Hysterical LEGACIES

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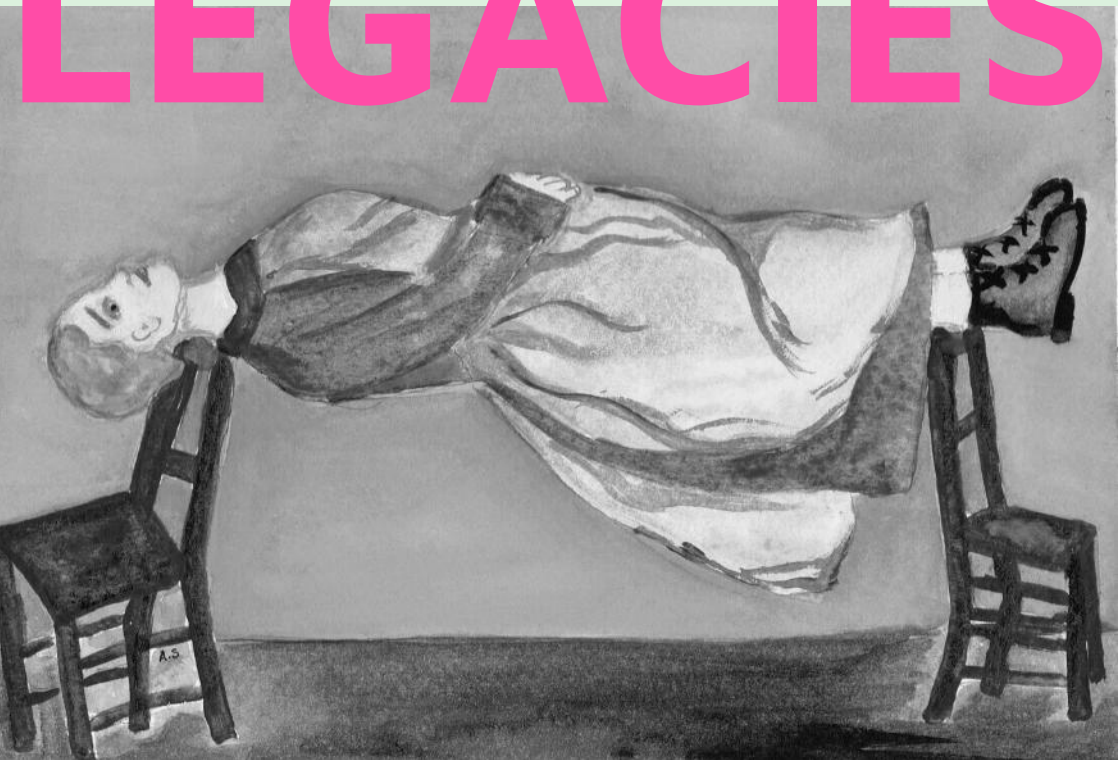

We acