude - the writer in a garret or cottage far away from noise and distraction, the musician in a rehearsal room, the painter or sculptor in a studio surrounded only by the tools of their trade.

So the idea of a festival in which the public is invited to watch a group of street artists cast their creations onto city walls would seem like a recipe for tension, for drama, for nervous breakdowns, for explosions!

Surprisingly, there were no impassioned eruptions during No More Blank Walls Subi, a 10-day festival held in October 2024 that not only put the public into public art but has left the city with one of the most interesting visual landscapes of any urban centre in Western Australia.

According to Will Clark of Blank Walls, a Perth and London-based arts consultancy dedicated to connecting street artists with clients in the private and public sectors, the festival was a wonderful community occasion, with local, interstate and

*Whimsey on Walmsley, Graeme Miles Richards, 2024*



Will Clark

“  
**Subiaco was a fantastic place to hold the event. It is like a village. You can wander about and make a discovery around every corner.**

~ Will Clark, *Blank Walls*

overseas muralists enjoying the experience of creating in front of crowds and taking part in a series of related events.

“It was very cool,” says Clark as he takes me on a walkthrough Subiaco and points out the walls that have been transformed by artists such as Curtis Hylton from London and Wild Drawing from Greece and Sofles, Danby, HWJ and Fintan Magee from the East Coast as well as highly regarded locals such as Graeme Miles Richards and Bec Abdy.

“For 10 days, Subiaco was taken over by a group of amazing artists whose work is now available for anyone to see for years to come. Subiaco was a fantastic place to hold the event. It is like a village. You can wander about and make a discovery around every corner,” says Clark as we strolled from one eye-popping mural to the next.

The City of Subiaco originally asked for submissions to create seven pieces. Clark, and co-founder Jerome Davenport, boldly upped that ante and suggested expanding the number to as many walls as they could find and to build a festival around it, as they had done in South Hedland and Mount Lawley.

The council bought the idea for the festival, which was christened No More Blank Walls Subi, and thousands of people descended on the city in mid-October last year to watch the artists at work, attend artists talks, join tours, take part in paint-and-sip nights and, most spectacular of all, watch a live mural battle between street art superstar Sofles and Perth’s spray can powerhouse ArtByRow.

One of the reasons why Clark proposed a street art festival was the opportunity to work with his idols in genre, such as Brisbane-born Sofles (aka Russell Fenn), one of the biggest names in the world in street art whose work graces the walls in cities such as Berlin, Copenhagen, Oslo, Las Vegas, and Los Angeles.

“It was amazing to have someone of his talent and standing working here in Western Australia. Local artists also got to spend time with him, which is one of the benefits of festivals. It’s not just about artist’s showing off their works. It is also about the opportunities it gives for artists connecting with other artists.”

Clark takes a lot of pride in his work as he is helping street artists to earn a living and work full time at what they love.

“Corporate people don’t know how to contact an artist directly or don’t understand the field, so they come to us. The artists have our trust, so we can make those connections. With a decent commission or taking part in a festival like No More Blank Walls muralists can stop being a part-time bricklayer or spending their days in offices and focus on their art,” says Clark.

“We make sure that artists get paid what they are supposed to be paid. Before our festival came along the only payment for their work that many artists received was paints. Our is probably the highest paying festival in the world,” says Clark.

Subiaco mayor David McMullen says he was thrilled the city could become a canvas for a group of incredibly talented local, East Coast and international artists.

“Public art breaks down barriers,” argues McMullen. “It makes arts and culture accessible for anyone to enjoy, for free at their leisure. It can reinvigorate how we see our local surrounds; and by creating new landmarks in our neighbourhoods, we can boost visitation and foot traffic, with flow on effects for local businesses.

“No More Blank Walls Subi has successfully enhanced our city’s aesthetic, elevated our reputation as a hub for culture and creativity and injected moments of interest and curiosity into everyday life, as all good street art should.”

When Clark and his team were looking for an artist for Walmsley Lane, the cute walkway off Rokeby Road named after Subiaco stationmaster West Walmsley (1915-1922), the first muralist that sprung to their mind was veteran Bayswater muralist Graeme Miles Richards.

Will and the Blank Walls team had seen Miles’ stunning work on the exterior of the Fremantle furniture store East West Design, in which he uses the trompe l’oeil style to create the impression of a series of old-school Parisian shop fronts on one side and various beach scenarios on the other and felt he would be perfect for Walmsley Lane.

“Graeme’s work is full of detail and demands to be seen up close, so he was the natural choice for this beautiful, intimate space. Every time you walk past Graeme’s piece you see something new. It takes you on a journey,” says Clark.

Fortunately, on the day that Clark took me on the No More Blank Wall tour Richardson had returned to Walmsley Lane and was touching up the work, which is centred on an astronaut and his astro-dog and an array of objects flying over a canola field, Wizard of Oz-style.

“The wall belongs to Bar Amelie and they wanted something whimsical to match the movie. Anyone who knows the film can see a few references, such as the shoes and the gnome who goes off on an adventure around the world,” says Richards in between brush strokes.

The New Zealand-born former graphic designer says he was drawn to murals because of both the scale and the way it transforms a space. He also loves getting out of the studio and into the streets, where he really enjoys engaging with those who stop for a stickybeak.

“Most people are fantastic,” says Richards. “The

East West Design job I did in Fremantle took a year, so the same people would pass every day. There was one lady, Anthea, who would bring me cups of coffee and croissants. She had an ulterior motive, of course. She had a poodle she wanted to put in the mural.”

Richards admits that the spaceman was an overhang from another project in Leederville that didn’t happen. And the canola field was a response to the time he spent in the Wheatbelt working on projects. “I was going back and forth a lot and those yellow fields just stayed with me,” remembers Richards.

Richards has enjoyed working with Blank Walls and the City of Subiaco, which he says are much more switched on to the arts than when he began as a

muralist back in the 1980s.

“It was terrible back then,” Richards remembers. “They were not supportive of public art in the way councils are now. When I first started the only commissions you got were from restaurants and hair salons.

“Now councils are heavily involved in public art. You just have to go on a stroll through Subiaco and you will see wonderful work everywhere. I love the piece around the corner above the post office [*The Boy on the Red Bike* by the American artist Evocal].

“It draws people into the area. People even make a well-known mural a place where they met. It can become iconic.”



# Eat, pray, art

Subiaco offers many opportunities for creative enrichment, from candle-making to sewing a new outfit from scratch or painting a new teapot.

BY Gail Williams



Forget Mel Robbins and her self-help book sensation, *Let Them*.

If you are in Subiaco and seeking change in your life there are alternatives to the step-by-step bestselling guide on how to discover self-love and protection.

A satisfying and productive journey to emotional wellbeing is right under our noses in outlets dotted throughout our suburb.

This route to happiness comes in three words. Arts. And. Crafts.

Who would have thought that the meditative influence of knitting socks, painting a breakfast bowl, writing a memoir, baking a loaf of bread or potting geraniums would hold the key to life satisfaction?

Researchers who have done countless studies, that's who. And they all extol the theory that people who engage with creative arts and crafts have greater levels of happiness, satisfaction and a feeling that life is worthwhile.

Winston Churchill knew that. Without getting his "black dog" under control by putting paint to canvas, it's possible he may never have led Britain to victory in World War II.

Ryan Gosling, Russell Crowe and Sarah Jessica Parker all know the meditative effects of knit one, purl one, while on set.

Closer to home, celebrated chef Joel

Valvasori while away the hours with his paintbrush to soothing - and artistic - effect after a busy night in his Lulu La Delizia restaurant.

"Painting for me is a great way to escape from the rigours of life and really immerse myself into something that requires so much focus that I find myself getting lost in it for days and even weeks at a time," he says.

The soothing sensation transfers to food on the plate in his eatery.

We can thank COVID for triggering a global renaissance of craft activities. We have seen the price of handmade pastries skyrocket thanks to beautifully packaged products going viral on Instagram.

Locally, small-scale creatives are spreading the serotonin throughout Subiaco in cottage industries such as The Painted Teapot, Studio Subi, Bespoke Blends candles, Infi Art, and Studio Thimbles sewing classes.

They're among the 154,847 small businesses (non-employed businesses) making up 62 per cent of the small business sector in Western Australia.

Each creative behind them has a story to tell about their own labour of love, passion and ultimate satisfaction in following their dreams.



Caduree Candles

## Caduree Candles

[caduree.com](http://caduree.com)

Meet Annabel Cheong, who gave up a highly paid, successful career as a chemical engineer with Chevron Corporation to turn her hand – and knowledge of chemistry – to producing beautiful made soy wax candles with names like Bushwalk, Minty Morning, Rokeby Rose, The Dress and Soiree.

Working from her Subiaco home studio, her online company - Caduree Candles - has found a niche market in supplying exquisite, classic tapered and ribbed pillar candles for weddings and other special events.

Listening to the self-taught artisan describe her techniques of blending essential oils, melting, stirring and wicking makes it sound like a romantic and easy workday.

Cheong laughs at the suggestion.

“I wouldn’t say it’s easy,” she says. “There are pros and cons. Working for a company is easy. You have colleagues to bounce things off, and company. But I also see some former workers in corporations suffering from suffocation and not reaching their full potential even though they are making a lot of money. I find it very therapeutic to make my candles. It’s really cool.”

Cheong’s career change came about when she was working fly-in fly-out and finding herself with 28 days back home to do something different to her day job.

“At school, I really enjoyed maths,” she says. “So it was natural for me to go into engineering. But on my days off I wanted to do something creative. I did an interior design course and learnt about small business, and I studied data. I began playing around with business ideas. That was back in 2021.”

Her chemistry knowledge and her perfectionist nature stepped in and she began experimenting with waxes, wicks and essential oils teaching herself on Youtube.

One, melt the wax. Two, stir in scent. Three, wick your candle. Four, let the candles cool.

Is that how it works?

Um, sort of.

Cheong says she spent hours tapping into her curiosity and scientific method, gleaned from her former profession, to familiarise herself with flash pointing, scent throwing, burn rates and melting points.

“There is lots of chemistry involved,” she says. “Which wax do I use, which one is more brittle, what temperature I need to pour at. Basically, I do a lot of experimenting with temperature. I am very finicky.”

Four years on, she is churning out around 100 candles a week and is earning a reasonable living with her online business, working with wedding planners and exhibiting at wedding expos and on photo shoots.

She couldn’t be happier.

“Creating something unique and earning a living out of it, is great,” she says. “Financially it is still a passion project. But I would recommend it for people

wanting to do something individual and expressing their own ideas in moving away from the corporate world which is what my generation have grown up with, is liberating.”

If you want to feel like you have had a deep tissue massage while discovering a hidden talent here are some other places to head to in Subiaco.

## Bespoke Blends

*162G Rokeby Road, Subiaco*

[bespokeblends.com.au](http://bespokeblends.com.au)

Jane Hough, the charming chandler (that’s the name for a candle maker) is the talented artist who shares her techniques online and in perfume making workshops in a studio above Citizens of Brew Ha.

Hough is a self-confessed candle obsessive and she, too, has a background in science, using that knowledge to create unique candle aromas around the other things she loves – cocktails, tea and gemstones.

The harsh petrochemicals and synthetic fragrance found in mass produced products was one of the reasons she started making her own.

Working with her son she began designing, and now the small business transports candles around Australia in beautiful little bowls, vases, teacups and anything they think makes a good candle container.

She has a series of upcoming perfume making workshops and you can check out her website for tips on how to make candles at home.



Bespoke Blends



Bespoke Blends



The Painted Teapot



The Painted Teapot



The Painted Teapot

**The Painted Teapot**

95 Rokeby Road, Subiaco  
 thepaintedteapot.com.au

If you want to really get to know someone, invest \$8 and a bit extra in some pottery – an espresso cup, a teapot, a vase or a flowerpot. Then sit beside that person for a couple of meditative hours, listening to their stories as you engage in parallel play.

That’s when the truth comes out. And that’s not

the only benefit. Another is watching magic as an everyday piece of pottery takes on a life all of its own, all thanks to your burst of creativity.

It’s not surprising that this little old shop is often crammed with people of all ages, getting in touch with their inner creative with their friends, kids or significant others.

And, add a bit of sipping to the painting and the teapot puns are as sharp as a tea kettle’s whistle!



Noodle Soup Digital



Infi Art

**Infi Art**

Shop 8 Forrest Walk, Subiaco  
 infinitasart.com

When an artist hub describes itself as a place to explore creativity in a supportive and inclusive community to encourage healing, inspiration and joy it makes you want to stick your head in the door at Forrest Walk to discover more.

If you do venture in, you'll find diverse groups of

enraptured people immersed in the moment.

That's the way things serenely roll in workshops under the guidance of renowned artist, Guibin Cong, whose vision to serve as a vibrant hub for artistic expression through exhibitions, workshops, and training is realised in the happy space.

Cong's works have been exhibited around the world, and he has won numerous awards in China.

Art, he says, is a universal language that

transcends boundaries and connects people deeply and meaningfully regardless of background or culture.

It is also used as a therapeutic outlet, fostering inner peace and purpose through creative expression.

Their mission is to share the "eyes of an artist," making art accessible in daily life to enrich people's experiences with beauty, creativity, and joy.

All ages are welcome in workshops which cover birthday parties, team building activities, paint and sip events and jewellery making.

Come along and you might just find that boundless creativity allows an opening to unlimited possibilities of life.

Sigh, that's Nirvana.

**Noodle Soup Digital**

Hood Street is fast becoming Subi's coolest enclave. And things in the 'hood just got more awesome with the opening of Noodle Soup Digital.

To prove how cool they are, Noodle Soup Digital, has nothing to do with food – well, apart from turning alphabet soup into beautiful prose which ends up on Instagram and Tik Tok.

It is thanks to Yen Ling Tan and Ethan Wee – two huge foodies – who have combined their backgrounds in marketing and film making.

Now, we know your next question will be What Do They Do?



Studio Thimbles

Says Ling Tan: “We’re a video-first social media agency, helping brands stand out with scroll-stopping content. From strategy and production to management and reporting, we handle it all, creating video-driven social media that’s fun, effective, and built for the digital world.” Now that does sound like alphabet soup to me.

As for the name, Ling Tan says it comes from their love of food which the pair bonded over initially.

“We’re both huge foodies with a love of Malaysian food and noodle soups,” says Ling Tan.

“We keep social media straightforward, like your favourite instant noodles (but way more satisfying and with better results).”

### Studio Subi

294-296 Hay Street, Subiaco  
[studiosubi.com.au](http://studiosubi.com.au)

If you’ve ever longed to fold an origami rabbit or crochet an octopus, head to Studio Subi and there is a warm and welcoming teacher just waiting to offer a guiding hand.

Their expert team of tutors cover every artistic pursuit from A to Z. Well, from amigurumi (the craft of creating small, stuffed yarn creatures) to watercolour pencil tonal classes, anyway.

The lovely studio is also available for private group bookings, fundraisers and corporate events.

Victoria, who was a beginner, was impressed enough with her \$95 experience to share this review.

“This was so much fun. As a complete beginner it was a bit tough to get started - but the teacher was so patient and I got there in the end. It’s a fantastic venue, especially on Sundays when it’s so quiet.”

### Studio Thimbles

437 Hay Street, Subiaco  
[studiothimbles.com.au](http://studiothimbles.com.au)

There’s a certain shop window down at the west end of Hay Street that has smudge marks all over it. That’s

because passers by are so intrigued by the activity and sense of focus going on inside that they press their noses up to the windows and gaze in awe at the creative process at work.

Under the gentle tuition of Olga Abbott, a mining engineer who loves sewing, the students are learning how to turn flat pieces of fabric into three-dimensional wearable creations.

It all takes place in quiet contemplation with a soothing soundtrack of sewing machines purring.

Says Abbott: “I honestly believe that sewing is a lifelong skill useful for any household, whether you embark on a home decor project or a hand-made gift, clothing for yourself, your kids or just perform a simple alteration! For me, sewing is about taking time for myself from my busy schedule and losing myself to the art of creating.”

There’s classes and workshops for all ages and abilities starting with zipper pouches and drawstring backpacks through to do-it-yourself pyjamas.

As part of her commitment to creating a social and collaborative atmosphere for home sewers, Abbott welcomes those who drop in on her social sewing classes and bring their own projects. Each stitch is a stitch towards happiness.



Earthwise

### Subiaco Community Men's Shed

*Tom Dadour Community Centre:  
363 Bagot Road, Subiaco*

If you are a male, aged over 18 and would like to learn new skills, support your local community and make some new mates, you're invited to rock up to the Tom Dadour Community Centre between Monday and Thursday from 8.30am to 1pm and join in the fun.

There's woodworking, wood turning, metalwork and, sometimes, photography and computing. This is one place where the rapidly dying habit of dropping in is perfectly acceptable. Drop in and hone existing skills or learn some new ones in a warm and supportive group.

### Subiaco Women's Shed

*Earthwise, 315 Bagot Rd, Subiaco  
subiws.org.au*

Established in 2024, the Subiaco Women's Shed offers a welcoming space to help women learn skills, be creative, and make new friends.

The Subiaco Women's Shed is there to help women feel capable and confident whether doing small fix ups around the house or embarking on more ambitious projects. Or, a shared coffee or walk can nurture connection and wellbeing without any need for tools.

Monthly coffee catchups are open to all women. Additionally, there are members-only workshops and events.

### Earthwise

*315 Bagot Road, Subiaco  
earthwisewa.org.au*

Some people just make you want to be a better person. Jen Korab is one of those.

As coordinator of Earthwise's huge team of volunteers in the old Uniting Church grounds, her positive influence spreads far and wide.

And with each contribution of valuable time, sharing of skills in areas from permaculture to cooking, singing, fashion or art and craft, the team is making a huge difference to the lives of many.

Regulars know if they're feeling low and in need of company or a wholesome meal they can pop by for a chinwag and some sustenance.

Some turn up for the Friday morning busy bee to learn about permaculture and to put into practice the principles of organic gardening.

Some help create pieces of junk art like the arches made of of milk crates.

Others helped make the terracotta letters spelling out "Caring for the earth and for each other" at the entrance to the op shop.

"That is the basic principle of permaculture," says Korab.



Subi Men's Shed



# Root Cause

**Subi Blooms 2025 dug deeper than ever before to create a narrative that allowed visitors to pause, reflect and wonder.** BY Brooke Hunter

**A** spectacular celebration of flowers in Subiaco drew all eyes in 2024, featuring one particular and impressive installation which used technology to follow passersby.

Held over the Mother's Day weekend from May 10 to 12, Subi Blooms attracts tens of thousands of visitors, making it the most popular botanical event of 2024.

An immersive floral art trail was brought to the streets of Subiaco and featured a first locally for *Stem by Stem*, a unique interactive art installation designed by ENESS. This installation ran for a month from April to May.

*Stem by Stem* was a fusion of interactive technology and floristry, and its Western Australian debut captivated audiences for the first time last year. The installation featured two inflatable characters sitting side-by-side holding bouquets of flowers.

ENESS founder and artist Nimrod Weiss said the concept of *Stem by Stem* emerged from his fascination with inflatables and natural flora.

His love of fashion, particularly pattern-making, also had a big influence on the design of his art.

"The patterns that I create for the textures of our artworks are individually designed. For me, the pattern of an artwork is just as important as its form. In the case of *Stem by Stem*, the patterns are reminiscent of Kimono silk. This Kimono aesthetic was a natural complement with flowers and so I was inspired to make *Stem by Stem*," he said.

He explained that his creative process often blended elements of futuristic motifs within his work.

"The forms I designed were very alien-like. This is no accident – themes like space and AI as well as rockets and robots continually surface in my work because these are ideas that I have long been attracted to and interested in."

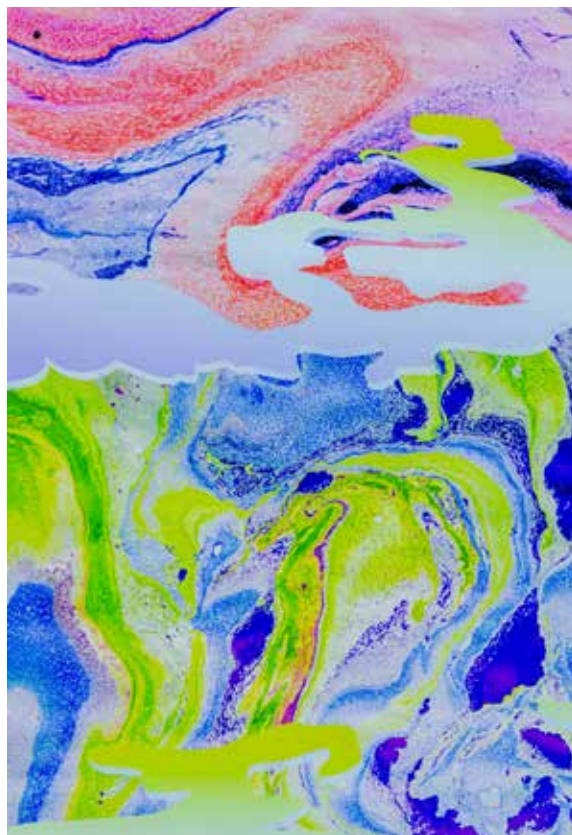
The technology behind *Stem by Stem* was especially impressive, with the installation reacting to visitor's movements. As people approached, the

character's eyes would follow them, while bursts of colour bloomed beneath their patterned surfaces.

Weiss' team includes a diverse group of collaborators, including software engineers, industrial designers, and musicians, ensuring that each artwork is both technically challenging and creatively inspiring.

*Stem by Stem* featured dynamic soundscapes, which shifted as visitors entered and exited the space.

"This is a complex process because this technology is used for movies and animations but we're using it to





**EYE-CATCHING** A new public art installation took up temporary residence in the shadow of ONE Subiaco for 2025's Subi Blooms, led by artist Claire Mueller (below).



create large-scale fabric forms,” Weiss said.

“With each new artwork we problem solve and use our ingenuity to overcome the challenges so that we can create something digitally that is executed the same on the ground.”

Pointing to Subi Blooms, Weiss emphasised the importance of creating art that is accessible to everyone. He described how visitors, particularly children, often felt compelled to embrace the inflatable characters.

“There’s something about the round and friendly forms combined with oversized, expressive eyes that stimulate this outpouring of affection,” he said.

“Festivals (such as Subi Blooms) bring all members of the community together in an open space so many of the barriers to accessing art are broken down. Our driving purpose at ENESS is to invest public spaces with creativity, to stimulate curiosity and a spirit of exploration about art and the world.”

Culture Counts estimated that *Stem by Stem* registered almost 43,000 impressions throughout its exhibition during Subi Blooms 2024 and beyond. This represents people that engaged with the artwork, including anyone in the nearby vicinity of the work.

As part of the 2025 Subi Blooms event, the City of Subiaco showcased a new public art installation *REFLECT* by floral art studio ACID.FLWRS, led by Perth-born, Sydney-based artist Claire Mueller.

The three-part module engaged people of all ages and created moments of connection, reflection and wonder.

This creative experiment blended floral modification with graffiti art, transforming flowers with vibrant, hyper-coloured patterns. The process, inspired by historical printmaking techniques, resulted in individual flower stems that each became a unique piece of ephemeral art.

Before Subi Blooms 2025 kicked off, Mueller said she was extremely excited to return to Perth and join Subi Blooms x Gather as an artist.

“ACID.FLWRS is a dynamic studio practice that seeks to create moments of wonder, so having the opportunity to scale this up into a public setting is a dream,” she said.

“The interactive work invites people to reflect on their roots, highlighting the many influences that turn us all into unique flowers.

“The design process has been a fun challenge. As

an outdoor piece there are lots of technical details to consider - but it will of course be bright AF and I hope it will inspire connection, reflection and joy.”

Encouraging a shift in perspective, Mueller’s work invited viewers to challenge conventional expectations, blending classical and futuristic elements, as well as natural and synthetic materials.

The 2025 attraction was held on Seddon Street from 25 April to 25 May 2025, urging audiences to embrace the unexpected and look towards a brighter future.



REFLECT, ACID.FLWRS, 2025.

# WATCH *this* SPACE

**SPACEMRKT is making good use of empty urban spaces with architect-innovator Joel Benichou taking the organisation to new heights. | BY Gail Williams**

Joel Benichou is an architect with 20/20 vision. For the non-optometrists among us that means he has sharpness, clarity, peripheral awareness, colour vision, and depth perception. In spades.

Subiaco residents are about to be swathed in that vision as he and his co-director Sarah Booth at SPACEMRKT, an urban-renewal organisation, begins to fill vacant spots with fascinating possibilities.

Benichou's sights are focused on dormant buildings and laneways throughout his old stomping ground, not far from where, as a teenager, he would sneak out of his bedroom window to visit the old Red Sea nightclub.

"I have fond memories of that and the Subi Hotel," he laughs. "Along with Subi Primary School and the Pavillion Markets."

Their first project is a dynamic new partnership with the City of Subiaco where they are transforming the shopfronts at 83 Rokeby Road.

The team have taken on a year's lease to work with artists and other creatives to bring vibrancy to the shop front of the three-storey building which was once crammed with old radios, lamps and other electrical goods being repaired by Hiddlestones Electrics which operated there for over 100 years.

When they sold the premises last September, the Blank Walls Gallery popped up - and that's the space about to enjoy a bit of extra TLC.

Benichou is delighted to add it to SPACEMRKT's extraordinary portfolio as he puts out the call for







artists, creative professionals, small businesses, and not-for-profits to bring colour, noise and community engagement to the mix.

“We are very, very excited to be doing this,” he says from his office at the former Loreto primary school in Nedlands, another one of the organisation’s space-changing projects.

Others are Fremantle’s Robert Harper Building in Phillimore Street - a project which was completed before Benichou joined - in conjunction with businessmen Adrian Fini and Nic Trimboli, both of whom also have connections to Subi.

Victoria Hall and the offices of the old Esplanade Hotel, also in Fremantle, are just two of the others. But Benichou is itching to get his hands back on Subiaco, a place which is supercharged with fond memories, as he grew up here before moving to Melbourne for 14 years where he taught architecture and design at Melbourne University and RMIT.

He also became a director of Archive, the architecture and design office which aims to cultivate spaces to elevate the human experience and foster social engagement.

“I left Perth, like a lot of young people do to make a life in Melbourne,” he says.

“I returned as COVID hit, to spend time with and care for my Dad, Lucien who was unwell and that

time in Subi with my family reignited my love for my hometown.”

On returning, he noticed there was huge potential to improve the city he grew up in and - now with a young family - he decided to move back to Perth.

“I was really loving the village atmosphere,” he says. “Walking to cafes, making connections and it felt like the shift was immediate. My creative perspective felt clear, purposeful, and part of the conversation, not just one voice among many like it often was in Melbourne.

“When I left Perth, it was booming,” he says. “Subi was in its heyday. Then the high street started losing icons and the suburb misplaced its vibrancy after the football left. Before then Subi was fashion, Subi was nightlife and had all those iconic institutions.”

Establishing a Perth branch of Archive and scoring a job in the Architecture Department at UWA, Benichou was also approached by SPACEMRKT - already known for their work on Moana Chambers in Perth and the old Myer building in Fremantle - to become involved. He jumped at the chance.

“SPACEMRKT became a way for me to give back to the culture of Perth and reconnect after years of focusing my creative energy in Victoria,” he says.

On walks around Subiaco, he was inspired by the empty buildings and started imagining what could

be done with them - sites like the old Coles building in Barker Road, the old Woodpeckers, site and the Doric Buildings - and contacted the City of Subiaco who agreed to a meeting with him.

“I started calling the City of Subiaco to sound them out and just kept pestering them,” he says.

“After a chat over a coffee, the first step in working with the City was to look at what we thought was possible in Subiaco.

“I put together a report and began reaching out to the owners of the buildings and real estate agents and found a few great supporters including Human Urban and Westbridge Funds Management.”

Subiaco Mayor, David McMullen is already a fan.

“This will showcase the work of some very talented creatives, bring additional vibrancy to Subi and demonstrate the benefits of setting up shop in our bustling city,” he says.

Call in and see what they are up to. It’s literally a case of watch this space for their next project in Hay Street.

**SPACEMRKT would love to hear from agents, property owners or developers who have vacant spaces. And any artists who are interested in exhibiting are invited to contact Joel at [hello@spacemrkt.com.au](mailto:hello@spacemrkt.com.au).**

# HANDS ON ART

**Donna Gough was SPACEMRKT's inaugural artist occupier, and what a treat Subiaco lovers had in store from this internationally renowned creator.** BY Ara Jansen

**D**onna Gough carries a sketchbook with her everywhere. She draws ideas for a painting, notes thoughts or maps out a sculptural concept.

Sometimes the Perth-born painter and sculptor will use them right away in a current work or she might return to an idea much later because she's found a material which will help create what she imagined.

"I'm always sketching things down," says Donna. "I will circle back to them and see an idea that can be turned into something. Sometimes I'll draw an idea with no idea of how I'll realise it but later will find a technique or come across a material which will make it work."

The Rokeby Road SPACEMRKT shopfront welcomed Donna as its first exhibitor in May. After many decades overseas, it also marks the first local showing from the internationally exhibited artist. She has been living and working in Los Angeles since 2010 and promises to never complain about Perth traffic again. Before that was London and time in Sydney, working as an animator for Disney Animation Australia.

Her work at SPACEMRKT – pieces from the *Berlin Black* series – is an exploration of three-dimensional geometric shapes and solid colours on aluminium panels. She's currently using black shapes on yellow backgrounds (*Berlin Black*) or pink and grey (the *You Are* series) on the raw aluminium surface. Also a sculptor, she has created illuminated light works and her painting series was originally imagined as models for a three-dimensional printed sculpture series.

Donna started her creative career as a graphic

designer and that craft has continued to inform her pieces and as she works in the user experience space creating digital platforms.

"Having spent years and years working on a computer as a designer, it would have been easy to move into digital art. But I wanted to move away from that and make my art very hands on, which is what I love – making things.

"At the same time the paintings I make are very graphic, with a flat matte aesthetic which almost feels like a digital print."

Getting to this point meant Donna did extensive experimenting and playing to find the right materials. Additionally, with an art degree that focussed on drawing, the ability to hand draw is never far away as she still sketches out all her art before she physically makes it.

"All my paintings are hand-drawn first. I'm a visual thinker and often have to draw something to understand it.

"I experiment a lot with different materials. It's probably why it has taken me so long to find what I like to work with, like the aluminium panels and acrylic. It's a perfectly smooth surface, like working on paper."

Particularly interested in geometry as a universal language, Donna uses her work to explore our relationships to each other, nature and the cosmos. [donnagough.com](http://donnagough.com)



Artist Donna Gough in front of her work at SPACEMRKT, Rokeby Road.



# LET THERE BE (LEAD) LIGHT

Stained glass art is one of Subiaco's most prevalent – and beautiful – architectural adornments for many homes in the city. Gabi Mills explores one such treasure – Thomas Murrell's home, Fairview.



**WINDOW DRESSING**  
 Thomas Murrell's home is a treasure house in more ways than one, with a rare collection of original, restored and modern stained glass.



Even a cursory stroll around Subiaco will reveal that this is a city suburb with an extra special feature. Many of the turn of the century homes proudly present a front-facing visage decorated with more than just pretty architectural features. House after house – if you look closely – has stained glass windows, with motifs which reappear time after time. Rosy red cherries and other bright fruits sit alongside roses and irises, rondels and graphic expressions of wealth thanks to Subiaco's role during the gold rush boom days.

Stained glass was a very visible way to show that this was the home of a successful merchant back in the day.

One house in particular, however, has such a beautiful collection of original, restored, rehomed – and newly commissioned stained glass window art – that it has become a destination in its own right.

Fairview of Subiaco at 44 Heytesbury Road is the home of local Subiaco enthusiast and media identity Thomas Murrell. His home is a perfectly preserved example of how stained glass art is alive and well in 6008, and with the impressive collection of art which also calls Fairview home, Murrell's mission to encourage all and sundry to experience the magic of Subiaco's past, present and future is an ongoing project.

First, a little history lesson, courtesy of Murrell's meticulous research into the history of his beloved home.

“Fairview was built in the Queen Anne Federation





style for Scottish ice engineer John Kennedy and his wife Christina in 1915,” writes Murrell.

It is classified by the National Trust as a place of cultural significance because of the unique ornate front veranda.

Designed by Kennedy when he was at the peak of his career running the Perth Ice Works, snowflake timber corner brackets represent his profession whilst flying angels, often found on the front of Scottish sailing ships in the 1880s to protect passengers during their dangerous voyages to Australia, were incorporated by Kennedy to watch over his family.

“Fairview is a particularly fine example of the architectural style typical of historic Subiaco and the late gold boom period,” says Murrell.

“Its heritage significance reflects the development and settlement of a wealthy suburb close to the City and Kings Park known as ‘The Golden Triangle’ which gained a reputation in the early days as being a prestigious area marketed as ‘The Toorak of Perth.’”

The Queen Anne Federation home is characterised by its highly distinctive veranda, skewed gable corners, Art Nouveau style timber decoration and French Marseille tiled ridge capping.

What makes Fairview even more special is its rarity and the fact that it is a well-preserved example of a late gold boom period home located in Subiaco’s

Chesters estate heritage precinct. Add to that Murrell’s determination to seek out contemporary stained glass examples from all over the country to restore and reuse in Fairview, and the result is a unique example of how this ancient artform finds new expression within a historical house’s context.

Working with Kim Fitzpatrick of Tradition Stained Glass and renowned Perth architect Sam Teoh, Murrell’s vision to preserve and augment Fairview’s collection of stained glass art is a never-ending story.

Perhaps from day one, the house was destined to play a special role in Subiaco’s urban story; incredibly, over its 110-year history, it has only ever been sold three times. John William Levi Pointon bought the entire contents of the John Kennedy-owned house including a crystal wireless set in 1925. Its third owner was Polly Willis, a heritage activist and member of the Subiaco Historical Society, owned Fairview for nearly 40 years and contributed greatly to the position of Subiaco as an inner city treasure worth preserving. The Fairview legacy then passed on to Murrell who has dedicated the past few years to sourcing historically accurate stained glass windows – as well as modern designs, particularly in the kitchen.

Here are some of the details around Fairview that make it such a treasure house of the stained glass window art.



**LIGHTNESS OF BEING**  
Above left, Stained glass expert Kim Fitzpatrick and above, Shenton Park architect Sam Teoh.



## MAKING AN ENTRANCE

**Location: Glass panel – Front Entry – Iris and Roses 1915 by H.H. (Howard) Estcourt of Barnett Brothers studio, Perth.**

Unsurprisingly, the front entry is the most important part of a historic house. First impressions count for both visitors, the owner and complete strangers walking past at night when glass is lit from within. The stained glass windows in this location reflect the wealth of the house's owner, the cultural norms and social capital of an emerging society and as well as a strong connection back to country of origin.

The design of Fairview's entry window reflects the first Scottish owner's heritage with the rose and iris motifs whilst the size and quality of glass are an outward expression of his status in the community and new found prosperity.

He engaged the best stained glass designers and manufacturers in Perth to do this for his new trophy home. In this case, it was Howard Henry Estcourt, who was the chief designer and glass artist of the market dominant Barnett Brothers studio. All had moved from Melbourne chasing new opportunities that came with gold boom money.

"Estcourt's stunning designs are both strong and feminine. The use of etched glass, which had to be imported from Europe, lets in different amounts of light with its multiple layers and textures," says Murrell.

“

The panel is stunning and bears Clarke's characteristic use of mauve coloured glass with a white wispy spectrum feature through the glass, to reflect water.

~ Thomas Murrell

## FLOWER POWER

**Location: Front hallway – Roses and Iris.**  
*Commissioned circa 1926 by Fairview second owner John William Levi Pointon, Managing Director, Boans Department store from Barnett Brothers studio.*  
**Pair of Glass Panels – Kitchen – Irises – circa early 1920s, repurposed 2024.**

Fairview's second owner William Pointon and his wife Annie purchased Fairview in 1926 by an income derived from working a lifetime with the Boans Brothers, home to one of the largest displays of leadlight windows in Perth.

The collection of windows was located in the Boans Tea Rooms and were created and installed by a local company Barnett Bros. Pointon commissioned Arthur Clarke from Barnett Brothers to design a large stained glass panel for the front hallway featuring iris and roses.

Arthur Clarke's designs were distinctly nature-based, taking on strong themes associated with floral motives and water themes. They were also known for his strong vertical and horizontal lines. His design inspiration is said to have come from his daily lunchtime visits to the botanical gardens, known as Queens Park Gardens, located a short distance from the workroom in East Perth.

“The panel is stunning and bears Clarke's characteristic use of mauve coloured glass with a white wispy spectrum feature through the glass, to reflect water and is one of Clarke signature designs,” says Murrell.





## Old and new

Not content to repurpose historic stained glass from around Australia's reclamation yards, Murrell has also commissioned new work. In the kitchen, visitors will find a stunning modern stained glass artwork by Myra Staffa. The electric blue glass flower provides a nod to the past and a modern creative expression which will live long into Fairview's future.

To learn more about the historic stained glass at Fairview and nationally significant collection of women's art visit [fairviewofsubiaco.com.au](http://fairviewofsubiaco.com.au)

## LET THERE BE LIGHT

**Location: Glass panel – Stairway.** Sydney firm Ashwin and Falconer c.1880s. Restored in 2024 by Kim Fitzpatrick of Tradition Stained Glass. The Falconer and Ashwin studios operated from the 1860s to 1920s.

This stunning hand painted Victorian era panel has been attributed to the Sydney firm Ashwin and Falconer and is one of the most significant works in Fairview's collection. It was likely originally a crosspiece window above a door with side panels from an elegant mansion in Sydney which now permanently draws the eye of every visitor who mounts Fairview's staircase.

"It is a rare and historic panel of stained glass given a new life. It can be seen from many angles from the ground floor or first floor and the afternoon western light shining through it as the sun sets in the west is absolutely stunning," says Murrell.

It is a classic case study of how historic stained glass can be used in to create contemporary living spaces for a modern life and elegantly captures their designs which reflect the growing wealth of their clients as well as the social and cultural aspirations of a nation.





Diane Mossenson



# REVELATIONS & reflections

For the past three decades, Mossenson Galleries has shone a spotlight on Indigenous and Torres Strait artists' works, revealing the rich vein of creativity which runs through the heart of Australia.

BY Gail Williams

**D**iane Mossenson took a huge leap of faith in 1993 when she swapped her skills in acupuncture and muscular skeletal medicine to focus on shining a light on unknown artists in some of Australia's darkest corners.

It came about by chance during Diane's travels with husband, Dan, to Alice Springs where they were introduced to astonishing artworks being done in the local communities.

Indigenart was born, the first gallery in Perth dedicated to high-quality Indigenous and Torres Strait artworks.

It opened in the old Volvo workshop in Hay Street to little fanfare with a Balgo exhibition, from the school of Western Desert painting.

Over the next 32 years it grew into Mossenson Galleries, one of Australia's most successful art houses, which at one stage, also had outlets in Fremantle and Melbourne.

Come July, there will be a quiet celebration as the Mossenson family looks back on the friendships and memories created over three decades of trailblazing.

"It will be a reflective period," says Mossenson. "We may bring out 32 works that are typical of things that have happened over the years such as our exhibitions of Ngorra ochre paintings, Shane Pickett and Irwin Lewis. There are also fond memories of the showings at the Australian embassy in Paris, in London and South Africa. It's been quite a journey."

Mossenson will pay special tribute to artists like Irwin Lewis, the AFL legend who passed away in 2020, who was a beloved friend and an extraordinary human being.

Lewis – the father of footballer, Chris Lewis – was born in 1939, at Morawa.

One of eight children he was educated at Christchurch Grammar School and was the first Western Australian Aboriginal person to attend UWA.

When he took to canvas to depict the tragedies that Aboriginal people have suffered since colonisation, he garnered a huge fan base for works which have been shown in numerous Mossenson exhibitions.

His favourite motif was human faces jostling together in a visual cacophony, each one trying to exert its unique identity - some grimacing under the strain, others pushing themselves to freedom.

Lewis described these images as ‘expressions of all the feelings and emotions that Aboriginal people have had since settlement.’

With Mossenson’s mentoring, Lewis is one of the artists who went on to define the Australian Indigenous art movement. Others are Shane Pickett, Ngarra, Loongkoonan, Lucy Ward and Omborin, some of whom she guided from their very first painting.

Having facilitated significant projects, major commissions, print projects and overseas exhibitions, Mossenson finds greatest fulfilment in mentoring and advising young artists.

Shane Pickett, who died suddenly at the age of 53, was her artist in residence at the gallery from 2002 to 2010.

Having met him in Milan, Mossenson approached him to become artist in residence and it wasn’t long before he became a very dear friend.

Pickett grew up as one of eight kids, on Quairading’s Badjaling mission, and became one of Australia’s leading indigenous artists whose works are shown in galleries all around the world.

Mossenson was part of an exhibition which toured the United States with 29 works from the most radical phase of his career which featured at The McClung Museum in the University of Tennessee in Knoxville.

The exhibition, “Djinong Djina Boodja” (Look at the Land that I Have Traveled), was a partnership between the Mossenson Art Foundation, the Embassy of Australia in Washington DC, and the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia and was the longest solo one of any Australian artist..

Mossenson says few Subi residents realise the strong connection Pickett had with their suburb.

“His work is displayed in the Subiaco Museum, St John of God Hospital and King Edward Memorial Hospital and he did some work for the City of Subiaco,” she says.

In 1996 Pickett was commissioned to produce a painting at Lake Jualbup to commemorate the resurrection of its Indigenous name and significance as a traditional water hole. The work depicts maarle (the black swan), gorya (the frog), and boorda yaarkiny (the turtle). Another work, a message stick was commissioned by the Museum as part of its commitment to Indigenous reconciliation, and takes the form of a painted section of tree branch which was originally displayed on a painted drum, also designed by Pickett.

Mossenson continues to promote emerging artists like Eva Anyupa Baker, who was born in the Amata Community on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara of South Australia.



**Clockwise from left:**

*Mullubah* by Omborin, acrylic on linen, 91x 91 cm

*Uncool Poorly* by Tyrown Waigana, digital print on paper, 100 x 76 cm

*to Descend from the Dreaming* by Shane Pickett, acrylic on linen, 122 x 153 cm

Her first solo exhibition was held at the gallery during May and featured Baker’s, strong connections to Minyma Kutjara tjukurpa (Two Sisters creation story) and stories passed down by her aunt, Kunytjil Cooper.

In 2006, Mossenson Galleries expanded its interests to include non-Indigenous artists, showing major exhibitions from artists including Col Jordan, Emmanuel Raft, Graham Kuo, Peter Pinson and Jason Cordero.

One of those, self-taught artist, Col Jordan, will travel from his Sydney home this June – at the age of 89 – for an exhibition of his abstract artworks called *To Op with Thanks*.

“It will be his salute to optical painting,” says Mossenson.

“For over 60 years he has produced wonderful abstract artworks all slavishly committed to hard edge optical abstraction in their final execution and presentation.”

Back in the 1960s, Jordan, a former teacher, was inspired by a catalogue from the New York Museum of Modern Art to paint in the style of op art and

geometric abstraction.

He began painting simple forms in brightly coloured acrylic paint and has achieved fame nationally and internationally with his works held in multiple collections across Australia and overseas.

Through the Mossenson Art Foundation, the gallery is also involved in publishing books - one on Shane Pickett Meeyakba, the other Ngarra, the *Texta* drawings.

With three decades of experience now, I ask if Mossenson has any tips for trends or for collectors?

The answer is straightforward and refreshingly unpretentious.

“I can’t predict any trends for the forthcoming year but only hope that the audience is prepared to broaden their mind,” she says. “Which in turn will cause them to embrace the unexpected.

“On collecting, I would say collect what you like, not what others like and think you should have. Do your research and be informed. Don’t be afraid to start with small works, collect for the fun of it and supporting the artists.”

Here’s to 30 more years.



Archive is an architecture and interior design studio based in Perth and Melbourne.

We craft spaces distinguished by atmosphere, craftsmanship and a deep engagement with culture and context.

From interiors to new builds and sensitive extensions, our work enhances the experience of space across residential and commercial settings, creating places that feel refined, considered and deeply connected.

# AMP

# MUSIC





Clouds



Band competition at The Shents

**Band photographer Mike Wylie spent many a night in the 90s at The Shenton Park Hotel capturing bands on stage, hugging the amp as legends were captured by his lens. | BY Ara Jansen**



Cachexia

**A**nyone in Perth in the 90s who loved music, probably spent some time - or maybe many a drunken time - at The Shenton Park Hotel. Affectionately known as The Shents, it was the go-to pub for when you wanted to see a local or touring band live.

Photographer Mike Wylie spent more time than was probably sensible at The Shents in the 1990s, taking photos of bands.

The first time he shot a band at the venue was for his first job for street magazine X-Press in the early 90s. He returned many times over the subsequent years shooting for The West Australian's music pages. Up until then, the local snapper had been working for a surfing magazine.

Built in 1907, the Shenton Park Hotel was a popular local meeting place for nearly a century before closing in 1999 and is now a mixed residential and business complex.

During the decade until the much-loved venue's closure, Mike shot more than 200 bands there. They

included local bands of all musical persuasions such as Tall Tales & True, Hogfodder, Jebediah, Manic Finster, Infected, Verona, Stonemasons, Thrombus, The Glummen, The Rosemary Beads, Caterpillar Now, Storytime, Mutt, Boticelli's Angel and Favourite Game. Australian bands he photographed included Screaming Jets, The Clouds, Things of Stone & Wood, The Sharp and Caligula.

The audience varied depending on who was playing; university types watching their fellow students play live, music lovers who supported local music who varied in age from their 20s through to their 50s and cricket and footy players and followers playing at nearby Lake Jualbup.

During a time when the local music scene felt very healthy, The Shents was loved by local bands, many of whom played their first gigs there or launched an EP, a vinyl single, a cassette and later a CD. It was a fixture on the circuit for national bands, who often played The Shents on a Friday or Saturday night. Bands would play the other night at a venue like The



Jebediah

”  
**What was particularly notable about the room was that the stage was barely a foot high, had way too much gaffer tape on it and the ceiling was very low.**

Grosvenor back room and round out the weekend in Freo with a gig at the Newport Hotel. The then 9pm curfew (remember them!) meant a band could play a show and be on the midnight flight back east.

“That first gig - the Painters & Dockers on a Friday night at The Shents - started my career as a band photographer,” says Mike. Painters & Dockers were notorious for crazy shows, especially around their equally notorious song *Nude School*.

“Those first photos I took of Paulie (lead singer and trumpet player) from behind the drum kit were pretty interesting. It was a lot of work but I think is still one of my best.”

For some added mayhem, the Dockers shows often included Kym the Crazy Fire-Breathing Clown. Mike says seeing him join the band at The Shents during one night ranks as “one of the craziest things I have ever seen” in a room which felt well north of 45 degrees.

Mike’s unique style, which he would hone at many more gigs, often included getting up close to the band and standing in odd spots to get a shot no one else would. Using slow exposure he could capture plenty of movement or long hair flying.

At that point, he was also still shooting in black and white with film but later swapped to a full

colour digital camera.

“It has such a different feel to the digital stuff.”

Mike started photographing three to six bands a week and had his weekends full, racing between venues across Perth to make sure he covered everything.

“In contrast to now, every weekend there were two or three good Australian bands touring. They were playing venues like The Shents and usually had one or two local bands opening for them. Plus, those local bands were also playing their own shows and launching new music.

“The Shents often did interesting showcases and they really had their finger on the pulse. It wasn’t a particularly pretty room but it had good lights and sound and it was usually pretty packed.”

What was particularly notable about the room was that the stage was barely a foot high, had way too much gaffer tape on it and the ceiling was very low. This wasn’t an issue until musicians started to jump around and there was always a worry they would bounce too high.

“It would get even more crazy when the stage diving started and they were almost hanging off the ceiling. The venue attracted a crowd that could get pretty loose so there was always lots of dancing,



**M**usician Greg Dear played regularly at The Shents with his bands the Holy Rollers and Beautiful Losers in the 1980s and into the 90s.

The first Holy Rollers show was at the Shenton Park opening for The Triffids in April 1984. Greg's sister, Felicity, later joined the band as their drummer.

"The reason I remember that gig in particular is that our opening song was a cover of Leonard's *Cohen's Joan of Arc*," says the singer, songwriter and guitarist. "I was so nervous when I approached the mic. The song had this precise picking pattern in 3/4 time and my fingers were jittering all over the place. In the end I was just strumming the melody and had made my fingers bleed. I just remember having very little control over my fingers in that moment. We moved onto the next song and there was blood all over my guitar."

Greg says The Shents was probably his favourite local venue. It helped that the band scored a 10-week residency at the venue once. They swapped headline spots each week with The Marigolds. What was also unusual, was that there were only two bands on the bill, rather than the often four crammed into the night. This way each band got to play a solid full set each Friday.

He particularly remembers in the kitchenette near the stage, which served as the band room or green room, there was always a plastic baby bath filled with ice holding a carton of beer for the band. Greg reckons on a Friday night the two bands would polish off two – three cartons between them.

"It had that low ceiling which always looked like it had this material which you could push up. The stage was low too but what I remember the most was that the lights were always so hot. There were these cans so close and they were burning hot you couldn't touch them. They were so bloody hot and somehow I got through gigs up there in a jacket.

"I think the room was licenced for about 390 people. But I've been to gigs there like Paul Kelly and Hunters & Collectors where it was packed. At one Painters & Dockers gig I felt like a sardine.

"I was side of stage at a Painters & Dockers gig when they did Nude School. There were people in the crowd stripping off and later they were all trying to find their undies, picking them up going 'those aren't mine'. I'm sure half of them just thought 'these ones will do'."

Randomly and perhaps closing a circle, Greg's other sister Liz now lives in one of the apartments on The Shents site.

moshing and jumping.

"Because the stage was pretty low, it meant there was a lot of interaction between the crowd and the performers. I could stand right up the front with my camera and capture that.

"When I photographed local band Blue Tile Lounge - probably the slowest band I have ever seen - everyone was sitting down on the carpet! I'd been at a dress up party and was wearing a yellow safari suit. As I was taking a photo someone threw a can at me and got me in the head.

"Thankfully it was empty."

Once the lighting guy asked Mike to stand in for him while he went to the bathroom. His only instructions were "turn this up and down when the drummer goes crazy". He's pretty sure he made the show worse for those few minutes. It was his first and only crack at being a lighting engineer.

"There's nothing like it when you're in the middle of a drunk crowd and the performers are trying to make the crowd get crazy. That dynamic between the two is a really interesting thing. My best shows were always the ones where both the band and the crowd seemed magically in sync - and plenty of those moments were at The Shents.



Painters & Dockers

Hiroimi Uehara



KIND OF

# *Wonderful*



YAMAHA

Tal Cohen



Esperanza Spalding

## The big stars are flying in for the Perth International Jazz Festival, but local audiences are already enjoying the art form's best performers in the world.

BY Mark Naglazas

A couple of years ago I was told by a senior figure in the Western Australian arts industry - so senior she can't be named in this context - that "Perth has some very good classical musicians but our jazz performers are world class."

The arts guru's bold assertion has ever since bounced around in my head, like the earworm opening of Dave Brubecks' Take Five, starting up each time I attend a gig at an inner-city club or catch a show at the Perth International Jazz Festival. Is this just another night at The Ellington Jazz Club, I keep wondering, or are we watching performers who would cut it in London, New York or Paris?

This question of why Perth jazz artists are not as well-known as, for example, our rock musicians, writers or actors has been nagging at me so long I took the opportunity to put it to one of those performers, Mace Francis. His day job is directing the Perth International Jazz Festival.

"The quality of musicians in Perth is something I noticed the moment I arrived here from Geelong to study guitar. I didn't have to look very far. The musicians in my year at WAAPA were excellent," Francis tells me at the lovely heritage-listed Camelot Arts Club, where the festival now manages and has office space.

"A good measure of the quality of musicians that are coming out of Perth is the number who've gone on to enjoy significant international careers. There's bassist and composer Linda Oh, who graduated from WAAPA and is New York-based and winning Grammys; there's Dane Alderson, who plays bass with the American jazz fusion band Yellowjackets; there's Graham Blevins who lives in the UK and plays in the horn sections for Mark Knoffler and Kylie Minogue; and lots more. Our talent is in demand all



“

**The quality of musicians in Perth is something I noticed the moment I arrived here from Geelong to study guitar. I didn't have to look very far.**

~ Mace Francis

Mace Francis

over the world,” he says.

Francis, who taught composition at WAAPA, directed the Western Australian Youth Jazz Orchestra (WAYJO) and fronts his own band, the Mace Francis Orchestra, believes that we punch above our weight when it comes to jazz because of our isolation.

“We constantly hear about amazing things happening all over the world and wondering if we have what it takes to compete. So we work extra hard because that is what we imagine we have to do to make it,” he argues.

“And being so far away from great jazz scenes in places like London and New York we can't compare ourselves. So we work our arses off to get better and better, always imagining what it means to be at the

top. But it is not just jazz. We punch above our weight in a lot of art forms in Western Australia for the same reason. Isolation breeds excellence.”

Francis was given further insight into the quality of the Perth jazz scene when he was asked touring American saxophonist Sarah Hanahan to put a band together for her festival shows.

“When I was driving Sarah back to her hotel she said, ‘God, they are amazing!’ What are they doing here in Perth? She was blown away by the quality,” remembers Francis, who himself is heading to Europe later this year for a series of shows with Perth indigenous artist Zero MC.

Perth-based singer, pianist and composer Georgia Aue agrees with Francis that our jazz artists are as



Eishan Ensemble

Georgia Aue

good as any in the world.

“When I was living and working on the East Coast we were always talking about this mythical place where jazz giants roamed,” says Aue, who grew up in Adelaide and graduated from the Elder Conservatorium of Music.

While Aue has a romantic view of masters of jazz springing up from the seemingly barren soil of a city so far from the wonderfully atmospheric clubs of New Orleans, Chicago or Amsterdam when we drill down on the reasons, she doesn’t hesitate in naming the source: the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts.

“The level of musicianship coming out of WAAPA is exceptional,” says Aue, who during her years as a



Kate Pass with Kohesia Ensemble

producer for the Perth International Jazz Festival had a great opportunity to compare home-grown talent with the artist flying for the increasingly significant springtime music event.

“The quality can be put down to the incredible group of teachers. Jamie Oehlers, Tom O’Halloran, Victoria Newton, Daniel Susjnar, Ben Vanderwal, Karl Florisson and Nick Abbey. They are all inspirational. And that is just the generation that I know,” says Aue.

“In the past seven years that I have been involved in the Perth scene I have watched many students graduate and have been amazed at the level they are playing at. They work incredibly hard. It is not surprising they’re achieving incredible things on the world stage.”

Aue agrees with Francis that isolation has bred a drive for excellence, adding that the distance from the critical eyes looming over the major metropolitan centres has encouraged our performers to experiment.

“They’re always trying new things with different line-ups,” says Aue, who herself has evolved her practice to embrace Brazilian jazz and draws on the likes of Sergio Mendez, Jobim and American saxophonist Paul Desmond (one the members of the Dave Brubeck Quartet that gifted the world the best-selling jazz song of all time, Take Five).

“Living and working in Perth means they have the time and space to experiment. If they were in Melbourne, where the scenes are bigger, they would get caught up in the intensity of it. Here they are away from the centres and can evolve their art,” says Aue, who regularly performs in jazz venues such as

Ellington’s in Beaufort Street, Perth and the Duke of George in East Fremantle.

Perth jazz legend Jamie Oehlers agrees with Aue that key to the quality of the Perth jazz scene is WAAPA, where has lectured for many years.

“When I first moved to Melbourne I was greeted with, ‘Oh yeah – another one of the Perth mafia who have moved here to take our gigs’,” Oehlers tells me over the phone from Naarm, where he has travelled to further annoy/entertain the country’s most passionate jazz fans.

“The rigour of the WAAPA jazz course means that graduates can read music really well, they know a lot of tunes and they can improvise. This makes them eminently hireable. That level of craft allows them to survive and thrive in a scene that can be a challenge,” explains Oehlers.

Oehlers concurs with Francis that the isolation of Perth means that performers set an extremely high bar for themselves when they plot their move to the East Coast or overseas.

“When I was a kid and dreaming of being a jazz musician, I thought everyone in New York could play like John Coltrane. And I thought the same thing about performers in Melbourne and Sydney. Of course, they weren’t, but it was great to have that imaginary standard,” recalls Oehlers.

“There was a lot less to do in Perth when I was growing up. I used to lock myself in my room and practice for hours on end. And I imagine that so many other Perth musicians did the same thing.

Jamie Oehlers



“

**Everywhere I look I come across musicians I've taught or played with working with some of the biggest names in the world**

~ Jamie Oehlers

Which is why Perth is punching way above its weight on the international scene.

“Everywhere I look I come across musicians I've taught or played with working with some of the biggest names in the world, such as guitarist Tim Van Der Kuil, who is Adele's musical director. It is remarkable how many musicians - many of them WAAPA graduates - are working at the very top level.”

Even more remarkable is that most of the students entering the WAAPA jazz course are Western Australian. While the drama and musical theatre courses draw students from across the country, the majority of wannabe Dizzy Gillespies and Oscar Petersons come for high schools across the metropolitan area where they are taught by - you guessed it - WAAPA graduates.

“The cost-of-living crisis means that parents are not as willing to pay for their children to move to another city. And the local high schools have really got their acts together. When students come in they are already playing at a very high level,” says Oehlers, who is looking forward to next year's move of WAAPA from Mt Lawley into the city (“It is going to be amazing,” our homegrown sax giant).

While Perth jazz musicians are being celebrated on the East Coast and overseas there is, sadly, little acknowledgement of their achievements in their hometown.

“The lack of acknowledgement for Western Australian jazz artists annoys me. Every day on the news we hear about a sportsman winning this or that even in Europe or America, yet there is little celebration for the achievements of jazz musicians - and not much for WA artists in general,” says Oehlers

“When I won the World Saxophone Competition in 2005, I hardly got any media here in Perth. The



Bill Frisell



Gregory Porter

only media I got was the media asking the question of why I received no media attention!" laughs Oehlers, who has a long list of awards for his albums and his performances.

"The classical music scene gets a lot of press and funding. But our jazz artists, who are working at an equally high level, tend to get overlooked. Which is why the Perth International Jazz Festival is so important. It gives attention to performers who warrant it."

While our jazz talent is not nearly as well-known as it deserves to be there's clearly a hunger for the art form, with the jazz festival is going from strength to strength and spreading into parts of the city where you would not normally expect to find jazz, such as Brookfield Place, which has become the venue for opening event, and the QVI Plaza, the venue for the sensational 2023 performance by New Orleans Hot 8 Brass.

Subiaco's Regal Theatre has also become one of the key venues, with headliner Gregory Porter's opening show selling out months before the event. Other big names announced are Japanese pianist and composer Hiromi Uehara and celebrated American guitarist Bill Frisell.

"There has definitely been a surge of interest in

jazz, particularly amongst younger audiences, which is great because they are a bit more adventurous in their taste. Older audiences tend to be nostalgic and like to hear the music they grew up with or songs that they recognise. Younger audiences love to see it being mixed up with electronic music, hip-hop and funk. And they love improvisation," says Francis.

While Francis would love jazz to be more widely embraced and for there to be a full-time jazz orchestra in Perth, as the classical music scene enjoys with the WA Symphony Orchestra, he believes jazz has never entered the mainstream and, like mushrooms and truffles, thrives in the shadows.

"Jazz has always been underground. People love the idea of slipping in through a secret door and into a basement to listen to music that when it began was considered subversive. It was associated with sexuality or people of colour or intellectuals or those on the left. Even today all the best jazz clubs are in basements."

**Perth Jazz Festival 2025 runs from October 18 to November 3.**

# Take 5

## Mace Francis Picks Perth's Best



### GRAEME BLEVINS

After graduating from WAAPA Blevins moved to London and established himself as a first-call saxophonist of incredible range, moving between stadium pop and classic jazz to the pushing the boundaries of the form. Amongst the big names he has worked with are Phil Collins, Robbie Williams, Mark Knoffler and Kylie Minogue.

### LINDA MAY HAN OH

When Oh was a student at Churchlands Senior High she was inspired to switch from bassoon to electric bass after watching Dane Alderson in the WA Youth Jazz Orchestra rehearsals. She switched again to the double bass while studying at WAAPA, setting her up for a move to New York and an extraordinary career that has led to a career playing with the greats and winning multiple awards, including a Grammy.

### TAL COHEN

WAAPA-graduate Cohen played in the first Perth International Jazz Festival in 2013 with US saxophonist Joe Lovano. Joe suggested Cohen move to the US, which he did and is now performing all over the US and Europe as a featured pianist in his own groups and as a side man with Greg Osbey and others.

### TROY ROBERTS

Roberts – another WAAPA graduate and a multiple Grammy nominee – created some of the most exciting and innovative bands on the Perth scene in the 2000, such as VOID. He moved to the US and has become a regular touring artist with Van Morrison, Veronica Swift, Jeff “Tain” Watts and Kurt Elling. His original band Nu-Jive performed at the 2023 Perth Jazz Festival and absolutely blew everyone away. NU-Jive features another great Perth musician, guitarist Tim Jago, also doing amazing things in the US.

### KATE PASS

Bassist and composer Pass draws on her Persian heritage in her practice, which has taken her to New York where she is studying composition at the New School. Since moving to the US she has performed with artists such as Dave Douglas, Anat Cohen, Alison Miller and Patricia Brenan. She also continues to work with Australian intercultural group Kohesia Ensemble.

“

Jazz has always been underground. People love the idea of slipping in through a secret door and into a basement to listen to music that when it began was considered subversive

~ Mace Francis

**Enter the Bittersweet Tattoo studios on Hay Street, and discover a hive of creative energy and two souls who connect with both their artworks and clients deeply.**

**BY** Lisa O'Neill

**SKIN**

**DEEP**

**T**here isn't an artform more intimate and worthy of trust than one where the canvas is your bare skin. Bittersweet Tattoo in Subiaco has 35 tattoo artists with experience varying from decades long to apprentices practising on pig skin for over a year until they're unleashed on the real deal. One thing's for sure: you won't see any charlatans crossing the threshold of this highly reputable studio.

Two of the most experienced Bittersweet Tattoo artists are Lauren Fenlon and Daniel Smith, both highly tuned in to the responsibility they carry each day, whether their art represents a loved one who has passed or simply something that looks cool.

"I come from a fine art background where my work was shown in galleries, and now I work on living, breathing canvases," Daniel said.

"Tattoos are becoming seen as more of a fine art, rather than a low form of art, and integrity is the most important quality of a good tattoo artist.

"I recently tattooed someone with her sister who had passed, and she told me later how safe she felt with me. To me, that is as important as my ability to tattoo."

Both Daniel and Lauren first seek to understand the brief, then connect with the client to ensure there is a synchronicity of vision and values.

"After 18 years working as a tattoo artist, I have

a lot of work out there for people to see, so people message me if they like my style and want something similar," Lauren said.

"I always get them to come in for a face-to-face consult so we can chat, collaborate and see where they want the art because often what people imagine and what is the reality can be quite different."

Lauren's background in portraiture and her fascination with friends' tattoos first led her to the industry 18 years ago. Her personal style has evolved to stylised realism with a particular affection for animals and large-scale works.



”  
Typically, the demographic of tattoo clients is 20 to 35 but Lauren has seen ages ranging from 18 to 89.

“Over 18 years, there have definitely been different stages of my career from my portraiture start, I was into more abstract at one point and then more realism, but I wouldn’t say I follow trends,” Lauren said. “I really love creating large-scale work like legs sleeves and backs, such as underwater sleeves with fish and sharks, and creating movement patterns through the design.”

Daniel meanwhile attracts customers who want slightly different tattoos or original art, his style favouring large and ‘fairly dark’ realism.

“A lot of tattoos are symbolic for people around loss and it’s a real honour to do those personal tattoos, even though they’re high pressure,” Daniel said. “A really special tattoo was for a lady whose son had passed – it was a cherry blossom tree with a dragon and an ethereal face amongst it – there were happy tears at the end and that’s what makes this job really special.”

Of course, not all tattoos are poignant, including Lauren’s client Karma Clarke’s first tattoo around 20 years ago.

“My first tattoo was to piss off my mum!” Karma joked. “After that, my tattoos have been a mixture of things I love and things I think will just look really cool – and sometimes they’re both.”

Her most recent tattoos are part of a big vision that will eventually become leg sleeves.

“Lauren’s tattooing a bin chicken on me right now because I love them and they represent the underdog of the bird world, and on the other leg I have my cats,” Karma said. “Other tattoos are from my favourite movies like the Labyrinth and Watership Down, and I love my willy wagtail because they’re so little and angry, they’ll take on anything despite their size.”

While Daniel prefers certain pieces of art and likes to take on ideas that are at least ‘vaguely cool’, he says he can be persuaded to do less original work.





#### ATTENTION TO DETAIL

Creating a unique tattoo requires the artist to put in many hours of practice before inking a client for the first time.

“All artists need to pay their bills so sometimes I take on the lions and for a while, I ran out of blue ink because lions with blue eyes is huge, but they’re off the menu now,” Daniel said, laughing. “And I’ll never do a lion with a crown, it’s too cliché and I really try to avoid the super cliché crap, and I’ll talk people out of stuff that will look bad.”

Both Lauren and Daniel have refused to do certain work, mostly for ethical reasons.

“There are certain things, like Nazi symbology, which are an absolute no mostly because I wouldn’t want to spend time with that person and some tattoos take days – the longest I’ve spent with someone is 15 days on a piece of work,” Lauren said. “I also personally won’t tattoo faces, because I don’t want to be responsible for changing someone’s face.”

“Any gang stuff is also a no, even though tattoo artistry has a history with gangs, it’s something we won’t do here,” Daniel said.

Both artists’ collaboration with clients is often around what will age well, considering tattoos are a rather long-term commitment.

“We have a responsibility to let the client know the cons of their vision, a good tattoo artist will always tell you the pros and cons,” Lauren said. “If you put a tattoo on a woman’s abdomen for example, potentially they’ll have a baby and that tattoo will change – I had a colleague who had a koi fish on her ribs and the head was around her hip, and when she was pregnant the head moved a long way, and it never went back to how it was.”

While fine tattoos are very on trend right now, both Lauren and Daniel say there’s risk in longevity with this style too.

“After tattooing for a long time, I’ve realised bold will hold and you need the foundations with dark colours and lines to hold the tattoo together,” Lauren described. “Something can be visually amazing when





**SKIN IN THE GAME**  
Bittersweet Tattoo artists like Daniel, below, are in high demand with customers who return time and time again.

its first done but can be a mess five to ten years later when the colour fades and the tone goes. Tattoos that are too small also present a risk of spreading together.”

Typically, the demographic of tattoo clients is 20 to 35 according to Lauren but she’s seen ages ranging from 18 to 89.

“I get a slightly older crowd because of my age and the style of my tattoos,” Lauren said.

“We get all sorts though, I tattooed an 89 year old once and when I asked how she was going mid-tattoo she said ‘love, everything hurts’, so older people are often the best at handling the pain.”

Visit Bittersweet Tattoo at 266 Hay Street or @bittersweettattoo to see more of Lauren, Daniel and the other artists’ work.





# FISH TALES

Wembley Ware was made right here in Subiaco, much to people's surprise.

BY Ara Jansen



Graham Chave

A visit to the Art Gallery of WA set Graham Chave on a path he never expected.

He saw an exhibition of Wembley Ware, a glazed china which was made in Subiaco at the Bristle factory between 1946 to 1961. After seeing the exhibition, he was captivated. He even went back again.

Fast-forward 23 years and the 83-year-old owns a comprehensive collection of Wembley Ware. He has around 300 to 400 pieces, much of it hand-painted.

"I really love it," says Graham with a sparkle in his



eye, surrounded by his collection. "I don't believe in putting them away."

Wembley Ware is known for its highly lustrous and decorative products, ranging from functional household items to sculptures and figurines. If you received a Wembley Ware wedding present in the 1950s or 60s, chances are it might have been the Dhu Fish vase, a fish standing on its tail with a wide-open mouth.

Other iconic Wembley Ware pieces include a koala on a log ashtray (they made lots of ashtrays), a small condiment set on a lettuce leaf, a blue kookaburra and an eagle. There are also mermaids in bowls, dolphins, cats, native animals and a lamp made of that dhufish.

"Lots of it was very Australiana, but I like that. They were also very popular as wedding presents and people would use them as serving plates to take to someone's house for dinner. There's one plate with a rabbit on the side and a dhufish seafood platter."

Graham's favourite piece is called Tramp on a Bench, which features a hobo-looking type slumped on a bench and behind the seat there's a space to keep playing cards.

"A lot of the products Wembley Ware made were quite colourful and that was to brighten up homes after the china factories in Europe and Japan had gone out of production during and after the war."

Of particular pride is a set of eight footballers representing WA's eight WAFL teams. These are particularly hard to find and owning the only known full set is an impressive collecting feat.

Over the last two decades since his retirement, Graham has actively collected Wembley Ware. He has travelled around Australia to meet other collectors, attend meetings and ferret out pieces to complete sets. Other rare pieces have eluded him for all that time.

He has several different collections which he has been acquiring over the last two decades. The other large one is of Darbyshire Pottery, which was made in WA at the same time as Wembley Ware.

Graham is one of the founding members of The Wembley Ware Society, which meets regularly in Shenton Park.



**WONDER WARE** Wembley Ware, much of it hand-painted, is as collectible now as it was during its heyday between 1946 to 1961.



*Tramp on a bench, Wembley Ware*



*Still Life with Pears (2024)* features Wembley Ware loaned by collector Graham Chave (pictured above, and Graham opposite) to the artist, Jarad Danby.



Wembley Ware is collected all over the world but actually originated in Subiaco. Located in the former Bristile site on Hay Street, the factory is a key part of the city's industrial history.

The company was initially called Calyx Porcelain and Paint Company in 1921 and became H.L. Brisbane & Wunderlich (in 1939 – 1940), then Bristile and eventually Australian Fine China in 1997.

H.L. Brisbane & Wunderlich used the name Bristile but to differentiate from their clay tiles, produced a series called Wembley Ware. Bristile also became well known for their vitrified white crockery which was sold to government departments, hospitals and the military, often carrying the institution's logo or badge.

In 1946 the factory's pottery manager encouraged their gifted artists and modellers to use their talents

in developing the Wembley Ware lines. A number of employees, who were migrants from Europe, were talented in this area. Much fancier than the institutional white crockery it became exceedingly popular and collectible both in Australia and overseas. Production continued until 1961.

Australian Fine China was adopted as a new name in 1997 until the closure of the Subiaco factory in 2006. They are now headquartered in Kewdale and manufacture overseas.

The former Bristile site is now populated by commercial and residential buildings, but a number of the street names reflect the site's rich history and some of the people who worked there – Wembley Court, Wunderlich Road (named after the company), Mouritzen Way (the first managing director of Calyx, Christian Mouritzen) and Ruby Neevay Walk (a painter



who made bone china flowers). There's also an artist's impression of a Wembley Ware kookaburra as part of the public art.

As part of the No More Blank Walls Subi project, muralist and graffiti artist Danby used some of Graham's Wembley Ware as inspiration for his work on a building in Xanthis Lane. Called *Still Life with Pears*, 2024, the wall features a Wembley Ware fruit bowl, handled sugar bowl, cup and saucer.

Wembley Ware continues to live on in Subiaco, long after the last pot was thrown.

**The Subiaco Museum also holds and has exhibited a collection of Wembley Ware. If you're interested in attending a Wembley Ware Society meeting please get in touch with Graham at [chavestar@bigpond.com](mailto:chavestar@bigpond.com)**

“  
Of particular pride is a set of eight footballers representing WA's eight WAFL teams. These are particularly hard to find and owning the only known full set is an impressive collecting feat.



Shannon Meyerkort with Poppy.

# DIBS *to* DAGGLISH (*and* DORIS)



Previous owner of Shannon's house, Doris Turpin.

**The 1940s house which author Shannon Meyerkort calls home is more than just the place where she lives. It inspires her every day thanks to its lofty ceilings, the views over leafy trees, and first owner, Doris Turpin.**

BY Ara Jansen

**O**n the top floor of her house, inside her writing studio, Shannon Meyerkort has pinned an old black and white photo on the wall.

It's of Doris Turpin, the first woman to live in the 1940s Daglish house Shannon now owns. Doris was apparently a strong and feisty type and a teacher at Subiaco Primary. She lived alone in the house, which was rare at the time, and never married.

"I love that I can walk around the house and think of her treading the same floorboards and enjoying the same sunsets," says Shannon. "I love feeling the history of the house, especially because there are still some original elements."

Shannon has now lived here for 20 years, along with her daughters, a Shih tzu toy poodle named Poppy and a fish tank filled with plants. Their rescue cat from the local shelter is the only male in the

house. His name is Denzel, these days is often called Catticus as a nod to the classic *To Kill A Mockingbird*.

The award-winning author, freelance writer and bookseller is a Perth native but after spending some years in Sydney and Canberra, returned home and wanted to find a home in an older, leafy suburb. She wanted floorboards and high ceilings and found the house in Daglish.

"I'm constantly looking out at the trees as I write. I love that.

"I live within walking distance of the train which gives my girls some independence. I can just hear the train from the house and I kinda like knowing that people are going about their lives."

The photo of Doris isn't the only thing on the walls of Shannon's home writing studio. They're covered with ideas, pictures and wordlists. There are even mocked up book covers which help the author better imagine the world she's writing to life.

"It's a very busy space. I'm a long way from a minimalist. With my animals around me, it makes me happy. I love having colour around me. It all adds to the inspiration.

"I love writing and telling stories. I wrote my first book in Year 4 and my mum helped me publish it. All my jobs have always involved storytelling – even when I was in academia. I write historical fiction and love local history."

Ever curious and aided by her research and anthropology background, after Shannon and her family moved into the Daglish house, she researched Doris' life. Sometime later, one of her distant relatives gave Shannon the photo. What she discovered formed the inspiration for a book she's writing.

"The house has randomly only been owned by women. I got in touch with the people I could find and their relatives and got them to tell me stories."

Shannon's youngest daughter is dyslexic and as a way to connect and help her, she started writing and telling stories about famous people with the learning difficulty. She unexpectedly was asked to turn her stories into a book called *Brilliant Minds: 30 Dyslexic*

*Heroes Who Changed Our World*, which was published in 2022. It made the longlist for a Diversity in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand Children's Book Award. By way of spreading the word Shannon personally contacted politicians across the country asking them to buy a copy for the schools in their area, with solid success.

She's published an e-book called *The Brutal Truth about the Third Child* and started writing novels in 2017. Her three as yet unpublished novels are set in Western Australia.

While she has gradually gained more time as her daughters have grown older, writing with three children has been a challenge. Always a morning writer, Shannon says at a minimum she gets up at 5am and writes for half an hour, chipping away at her fiction projects. She's published numerous short stories and in 2022 was longlisted for the Hungerford Award for her book, *The Carrington Effect*.

When not writing her own books, getting articles published and running other people's social media accounts, Shannon works as a bookseller at Dymocks in Rokeby Road, and looks after their socials too. She has been there for three years and loves it.

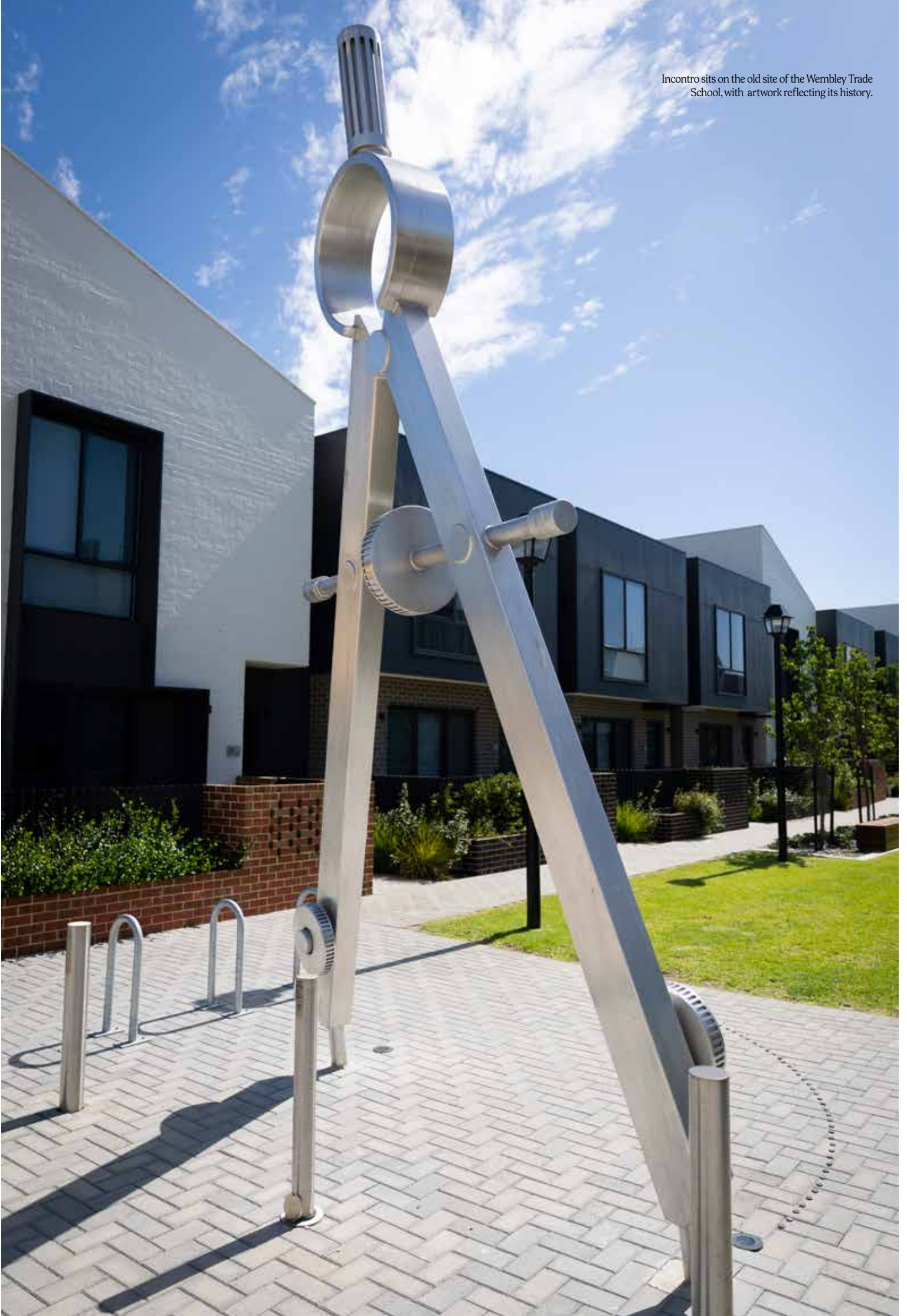
"I love working on the strip because you get to know a lot of people and the local businesses. There are also a lot of local authors in the area and we have a special stand for local books. We love to suggest them when people ask for recommendations."

An enthusiastic reader of work by local authors, they feature prominently in her large 'to be read' pile.

As a kid she remembers reading Trixie Belden adventures and wrote her own stories around the teenage detective. She loved Jeffrey Archer's short stories and always enjoyed the twist in the tale.

"I've always had an imagination, the kinds of things you come up with staring out a window. I'm also a history nerd. Everything I have done has included research but it's always about the people. I find people interesting and history too, so it's about where they intersect."

Incontro sits on the old site of the Wembley Trade School, with artwork reflecting its history.



# Street SMARTS



Artist Peter McMeikan

**The spirit of a former technical college lives on through the public art after its redevelopment.**

BY Ara Jansen

**W**hat artist Peter McMeikan loves about public art is that every brief is different. In a recent Subiaco job, Peter channelled the history of an old technical college to brighten the landscape of a new apartment and townhouse project.

“Every brief allows me to explore my creativity, the feasibility and what it would be like to create,” says Peter. “I enjoy the versatility of a different canvas each time. I love seeing something go from a brief, to seeing the idea develop from my head through to the finished product where it’s installed, and people can see it.”

The Incontro project sits on the site of the former Wembley Technical College or Wembley Trade School, fronting Bishop Street. It was constructed in 1947 as part of the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme. The courses offered at the campus were primarily fitting and machining, metal and

foundry techniques, engineering, surveying, drafting and cartography.

It’s these courses that artist Peter McMeikan used as part of his inspiration for the public art you’ll find on and around the development.

Peter’s work came in two stages, the first was related to the Incontro townhouses. Walk through the landscaped thoroughfare separating the two rows of townhouses and you’ll find two large pieces of art on it. Standing around five metres tall are a compass and a technical drawing pen both in brushed aluminium. Nearby there’s an arbor and the roof artwork features cut outs of foundry tools that also provide shadow play onto the pavement.

The second stage of the development will be an apartment block. With car parking on the two lower floors, Peter will create a powder-coated aluminium



#### URBAN ARTISTRY

Peter McMeikan's latest work at the Incontro site pays respect to the past with a view to the future.

screen with silver and copper overlay to enclose it. The designs were inspired by the technical drawing activities associated with the engineering, drafting and mechanical drawing courses the students would have undertaken.

The geometric patterns on the screens – which include cogs and draw from the building's sloped roofs - create a structural design overlaid and interconnected. Images of the college's shed-like former workshops provided a source of some creative shaping into the artwork leaving a legacy forever displayed.

The piece will be 58 metres long and around 4.5 metres high and pinned to the side of the building, giving it a three-dimensional feel. At a practical level, the design utilises the holes of a pegboard, so air circulates through the piece in and out of the car park while also creating the opportunity for whimsical shadow play.

"I wanted to depict the foundry, training and school and some of their activities," says Peter. "The compass and the pen pair up together as two instruments the students would have used. Making them so big allows you to draw out the detail in each of them.

"It's a contemporary site but I wanted to give it some historical context and make it a bit thought provoking. A lot of people after World War II needed to retrain and this was one of the sites they did that. Once I found out what they did there, it gave me ideas for the artwork as a way to bring a piece of the past into the present."

Ben Rosser, WA State Manager for Incontro developer Cedar Woods says the group place strong emphasis on honouring the history and former uses of the sites they develop. He says the integration of public art at Incontro is an important way to connect the new development with the rich heritage of the area, creating a deeper sense of place and enhancing the community's experience. He says the public art has created "striking landmarks that enhance community connection".

"Former students of the college have visited since to admire the artwork and share their stories, which





goes to show how proudly the local community has embraced the artwork,” says Ben.

“We worked closely with Peter to deliver the public artwork at Incontro, ensuring it aligned with our vision for the space and its connection to the history of the area. Peter’s concepts stood out from the beginning, and it was great to work with him to refine and deliver the final artwork.”

Peter says using public art in housing development not only offers developers a way to show off their work, but it draws people to come and explore the public parts of the site. He says it’s also an opportunity for people to be inspired and elevated by the art and the project.

“It’s great that people see different things when they see an artwork. I like the idea that my public art works can make people stop, look and explore.”

A lifelong artist - right back to those childhood horse drawings - Peter spent a good part of his career in radio advertising sales. Fifteen years ago, he decided to return to his first love - making art.

“I got re-directed through necessity, but I have always been an artist.”

For all his projects, Peter starts with hand drawn ideas - pen or pencil - before swapping over to create computer renderings.

His public art commissions have included Coolbellup Playground, Habitat Apartment in Applecross, Marina East at Ascot Waters, Quest Hotels Ascott and Midland, Rivervale’s Regatta Apartments and Midvale Shopping Centre.

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When the No More Blank Walls Subi masterminds asked Natalie Hiddlestone to lease one of her shops on Rokeby Road, Lisa O'Neill discovers it was the start of a colourful journey.

# Winged WONDERWALL



Australian birds flutter continuously in Natalie Hiddlestone's heart, whether it's red-tailed cockatoos like the ones she tends to at the Karaakin Black Cockatoo Conservation Centre or her collector's parrot Cecil, the unofficial boss of her home.

But perhaps the bird that has edged to the centre of her heart is the small but mighty willy wagtail, thanks to the spiritual connection Natalie developed with them following the death of her father and Subiaco community stalwart, Vern.

"I feel my dad around a lot, so many little things that are weird and hard to explain," Natalie said. "We never had willy wagtails at the shop before, but the day after my dad died 11 years ago, one flew past my ear and they've been coming to the shop every day since – now they line the wall of the Townsend Road office!"

So, when the opportunity to have the Hiddlestone Electrics' head office in Townsend Road painted, the subject was a no-brainer.

"My brief was Australian birds, that's all I wanted," Natalie said. "The black cockatoo was already taken with the James Giddy mural on Forrest Street Car Park, and the pink galah was being painted at Barker Road Car Park so I wasn't sure what they'd come up with."





*Restored memory 2793,  
Miser, 2024*



The No More Blank Walls Subi artist assigned, Miser developed a design for the 15-metre wall featuring willy wagtails in full flight, with no prior understanding of this symbolic choice.

“It blew me away actually, I said any Australian bird will do, but he chose the bird that connects me to Dad,” Natalie said. “It was even the same image that I have as a tattoo on my arm.”

The No More Blank Walls Subiaco project has brought a blaze of colour onto the traditional built landscape of Subiaco. Many heritage-listed buildings are scattered throughout the City, which can pose some boundaries to the amount and level of fresh aesthetics.

“The artwork has been done really well though, it’s all tasteful and something to be admired,” said Natalie.

Interestingly, it’s not her first rodeo with art installations, having approached the Subiaco Primary School to create some colourful artwork for the buildings her family owns around Hiddlestone Lane.

“I asked if they’d design and create some dragonflies in celebration of our 100th birthday five years ago, and I would provide all the materials and paint,” Natalie said. “They wrote it into their

curriculum for the year and every student played a part in the dragonflies.”

Beyond brightening the suburb, Natalie said the art has brought more people back into the suburb and the added bonus of shining a spotlight on our interaction with nature.

“The murals have created a lot of community engagement around the greater environment and the impact humans have on other species,” Natalie said. “The next step is embracing more food and watering stations for our birds, because the cockatoos are starving in the bigger community.”

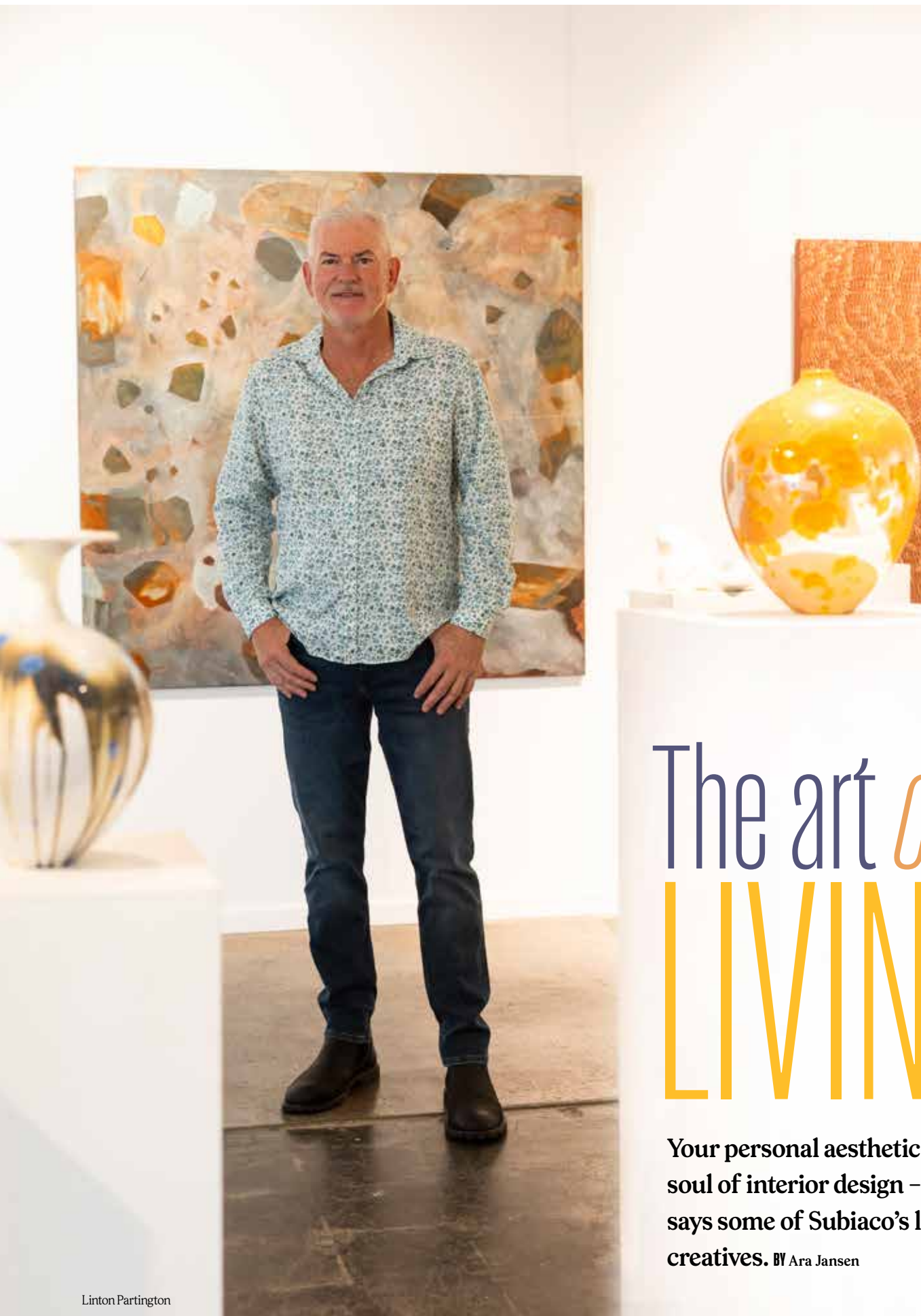
Visit Hiddlestone Electrics’ murals at 30 Townshend Road, where a new painting has joined the No More Blank Walls Subi feature.

“We commissioned the same artist to do the other side of the driveway, which is of baby willy wagtails in a nest, so it’s a complete picture now,” Natalie said. “Soon we’ll have two 40-foot sea containers arrive and we’ll have them painted with Australian birds, too. And yes, willy wagtails will feature amongst them.”

“

**The murals have created a lot of community awareness about the greater environment and the impact humans have on other species.**

~ Natalie Hiddlestone



# The art *of* LIVING

Your personal aesthetic is the soul of interior design – or so says some of Subiaco’s leading creatives. **BY** Ara Jansen

Linton Partington



## LINTON PARTINGTON

**Linton & Kay Galleries, 299 Railway Road**  
[lintonandkay.com.au](http://lintonandkay.com.au)

Fascinated by human beings' ability to make and create, gallerist Linton Partington has always decorated his home with art.

"I personally enjoy tinkering with things and I admire people creating anything with their hands, whether it's a wooden box or a painting," he says. "I admire human ingenuity and grew up doing so."

"I love having things that are handmade in my house and I like to look at them regularly. It's organic and from the human hand. There's generally a story or some kind of background attached."

Linton is highly curious about how people – artists in particular – are compelled to make art. Is it a material or a certain colour they are drawn to or is it a certain problem they want to resolve.

That's why, when it comes to choosing art for your home, the options and ideas are endless.

Linton is half of Linton & Kay, a well-known and respected gallery for lovers of fine art. Established in Subiaco in 1998, there are currently galleries in Cottesloe, Subiaco and West Perth as well as a curated collection at Cherubino Wines in Wilyabrup. He's also managing director of multidisciplinary arts company Voxlab Productions.

He argues that price – cheap or expensive – is not as important as the craftsmanship of something that makes it attractive to a potential buyer. That manifests as a potential attachment or emotion which hopefully makes you feel positive in some way.

"Over the last 27 years I've found art in the most fascinating places. You never know where you might pick up some interesting object. Some people have a knack for bringing items home, randomly placing them on the sideboard with other similarly acquired things and they seem to make it all work visually."

"My hallway has a space like that, filled with all sorts of objects, cheap, expensive, gifts, found, bought. Somehow, they all work together but may not necessarily comply with interior design principles."

When it comes to how people collect art at home, it varies greatly. More experienced collectors usually know what they want or may be willing to take a gallerist's advice on what might be suitable for their collection. They can also be quite specific in their tastes and only collect a certain artist, certain style or specific mediums.

At the other end of the spectrum are those with a lack of confidence and no experience in buying art. Linton says these people are often very successful in other walks of life but have had little exposure to art.

Art galleries are not scary places, you've just not yet learnt the language. Start by talking to the gallery

staff and asking them to offer some advice. They'll most likely ask you questions about where the piece might go and the kind of space it is. Do you want it for a piece of art or are you more concerned with making it fit the house? Neither is wrong, you just need to get clear – and ultimately you should love it.

Unless that's the point, you don't want art that will make you sad, scared, unhappy or nervous. If you're shown a piece of art, listen to what your body is saying.

"We have highly experienced designers on staff who can help people with their choices. Our designers can take art works for an in-home viewing to take any doubt out of the equation."

"Like with the art, we want to make a connection with our clients. Some people just want something blue. We'd also like them to have something they have a connection to, as well as it being blue." That also allows them to perhaps draw the client's attention to something complementary, whether it be in colour, texture or scale.

Ultimately Linton says they want you to love what you buy. One of the great things about becoming friendly with a gallerist is creating a relationship where they get to know your taste in art.

"You just don't want to sell them any old thing. You want them to be attached to it. You want to take them on a journey with it and potentially share this with them for a long time."



Tatiana Rosa



### TATIANA ROSA

**Elle Design Rugs, Unit 1 / 325 Rokeby Road**

***elledesignrugs.com.au***

***Instagram: elledesignrugs***

The single biggest mistake people make with choosing rugs for their home is picking one that is too small. According to Tatiana Rosa of Elle Design Rugs in Rokeby Road, everything on the floor needs to be held by the rug. This usually makes the space feel larger as well because your eye is often drawn to the rug.

“People often try to match their rug with the art on the wall,” she says. “I don’t think it’s about matching but complimenting the feel with both. Art – and rugs – should be special to you or speak to you. If you are investing in a beautiful rug like a piece of art, it has to do something to you and bring out emotion.

“It can be as bold or as soft as you like in terms of colour and design. Some people go for bright pinks and blues and other people choose something more neutral. A lot of it depends on how adventurous you are.”

Some people choose rugs purely so they match

the rest of the décor of colours in their home.

Tatiana encourages people to choose one which makes them feel something positive, similar to how you choose a piece of art. Just because it’s on the floor and people walk on it doesn’t mean less care should be taken.

“Investing in a rug should be like an investment in art,” Tatiana says about the rugs at Elle Design Rugs, which are from India and Iran. Some of the rugs are vintage (some are around 50 years old) and hail from palaces, government offices and stately homes and have been given a major contemporary lift.”

Originally an architectural draftsman and the subsequent owner of a number of businesses, Tatiana says she has always had a love for architecture and design. Elle Design Rugs has been her passion for 11 years.

She first fell in love with rugs a decade ago, after someone made a custom piece for her home. Tatiana’s favourite rug at home is a vintage gold and grey Persian which measures about five metres by four and a half metres.

## JOHN JULIUS

**John Julius Art Gallery, 421 Hay Street**  
[johnjuliusart.com](http://johnjuliusart.com)

Artist and gallery owner John Julius believes that people who want to hang art in their home generally look for something personally meaningful. Art that is bright, unique or quirky, the right size and shape and the right price also helps!

A long-time watercolourist, JJ says there's art hanging all over his home, which includes some of his own. Among other pieces, there are framed old photos of family members, a heartwarming reminder of the living and late.

"In one of the old photos there's a manicured garden our ancestors are walking in and it helps remind me of those who preceded us," says JJ. "I feel like there's a gentle attachment you are able to have with them every time you walk past. It's meaningful and that's important.

"I like to be able to complete a painting that reflects on something that has happened to me in the past or reminds me of a holiday. Whether its Rottneest for a day trip or a special place overseas with immediate family, there's an inner peace such a painting gives you."

If our homes are a place for comfort, solace and peace, then JJ says we should want to have objects around us which elicit those feelings and indeed cultivate them. Art is a perfect way to do that.

The John Julius Art Gallery exhibits work by artists and artisans who work in the medical field, which range from watercolours and acrylics to oil on canvas, flower art and metal art.

While it's easy to identify art that sells in a gallery, JJ says there are other types of art which you'll often

see in a home. Take the humble but proudly pinned art brought home from school. It has little monetary value (unless perhaps your child grows into a famous artist) but is huge on happiness points. Straight to a prime spot on the fridge.

"That kind of art provides joy and colour and memories and of course comes with a sense of pride for the child that you are happy to hang up some of their work."

JJ suggests finding some wall space for a set of cork tiles where all kinds of artwork and arty creations can get proudly pinned for a real-life Pinterest board. It also saves your paintwork.

A curiosity about the world and a love for maps can mean one mounted on a wall might bring you as much joy as a painting. Such items also make great talking points – like finding a map of Sydney before the bridge and Opera House were built or Perth prior to the Bell Tower and Elizabeth Quay.

"You can make art out of something like an old map by having it sympathetically framed. People who like botanicals have those framed on their walls and others collect old books. Or you might have bought a pot overseas and place it on the mantelpiece as decorative art that provides memories of happy times."

When it comes to budget, JJ says while it's about what you can pay, it's also about what you are willing to pay for a memory and what you value. Of course, it's very personal and certainly is influenced by your time or stage of life.

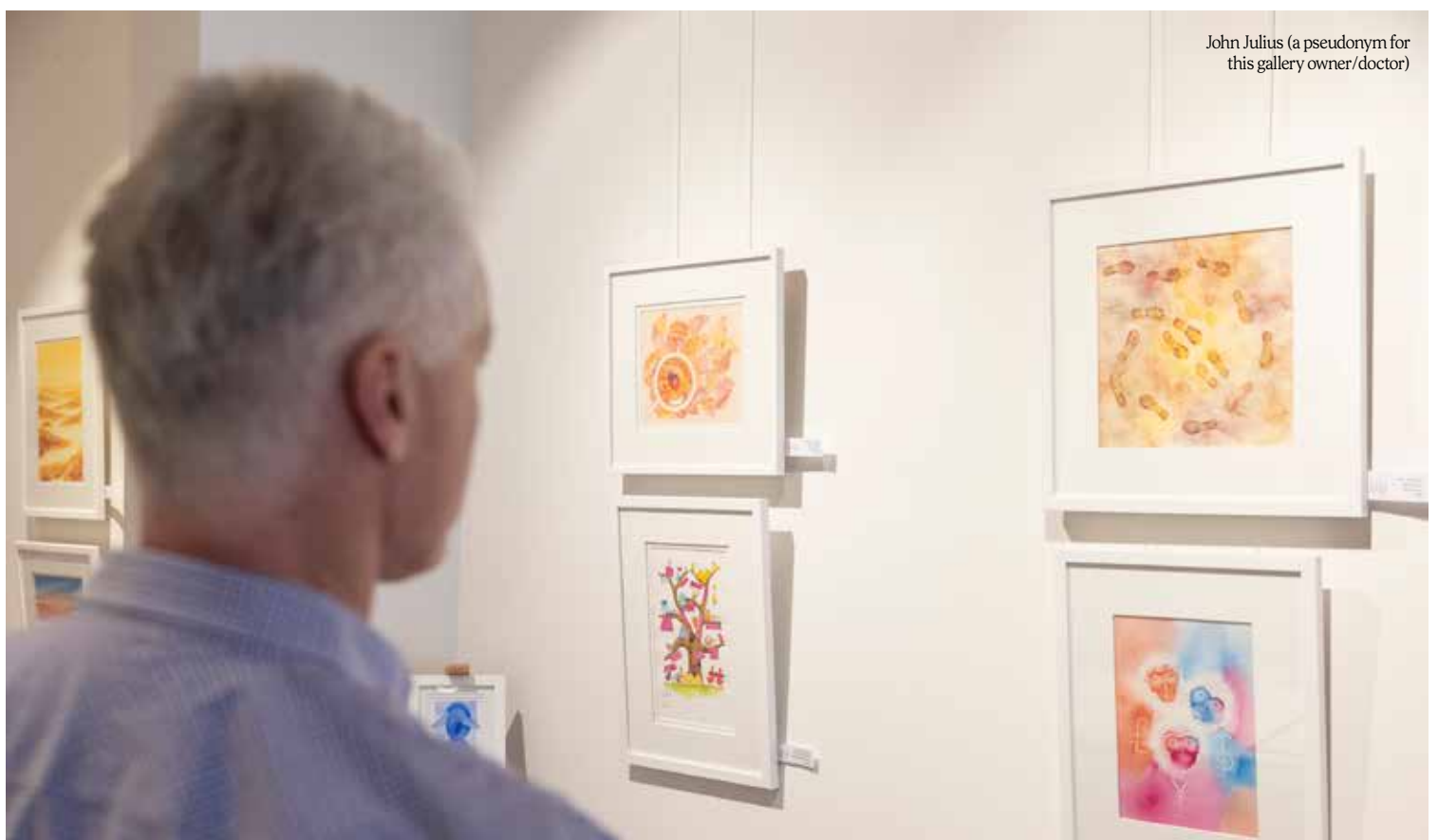
"There are people who buy a fancy car because that's what they like. In choosing a cheaper car, it provides an opportunity to spend money in another way. It's about what you value. Do you want a \$10,000 pushbike or a gorgeous painting or four!"

“

**If our homes are a place for comfort, solace and peace, then JJ says we should want to have objects around us which elicit those feelings and indeed cultivate them.**



Work at John Julius Art Gallery.



John Julius (a pseudonym for this gallery owner/doctor)

“  
Art in the home  
creates personality  
and interest as well  
as giving people joy.  
~ Jacinda Heather



Jacinda Heather



### JACINDA HEATHER

**Imagine That Lifestyle, 16 Rokeby Road**  
**[imaginethatlifestyle.com.au](http://imaginethatlifestyle.com.au)**

Art in your home points directly to your personality – and it’s an opportunity to also inject your home with that personality.

“When you are looking for art, you should always go for something you feel an emotional connection to,” says Imagine That Lifestyle’s Jacinda Heather.

Her Subiaco store provides art sourcing, custom made art and furniture, fashion and interior styling.

“Don’t necessarily try to match your art to your décor. There are many ways to artify your home without the ‘match to your cushions’ approach. Plus, you can vary things to create your own style.”

One option she suggests is to pick a wall and hang small art works together. They can be disparate or have a theme, which could be as obvious as all being nature studies, similar tones or simply by framing them the same way.

“This is a great way to go if you are not a collector and want to play with a few different styles of artwork,” she says. “If you don’t want to fill your whole house with art and have a more minimal style, a feature wall could be enough for you. There does not need to be a lot of cohesion.”

She suggests there are many different ways to do it and depending on how creative you want to be. If you love order and uniformity, enclosing everything in the same black frames (or any other colour) will satisfy.

If a mix and match is more your speed then different objects and paintings collected together can create a layered, eclectic vibe that feels both personal and effortlessly stylish. The same goes for treasured finds from a holiday or your daily beach walk. They have a flow because they are yours.

“Art in the home creates personality and interest as well as giving people joy. Objects collected on your travels take you back to that time or place. It’s like a response you have to perfume; there’s often an emotional connection.

“Often customers will come in and not know what they are looking for. They want a piece of art and

don’t have a clue where to start. I say if it turns your head more than twice, maybe it’s speaking to you and maybe there’s a connection there. For example, it could be the simplicity element of the art piece that resonates and it may make you feel a sense of calm. It’s that feeling I will ask customers about: How do you want your art to make you feel?

“Most people just want a nice home – compared to being a collector – and are not interested in collecting for investment. Then it’s not about the value but what you like.”

In the art versus décor debate, Jacinda suggests starting with your art and work the rest from there. Tease and pull colours from your treasured art and use some in the soft furnishings, if your goal is to tie the room together.

“Looking at colour can often give you a starting point. If you love colourful abstract art then you can mirror those colours in small quantities in soft furnishings. Do you want your home to be filled with energy or calm? Your art choices can help influence that. Look at furnishings as a whole and see if they are uplifting or dark and moody.

“There’s a lot to think about. An artwork that will work in a calm, light and airy place might not be the right choice if your home has lots of dark walls. I always ask how the home is furnished before we start talking art.”

Jacinda suggests the more adventurous think outside the box. Sometimes it’s *The Art of Looking Sideways*, the title of one of her favourite design books. Does a piece have to sit smack bang in the middle of a wall? Does an artwork have to be positioned central in a frame?

If a piece is behind glass, make sure it is non-reflective. While it costs much more than standard glass, for a high value artwork you can’t skimp on the framing. How the light falls on it might also dictate where you hang it and what you actually see. The sun is harsh in WA, so avoid fading and be mindful where you choose to place art.

“I feel as passionately about your space as you do and I want to make sure you get as much joy from it as possible.”

# Living in a MATERIAL WORLD

A love for materials and using her hands is just as important for sculptor Monia Allegre as the finished artwork. BY Ara Jansen



*Direction, 2024*



*Clouds, 2024*



*Mrs Robinson, 2024*



*Ocean Hues, 2022*



*Femme Masquée, 2020*

**M**onia Allegre has a love for materials. Whether it's fabric to sew bunting, concrete for a sculpture or tiles for a mosaic, she enjoys working with them all.

"I love welding," she says. "It's incredible, watching metal turn red and then into liquid. I'm a sculptor and I love playing with different materials."

She loves using her hands to mould and make but says she "doesn't really try to have presentable hands at all". Equally she's certainly used considerable amounts of different moisturisers.

"Not only do I love working with all sorts of materials, but the process is really important. I really enjoy putting the artwork together. There's lots of focus and concentration and the work can be very slow. I'm a slow producer and I don't produce en masse."

"I did one artwork where I folded 5000 origami papers to create a one-metre diameter suspended sphere. It took three months folding three hours a day. I couldn't do more than that. Someone asked if I got other people to help me but no, the process is part of the artwork. It's my time and it's valuable."

An artist for more than 30 years, Monia migrated from France when her husband found a job in the north-west of WA. Her three children were born in Subiaco and apart from a few years where they returned to France, Subiaco has always been home.

Coming from France, when Monia was looking for the right community to settle in, street life was an important factor in their choice. As was being able to walk to many places and not have to park the car.

"Subi was the closest for us. There was public transport and we'd heard that Subiaco Primary School was really good."

"When we came back from France the first thing I noticed was all the trees. I never would have imagined that I would have missed them so much. I got really attached to the trees. They are green all year long and full of life. I really notice it when I go to areas that are less tree-lined."

While trees don't necessarily feature in her art, Monia says they give her a great sense of peace and serenity as she explores societal issues around her and around the world, gender issues and politics.

She's done a series on sport – sculptural footy balls – because she knows how important it is to many Australians. There was also a series of small figures by the ocean. Beach life is important part of the WA psyche, though Monia says she will never understand early morning swimming.

"I'm in awe of people who wake up early and then get in the cold water."

Monia's work is diverse and she says sometimes that confuses people, because she doesn't just stick to one theme. It's because she wants her work to take people on a journey, both with her themes and materials.

Lately she's been working in porcelain, thanks to the addition of a kiln to her backyard studio. She also uses other spaces for larger works, or contractors, like she did for a piece for Sculpture by the Sea. Monia is a member and supervisor at the Lake Monger Community Shed, where she can share knowledge gleaned from former carpenters, welders and technicians from all industries as well as having access to well-equipped workshops.

"Many of my mates are older than me and I love their stories and they are full of humour. Community for me is really important. I really enjoy talking about art to people. I also like to share my knowledge and sometimes organise talks about contemporary art. Sometimes people think it's unapproachable and enigmatic but there's lots of contemporary art which is quite open. If you give people some hints on how to approach it and not to be scared, then you can learn how to read it."

Starting out by studying art in Paris, Monia says she never wanted to be anything other than an artist. Though she did take a temporary detour into sound engineering in her 30s, she has continued to study in the arts. She uses her computer design skills to

help create two- and three-dimensional renderings of work before she creates her maquettes, small scale models of larger sculptural work.

Monia's creativity extends to the family kitchen where recipes always receive an extra personal touch. She's spent many years experimenting and most of the time the meals have been a success. The family are apparently used to it and she's proud her kids are a little more adventurous than others they know.

Liking to keep her hands busy, she also sews. Amongst her friends Monia is known for the personalised hand-made fabric bunting she sews for special events like baby showers and weddings.

As a young child, Monia loved to draw. Living in a small high-rise apartment there wasn't much space for sport so she spent all her time drawing. She loved the school drawing club, did art as a final subject and just wanted to continue. Throw in a love of literature and that's where she put almost all her time and focus.

Her parents supported her and she spent many hours in the Louvre, at a time when it was free for students and enjoyed the ultimate luxury – not having to queue! There are worse cities in which to be an artist.

As she became a mother to three, art had to take a backseat for a while. For a full decade Monia made no art, which was a huge conflict for her, especially being so far from family and with no help.

"Motherhood was a hard struggle. I love my kids but during those 10 years I really needed that space. When they were a bit more independent, I got back to it straight away. It has given me back a lot of my sanity."

"Doing something with your hands – whether it's drawing or knitting – can be a powerful tool for your sanity and helps mindfulness. You don't have to be good. I think that's an important health prescription, especially if you do it with other people. Now I'm back with my art, I'm very strong with my family. This is my time now, tonight dinner is yours."

**[moniaallegre.com](http://moniaallegre.com)**





St John of God's art collection is one of the largest of any health care provider in Australia.

# The art *of* RECOVERY

**St John of God Health Care has one of Australia's significant private art collections and they proudly show it off in their facilities, including at Subiaco Hospital.**

**BY** Ara Jansen. **PHOTOGRAPHY** Henry Whitehead/Lucida Studio

**E**very day as she walks the halls of a hospital, Carina McPherson sees the power of art in action.

In places where people are often at their lowest and most vulnerable, her work as an art curator subtly supports patient wellbeing.

Carina has been St John of God Health Care's art curator since 2022. She was also born at St John of God Subiaco Hospital.

"It's a pretty amazing experience to be able to come to work every day and work in an area you're passionate about," says Perth-based Carina, who has previously worked with other collections at places such as the WA Museum and the State Library of WA.

Established in Western Australia in 1895, St John of God Health Care is one of the largest Catholic providers of health care services in Australia. It is also custodian of the largest contemporary visual arts collection of any health care provider in Australia.

As well as numerous hospitals and medical centres in Victoria and New South Wales, in WA St John of God Health Care has six hospitals and several small medical facilities. They all have pieces of the collection installed in public, semi-public and private spaces.

The St John of God collection has around 2,000 pieces of work by contemporary Australian and West Australian artists dating back to the 1960s. They must be professional artists. The work is either bought by the group or received through donation or bequests. They range in form from oil on canvas and photographs through to sculptures and large public art. People visiting the hospitals and medical sites are encouraged to explore the hallways to contemplate and consider the work.

"The collection is exciting because it features a collection

of artists working in a range of mediums and it allows an opportunity for us to collect work which explores new areas like digital and audio as well.

“It’s a working collection and the pieces have to work hard for us and be robust enough to withstand the hospital environment, compared to a gallery or museum environment.”

Notable WA artists featured in the diverse collection displayed at Subiaco Hospital include Carly Le Cerf, Joanna Lamb, Robert Gear, Helen Smith, Ronnie Tjampitjinpa and Josie Kunoth Petyarre.

The largest work in the collection is Cox River by Barney Ellaga, an acrylic on canvas painting which is four metres long by two metres tall. The smallest artwork is a tiny silver sculpture called Jumping Ship by WA’s Felicity Peters. It’s five centimetres long by four centimetres tall.

Around 250 artworks are on display at any one time and are regularly changed over. Specific attention is paid to using works which resonate with an area, such as Aboriginal works from regions relevant to each site.

“We want as many of these artworks to be seen by as many people as possible, so you’ll notice there’s art in the high traffic areas of each site – like hallways and patient lounges.

“There is also art in the non-public, back-of-house areas of Subiaco Hospital,” Carina says. In these areas staff often get attached to certain works and when it’s time to swap over ask for them not to be moved. In some instances, it’s the opposite and they are happy to see something new hung.

With redevelopment currently going on at Subiaco and Murdoch hospitals, Carina is readying plans for what art will be able to hang in the new spaces.

“This is a private collection for public good. We



Artworks by Brad Rimmer and Walangkurra Napanangka.



Photograph by Henry Whitehead/Lucida Studio.



*Mountain Devil Lizard* by Josie Kunoth Petyarre, 2009, acrylic on canvas. Courtesy of the artist and Mossenson Galleries.

want to share the collection and take a proactive approach. We recognise the importance of a local identity and place in WA and the large number of artists in the collection reflects that.

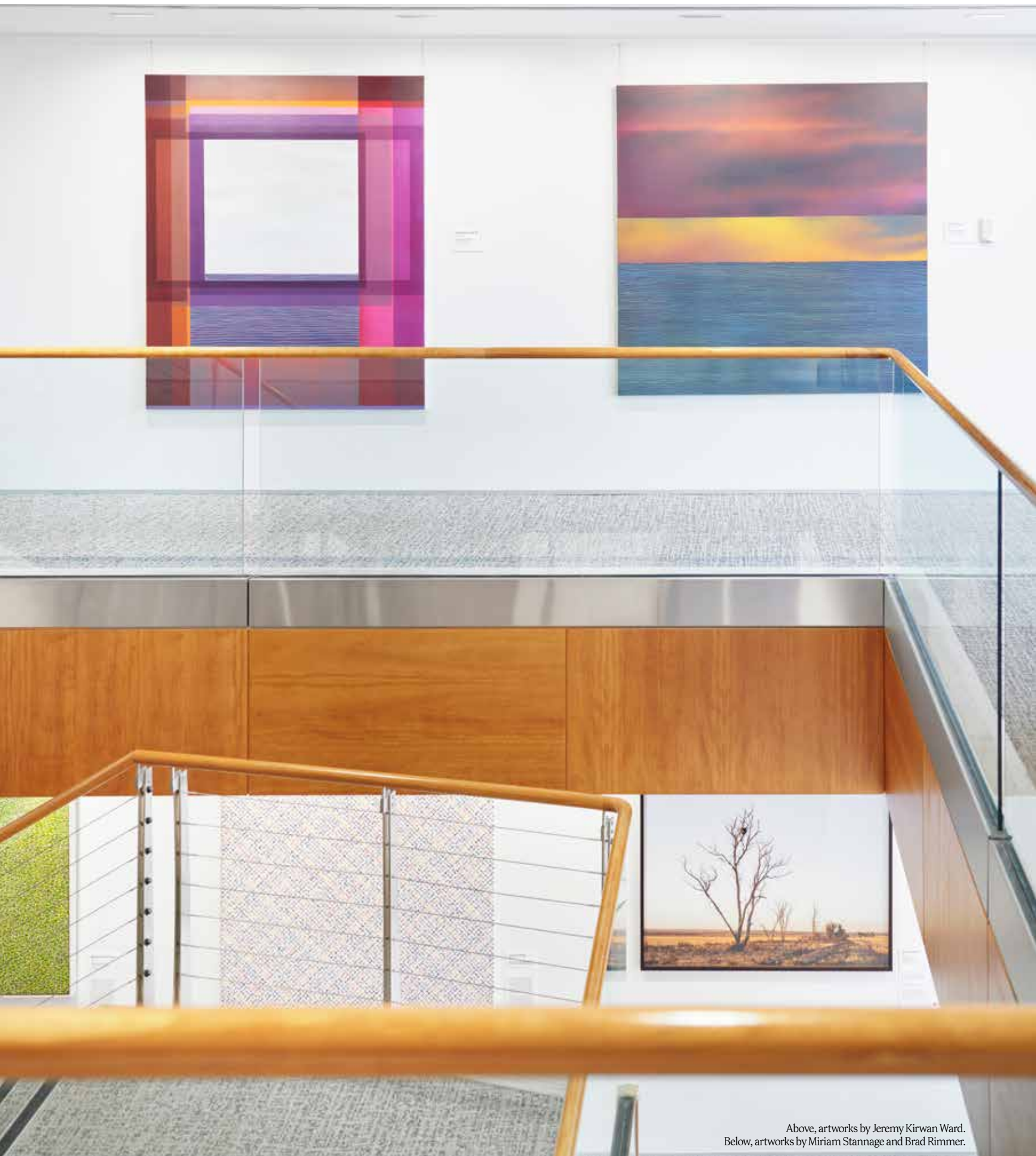
“A hospital is full of patient areas. We want to create a reflective space but also one that reflects place. The Sisters of St John of God have always been supportive of the arts and were quite open to the avant-garde even.

“There’s a rich tradition of art in the Catholic Church. It’s considered part of the spiritual process and experience. The sisters were not afraid to commission and collect artwork.”

When people enter a hospital, they are not usually there by chance but instead for a specific issue. They are often in a vulnerable state and Carina says the art displayed needs to be empathetic. That doesn’t mean however that it should all be cheery rainbows and happy scenes.

“What our collection reveals is how art can connect with the soul, with human emotions and experiences. The subject matter and the styles of





Above, artworks by Jeremy Kirwan Ward.  
Below, artworks by Miriam Stannage and Brad Rimmer.



**ANTICLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:**

*Petrol Station 02* by Joanna Lamb, 2020, acrylic on polyester. Courtesy of the artist and Art Collective WA.

*Looking Back Looking Forward* by Robert Gear, 2014, oil on linen. Courtesy of the artist.

*Warburton Creek* by Carly Le Cerf, 2023, oil and ancaustic wax on board. Courtesy of the artist and Michael Reid Galleries.

“

**A welcoming, healing and stimulating environment featuring art can help patients cope with pain and pain tolerance, reduce stress, provide a distraction, encourage empathy and support general wellbeing.**



work form a rich display that caters to a wide variety of tastes. A piece that’s moody more than cheerful acknowledges there’s a sensitivity to the circumstances and context for the people viewing the work.

“I talk regularly to people visiting the hospital and they often comment that the art they see can bring them a sense of peace or solace.

“In a hospital, art forms backdrop to people’s life experiences. The artwork can be really sensitive in that it also allows people to feel different ways.”

“It’s not always happy times and sometimes the nature of an artwork can help someone connect with their own emotions, quietly offer a sense of empathy or a sense of refresh. A piece of art can also remind you of a better time in your life or a positive memory from childhood. Art has the ability to move and elevate us amidst those extremely difficult emotions.”

“As a curator it’s a beautiful and constant experiment to see how people respond to the art.”



Sister Eugenia Brennan

# Answering *the call*

**Sister Eugenia Brennan arrived in Perth as a girl and has dedicated her life to the betterment of others, much of that in Subiaco. BY Ara Jansen**

**W**hen Sister Eugenia Brennan boarded a ship to Perth from London, little did the teen know the abundant future that was ahead of her.

The combination of faith and work has given this Sister of St John of God, who is now in her 80s, adventures of body and soul her younger self could scarcely imagine. Many of them too, have happened in and around Subiaco, where she now lives.

“Life is full of changes and you are called to be where people are and when you are, you should be with them in whatever is happening,” says Eugenia. “Sometimes I think I know more things about other things than I know about God; but I know God is everywhere and finding God in all people and all situations is what’s important.

“My commitment as a Sister is to give of yourself in religious life. We commit ourselves to go where we are sent. I had a vision to be a nurse. I had six weeks on the wards as an assistant and then I was sent to train as a medical scientist in diagnostic pathology.”

Eugenia spent 15 years in a pathology lab helping discover the cause of diseases in patients.

“You serve God no matter what you do,” says Eugenia, explaining that compared to a nun, who usually lives a cloistered and contemplative life, a Sister’s mission is to be out in the world doing work and serving those in need. She felt a nun “just seemed beyond me” but knows inherently that where she is and has been, is exactly where she’s supposed to be.

Over a lifetime Eugenia has held numerous

occupations – always in service – and earned degrees in science, theology and divinity in Australia as well as a master’s and doctorate in history in Ireland. She trained at DC General Hospital in Washington DC as a hospital chaplain. She has also been a long-time guardian of St John of God’s heritage and history and continues to be involved in tracking the Sisters’ history.

“I regarded going to train as a chaplain as another calling but it was also jolting to leave what I had been doing, which was working in a pathology lab in Ballarat. I was trying to become a professor of medical science and suddenly I was doing something else. But I grew to love pastoral care.

“It really showed me that the call in this case wasn’t to convert anyone but to hear people, meet

## “ Now I believe that God is as near to me as the air. I realise that my faith in God is unshakable. ~ Sister Eugenia Brennan

them where they are at and not be judgemental, especially in a hospital where patients are of all different faiths. It would have been so wrong of me to assume everyone thinks as I do.

“Training to be a chaplain is very good in enhancing your own self-awareness. It’s not so much about learning theology but becoming self-aware enough to never get in between a person you are talking to and their God. This way you are also facilitating a process of self-discovery of your own awareness.”

There have been hard times when her faith has faltered, but Eugenia says it has never left her.

“Now I believe that God is as near to me as the air. I realise that my faith in God is unshakable. I get disappointed in people and organisations about all sorts of things. But I believe if something is wrong and I have done nothing about it, then it is up to me to do something.

“I’m not sure all the time. If something happens, I might react quickly but I always know that I am not helpless and God is here. I also know I live in a community where there’s justice and support for me. Most of the time when I struggle it’s because I fail to ask for help.”

Eugenia loves learning. She has an inquisitive mind and likes to know the why of things. That sits comfortably side-by-side with her faith.

“I have been too close to people at the edges of life – the dying and the arriving. A doctor once told me ‘I have known a lot of atheists in my life, but I have never known a dying one’. When death is near people have often said ‘I would like to believe what you believe’.”

While Eugenia doesn’t preach, she believes the basic Catholic values of love, service, truth, justice, forgiveness and hope can be used by everyone, Catholic or otherwise, to live kinder and more generous lives.

The Sisters of St John of God were founded in Wexford, Ireland in 1871 and like their patron saint, dedicated their lives to alleviating human suffering and caring for the afflicted, sick and dying. On invitation, from the Bishop of Perth Matthew Gibney the first group of sisters arrived in Fremantle from Ireland in 1895 with a mission to care for the sick. They established a convent hospital and visited the sick in their homes, eventually running hospitals in Coolgardie and Kalgoolie. In 1898 they opened a convent, school and hospital in Subiaco.

Eugenia was a teenager when she arrived in Perth in April 1959 onboard the SS Oronsay from London with several other girls. Like the women who had preceded her, she had pledged herself to the order and when she arrived in Subiaco, started doing the good works of the Sisters.

“I had decided to take a year of exploration in the novitiate,” Eugenia says. “By the time the decision to

come to Australia was made I was quite at ease with that because I felt I was being called to be a nursing sister in Australia. The Sisters of St John of God were the congregation for me. I had a great sense of being called to look after sick children and others.”

By the 1980s the Sisters had nine hospitals as well as pathology and radiology services. At the end of the decade the creation of St John of God Health Care transferred the Sisters’ services to the new group. It is now one of the biggest Catholic healthcare providers in the country, operating 26 facilities here and in New Zealand. It acquired facilities from other orders, such as Sisters of Mercy in Mt Lawley. They have not forgotten the Sisters’ aims of caring for the poor and marginalised through community, care and mental health programs, outreach, support for new parents and international initiatives.

The variety of Eugenia’s jobs within the group has contributed to a life of richness and has included plenty of travel, such as taking more than a dozen groups on pilgrimages to Spain, regular visits to the UK and 20 years in St John of God Ballarat Hospital.

She has also spent many years researching the life and work paths of the original Sisters who came from Wexford. “The sisters did not see themselves as doing something historical or special. They were just busy doing it. It was more important to be the best you could rather than recording it.”

Since the first sisters arrived, Eugenia says more than 300 women have come to WA. Many of them are now buried at Karrakatta. Perth was the only big city where the Sisters settled. The rest were in regional areas because they didn’t have the services like Perth.

Now retired from her multi-profession career, Eugenia of course remains active in the church and active with her faith. A longtime Subiaco resident, she lives not far from the hospital and St Joseph’s on Salvado Road, one of the first areas she came to upon arriving in Perth a lifetime ago.

Eugenia loves to read, sew, cook and entertain. She listens to podcasts, loves fabrics, being out in nature and credits Pilates for mobility. The sister advocates always making time for things which are important to you. For Eugenia, it’s all those things and practising her faith but also keeping up with what’s new in the church.

“Some days I marvel at the life I have had. I have had the opportunity to be in different places and seen extraordinary sights – I saw Jimmy Carter’s inauguration and I’ve been to Victoria by train. Coming by boat to Perth was hard and magical. We stopped in Naples to receive our mission crosses because we couldn’t get to Rome.

“I keep up with what’s happening in the church and the exciting and unbelievable things. That’s exhilarating for me. I feel full of hope for the future.”



### Six Sisters of St John of God are being celebrated through a unique exhibition in Subiaco.

Conceived and created by portrait painter Jenny Davies and photographer Dr Robert Davies, the exhibition is titled *St John’s Sisters*. Both artists have a close connection to the St John of God community while Jenny is also a sports physio and Robert a urologist.

Their exposure to the inner workings of a hospital helped inspire the project during the COVID pandemic, a period which led them to reflect even more deeply on art’s ability to transcend challenging experiences.

Created between 2023 and 2025, Jenny drew graphite drawings and painted a portrait in oil of each Sister while Robert photographed the women through the lens of their religious life. All three mediums are designed to capture the Sisters’ personalities, vocations and stories.

The women featured are Sister Eugenia Brennan, Sister Teresina Connolly, Sister Romanus Dee, Sister Martina Hoban, Sister Columba Howard and Sister Eileen O’Grady.

The Sisters migrated to Perth as young women and now in their older years remain united in their history and either live or spend much of their time in and around Subiaco. They represent the more than 300 women who joined the Sisters of St John of God and came to Australia.

**The exhibition is located in the Clinic Gallery on Level 2 of the Subiaco Medical Clinic.**



The Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company in their new premises.

# NEW DIGS, SAME SPIRIT

## Theatre company Yirra Yaakin have joyfully moved into new offices in the Subiaco Arts Centre. **BY Ara Jansen**

**F**or theatre company Yirra Yaakin, moving into new offices in the Subiaco Theatre Centre is more than just more space, some new paint and different art on the walls.

It's another way to seal their relationship with the Subiaco community. It also reflects a new era for one of Australia's most respected Aboriginal arts organisations.

Artistic director Maitland Schnaars says the company love being in Subiaco, love their new space and remain enchanted by the gardens which surround them. You could say they have their artistic heart firmly planted in Subiaco.

"The move into a larger office is symbolic of the growth of our company - and it's continued growth," he says. "It's also symbolic of all the work we've been doing over the past few years to encourage and drive

that growth.

Yirra Yaakin has been based in the Subiaco Arts Centre since 2015. With their move to new offices within the centre, the engagement is done, the wedding has happened and they are truly settled in.

"Being a Blackfella theatre company comes with an extra expectation on us," says Maitland.

"We have to walk the line between black and white Australia. There're expectations from both sides. We have to stay connected to our community because the company is for the community and we need to tell these stories our way, create work for our artists and at the same time engage with a lot of non-Indigenous people.

"We want to attract and enlighten people with our stories. We carry that with everything we do."

A quote he lives by says 'don't look to us and what

we can do on stage but through us and at yourself.” Maitland says each season attempts to deepen that connection by sharing the stories and lessons contained in the shows Yirra Yaakin present.

“When I work with young actors, I want them to learn to be grounded on stage. You can draw the audience to you with that. Send energy into the earth and she will give you energy and it will ground you in place. Then, it will come through in your performance. This is the thing we have been talking about for generations because the past affects and shows who you are in the present.”

The acclaimed poet, actor and playwright says he encourages the whole company to regularly find a sense of calm or seek grounding in the green of gardens. Cue some calm, deep breathing and maybe bare feet on the grass.

When a role is particularly challenging or consuming, Maitland says it’s important for actors to reconnect with themselves. Having direct access to greenery and nature right outside the door is important and hugely valuable, not to mention potentially therapeutic.

“You have to know how to look after yourself. As a director of a show, you have to be mindful of your actors and what they are going through. You need to help them with that both during and after a production.”

For example, the 2024 production of *Brothers Wreck* explored themes such as suicide. During rehearsals on a Thursday, Maitland says they would do some sort of relaxation exercise. On a Friday they would often finish early and close with a meditation.

He says continuing this type of holistic care after a production can also help reduce post-performance blues or the sense of disconnection after an intense, compact process.

Maitland appeared as *MacBeth* in an award-winning production of *Hecate* which was staged in Noongar language. While one of his proudest moments, he says it was equally one of his most difficult and quite frankly broke him.

“Once the production was done, I had to put myself back together and it took a little while. Theatre companies need to be mindful of that – not just supporting actors during the process but after, for a period of time.”

Along with a couple of other personal experiences the artistic director says it has been drilled into him the importance of looking after and supporting the positive mental health of the company.

Yirra Yaakin aim to present three main stage shows a year. Maitland would like that to be the minimum. It’s all about consistency and a level of dependability in the community. Once again, a grounding relationship to place.

“That’s providing more opportunities for Aboriginal actors and the more shows we can do the more stories we can tell. The three-show format is really connecting with people. We’re also trying to push regional touring as well. While we’re based in Noongar Country, it’s important to get outside the metro area.

“I grew up in a small town where nothing got to

us. In a country town, if you’re an Aboriginal fella, all you see is sport. You can think that’s the only way out. Suddenly if there’s a place telling stories you relate to and there’s Aboriginal actors on stage you might realise there’s another option.

“Not all kids want to do sport. Performing and storytelling is in our genes, I believe. We have been telling stories and performing or as long as we have been here – just check out the oldest rock art. Like dancing and singing at corroborees, it’s all art. We don’t show young people these other options enough.”

Until he figured it out, Maitland did play footy for a while. Nickname, The Enforcer. He made sure the other team’s big fellas couldn’t mess with his team’s small fellas.

Maitland made a late entry into the arts at 36. It coincided with him becoming a father to triplets, who turn 26 in September. Being a stay-at-home dad gave him the courage to follow his artistic dream. He figured he couldn’t eventually tell his own kids to follow their dreams or dream big if he didn’t have the courage for himself. He enrolled at WAAPA.

Fast forward, more than two and half decades and Maitland has jumped and dreamed in the biggest ways, locally, nationally and internationally to currently helming his third season at Yirra Yaakin as artistic director while continuing his own work as an

independent artist.

Maitland has a print of Shaun Tan’s *The Water Buffalo* in his office and says it is a constant reminder that he – and the company – exist to make the future better for others.

There’s a Noongar saying related to the concept of *dadirri*, which emphasises deep listening and quiet observation. “Sit, do not speak, watch, listen and learn,” it asks. This practice involves stopping, observing and carefully absorbing information to foster a deeper understanding and connection to yourself, others and the environment.

It’s a line the artist says often comes to mind and runs around in his head.

“I’m always thinking about what I can do about growing and expanding the company – which currently has a lot to do with increasing our subscriber base and how we sell tickets. All the people before me in the company have given me things to build on. We should never stay the same, we should always change and grow.

“It’s a massive privilege to help take the company to the next level, but it’s also our job to care for it for when the next people come along. And in times of uncertainty, we will continue to tell our stories our way.”

**Visit [yirrayaakin.com.au](http://yirrayaakin.com.au)**



*Panawathi Girl*, a Yirra Yaakin production.

# Tour *de* Force

As one of Perth's most walkable inner-city precincts where the streets, splashed with murals, are alive with creativity, we speak with some of Subiaco's residents and regulars to discover their top spots to stop on a 15-minute wander. **BY** Tori Wilson



*Flaming Galahs*, Curtis Hylton, 2024



*Moments that make us*, Tessa Dorotich, 2024

Just west of the Perth CBD, where the city's glass towers give way to leafy streets and historic shopfronts is Subiaco—a neighbourhood buzzing with creative energy and bones that go way back.

Walk through Subi and you'll feel it: a place that builds vibrancy off the back of its heritage. Originally a working-class enclave settled in the 19th century by Benedictine monks and early European migrants, the area today is a bustling inner-city hub.

Along Rokeby Road, the spine of Subiaco, locals sip flat whites outside wood-panelled coffee shops, retirees stroll past long-standing bakeries with red-brick façades, and teenagers weave through crowds on skateboards. Side streets branch off into a mix of quiet residential pockets and unexpected laneways where murals, fairy lights, and pop-up wine bars create hidden social nooks.

But what makes Subiaco really stand out as one of Perth's most liveable neighbourhoods is its walkability. At every corner, captivating murals are splashed upon walls, public sculptures are studded through parks and creative or historic spaces add to the inner-city streets. It makes sense the area has a knack for attracting creatives and keeping them.



*Unexpected Journey*, Dan Bianco, 2024



**TAKE A MOMENT** A walk through Subiaco will reveal art 'embedded in the everyday', says Artrage's CEO Jo Thomas.

ARTRAGE CEO, creative performer and recent Subiaco resident Jo Thomas is just one of said creatives inspired by Subiaco's easy access to diverse art and heritage.

Having spent time in several of Australia's major cities, as well as London, New York, Barcelona, San Francisco, Edinburgh and Manchester, Jo is innately aware that art and architecture define a neighbourhood and its personality.

"When art is embedded in the everyday it builds the sense of place and community. I believe we are all fundamentally creative beings and the more we see that reflected around us, the more it encourages our own innovative and creative thinking," says Jo. "It's all crucial to how we define ourselves and welcome everyone in."

When asked where she would take a friend on a 15-minute walk through Subi, naturally Jo says

Rokeby Road would be her starting point.

"(I would then) wander off into laneways and carparks wherever they appeared. The fun for me is finding new pieces in unexpected urban places. I would then go a little further afield down towards Subiaco Common to visit the ducks, the dogs and the swans, the meandering creeks and pond and the fabulous street art and architecture—both historic and new—surrounding it. The art pieces, and remaining historic architecture, that reflect past manufacturing history of the area are wonderful."

For The Orangery Gallery owner and Subiaco resident Mark Coughlan, 15 minutes would only scratch the surface of all Subiaco has to offer, his creative walk of the city would begin in Price Street in Subi Centro. In Atkinson Road, the collection of sculptures by Perth-based artist Stuart Green immediately sets the tone.

*Still Life With Pears,*  
Jarad Danby, 2024



*Curl,* Geoffrey Drake-Brockman, 2021

“Stuart Green’s works in Atkinson Road are striking and impressive in size, shape and texture and also connect with the history of that part of Subiaco when there was a ceramics factory on the site,” says Mark, who would then walk through Carter Lane Park to take in views of the captivating sculpture, *Curl* (2021).

“Geoffrey Drake-Brockman’s large reflective work *Curl* is the centrepiece of Carter Lane Park. It’s nearly four-metres tall and looks like it might have rolled down the hill and come to rest in the park,” he says. “To my eye it links the natural park landscape of grass and trees with the buildings that surround it and it’s a surprising but beautiful thing to find in such a setting.”

Next on the agenda would be to wander over to Denis Street to enjoy the enormous mural of two red-tailed black cockatoos, *Karrak* (2021) painted by James Giddy in support of conservation efforts to protect the native species. It sits across from a mural

by Spanish artist Okuda San Miguel, whose pop-surrealist style is characterised by geometric shapes and multicoloured patterns.

To wrap up, Mark would meander up the recently renovated Forrest Walk. Once a shortcut between carpark and shops, it’s been reimagined into a dynamic public space that reflects the creative essence of Subiaco.

For many Perth locals, Subiaco holds a sense of nostalgia—memories of childhood trips to the Subiaco Farmers Markets, late nights at vibrant bars, and discovering art in unexpected places. For self-proclaimed Perth-enthusiast and Oh Hey WA owner-operator Adie Chapman, art shows and gigs at what was once the Corner Gallery on Hay Street holds a special place in her heart.

While that space has since evolved, the 2024 No More Blank Walls festival injected that same artistic

“

**I believe we are all fundamentally creative beings and the more we see that reflected around us, the more it encourages our own innovative and creative thinking.**

~ Jo Thomas,  
*CEO Artrage*



Space of Peace, Wild Drawing, 2024

to evolve. “Definitely a standout piece was Graeme Miles Richards in Walmsley Lane. He does just this incredible, immersive, fun, whimsical art that has so many different elements - you could spend hours looking at it.”

From there, make your way to Subiaco’s Theatre Gardens, where you’ll find something truly magical—Thomas Dambo’s wooden giant, *Bille Bob*. “It’s this perfect blend of whimsy and environmental consciousness. Dambo’s work connects people to place in such a tactile, joyful way.”

Subiaco is a place best explored at a slower pace, with curiosity leading the way, says Adie. “There’s something really special about exploring laneways and public spaces with no agenda, just simply to explore and see where it takes you and see what you discover.”

“And this is where you can always find those amazing street art pieces, whether they’re the really big murals or tiny little stickers.”

In Subiaco, whether you’re a resident, regular or fresh face to area, the possibilities to explore creative spaces by foot are endless. In just 15 minutes, a short wander through these streets will open up a world of colour and opportunities for connection—proof that Subiaco’s artistic spirit is as alive and thriving, now more than ever.

energy into Subi for Adie, who hosted a series of Oh Hey WA walking tours across the festival period.

Featuring works by 11 local, national, and international artists, the No More Blank Walls Subi festival invited the public to watch large-scale murals come to life in real time. While the festival has ended, the murals and their liveliness remain.

“I was very excited when the No More Blank Walls Subi festival happened last year, as it reignited my love for Subi,” says Adie. “It’s definitely got a really good buzz ... with the new art and some great venues and really good activations happening around town.”

To experience this energy firsthand, Adie recommends beginning a walk through Hiddlestone Lane, just off Rokeby Road. “I absolutely love Hiddlestone Lane in Subiaco. It’s such a colourful, fun gem. There are, of course, some fantastic new murals that were painted for the festival, and some really cool creative art installations.

“There are lights and gems hanging over the entrance to the laneway, and out the back on one of the walls, there’s upcycled art pieces—dragonflies made out of old chair legs and fan propellers that have been painted. That was actually done with one of the local schools, and it’s that kind of thing that’s really fun and quirky and unique.”

Next, head over to Walmsley Lane, says Adie, where one of the festival’s standout pieces continues

#### MIX N’ MATCH

There’s such a variety of art to enjoy on the streets (and parks) in Subiaco, including 11 works created during No More Blank Walls Subi festival in 2024.



*Bille Bob*, Thomas Danby, 2022 (Thomas Dambo’s Giants of Mandurah)

# A Journey of Art, Culture, and Subiaco's Steps Toward Reconciliation

**Dana Garlett, Subiaco's first Indigenous Artist in Residence, shares her artistic vision of honouring those who went before her.**

**W**hen Dana Garlett was born in 1991, the names Lake Jualbup, Kaarta Koomba, and Wandaraguttagurrup were rarely heard in the conversations of Subiaco's residents. Yet, for Garlett, these are the lands of her Whadjuk ancestors. She has always known these places—what others call Shenton Park Lake, King's Park, and Subiaco—not just by their European names, but as a part of her songlines, heritage and history.

Garlett's art is not just a reflection of her culture; it's a conduit for sharing the stories of her people and the sacred landscapes of the Whadjuk Noongar nation. Through her digital pieces, sculptures, and acrylic canvases, Garlett invites us to see the world through Noongar eyes—where every sunrise, every bird song, and every tree holds meaning. As Subiaco's first Indigenous Artist in Residence, her work serves as both a personal tribute and a public offering, honouring the history of her ancestors while weaving Noongar culture into the fabric of the city's contemporary identity.

Garlett's role as Artist-in-Residence is not just an artistic appointment but a vital step in Subiaco's reconciliation journey. Through her art, Garlett helps to bridge the gap between the city and her Whadjuk people, promoting a deeper understanding and respect for the region's strong Noongar history. Her artwork for Subiaco's Reconciliation Action Plan—a piece that now graces the cover of the RAP document and the mezzanine in the Subiaco Library—serves as a visual reminder of the shared history and ongoing relationship between the Noongar people and the land.

In February, Garlett's residency opened with *Becoming Djida*, an exhibition that featured four digital pieces, four sculptures, and eight acrylic canvases. Each piece reflects Garlett's deep connection to her culture, with 'Djida'—her language name—serving as the muse for the collection. 'Djida embodies the quiet, sacred moments of the early morning, when the world stirs gently with the first light of day,' Garlett explains. 'It's about awakening to the sounds of nature, witnessing the first light of a

new day, and carrying with us the stories that shape who we are.'

Garlett's art is deeply rooted in the teachings of her family, who introduced her to the wisdom of Country and its cycles. "I was born into a deep spiritual connection to nature, a connection passed down through my grandparents, parents, and extended family. From a young age, they taught me the ways of the land—how to use bush medicines, how to observe the subtle changes in nature, and how to live in harmony with it. These lessons, along with what I've learned from my own experiences, come through in my work. I create with the intention of honouring the wisdom of those before me, the resilience of my people, and the presence of my Creator."

During the COVID pandemic, Garlett launched Paperbark Prints, a business that creates greeting cards blending cultural symbols and messages. Through cards featuring clapping sticks or dilly bags with messages for occasions like birthdays, Christmas, and Valentine's Day, Garlett merges cultural elements in a unique, heartfelt way. Printed locally with sustainability in mind, each card reflects Garlett's commitment to caring for Country, a value

deeply aligned with Noongar principles of respect and responsibility for the land.

Since then, Garlett has launched her second business, Paperbark Design Studio, where she creates artwork across different mediums and collaborates with other creatives on a variety of projects, including businesses like Nani Creative, Armadale Line Upgrade Alliance, Wiriin Media Communications, and Leah Paige Designs.

Garlett's artistic journey extends beyond her business endeavours. She was commissioned to create artwork for the Armadale Line Upgrade Alliance rail level crossing, a piece symbolising the movement and connection of people across Country. Her artwork reflects the journey of travel, history, and connection, themes central to the Noongar way of life.

Visitors were able to experience Garlett's art firsthand until the end of May, and saw her work come to life through a collaboration with florists Euka Floral Design and Edie and Ivy on on a special floral installation for Subi Blooms 2025. It was an opportunity to witness her art in new, vibrant forms and celebrate the living culture that inspires her creative process.



## **BECOMING DJIDA**

Each piece in Dana Garlett's exhibition reflects the deep connection to her culture.



The West Australian Society of Artists host their monthly gatherings in the Subiaco, with president Tanya Izzard at the helm.

BY Ara Jansen

# Meet the muses



Whether you're a professional artist or a weekend dabbler, Tanya Izzard wants to meet you. As President of the West Australian Society of Artists, she's keen to grow both the membership, public profile and reputation of WA's oldest art society.

Dating back to 1889 as the Wilgie Sketching Club in South Perth, the society has an illustrious history. Early members include May Gibbs (her family are still involved) who apparently sat in meetings drawing caricatures of other members. Founding members included Lady Margaret Forrest (wife of Sir John), architect George Temple-Poole and geologist, naturalist and public servant Bernard Woodward who later became the first director of the WA Museum and WA Art Gallery.

WASA's monthly meetings are at the Palms Community Centre on the corner of Rokeby and Nicholson Road on the third Thursday of the month and there's always a talk, demonstration or activity to try.

There are around 250 members around the state and about 70 people show up to the monthly meetings. Membership is open to any artist whether you're a weekend dabbler or someone who makes a living from their art. Members fall across the spectrum of art from painters in all mediums to fibre artists, sculptors, glass makers and wood workers.

In her 90s, popular pastel artist Betty McLean is one of the oldest members while the youngest members are in their late 20s. In recent years, WASA has expanded its definition of artist work into areas such as three-dimensional art and murals as a way to widen the membership base.

Active in the community, WASA holds an annual art exhibition. The Annual Art Exhibition is a chance for all members to exhibit and sell their work. They often feature live sessions for the public to see artists at work. Borrowed from the BBC's Extraordinary Portraits, they've introduced a live painting session called Portraits in Giving. Local volunteers are painted

live at the exhibition by several artists and they get to pick their favourite piece to take home.

The exhibition dates back as long as the society and Tanya is thrilled that these days the winners are no longer just the usual suspects of oil on canvas, but winners include the likes of lino cut and 3D artists.

WASA also organise the Mindscape youth art competition in surrealism and fantasy. Open to budding artists aged 14 to 18 years across WA, the competition supports the next generation of artists. Finalists are invited to exhibit in a CBD building and first prize is \$300.

Jacksons Art Supplies in Subiaco are longtime supporters and hang members' art in the window and instore, taking no commission.

"All these things are growing us as a society, which I think is great," says Tanya. "I love that the society meetings offer a place for artists to mingle and meet each other and even learn from each other."

**Find out more at [wart.org.au](http://wart.org.au)**

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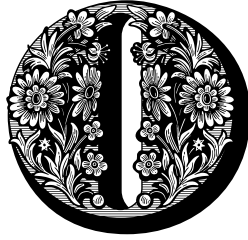
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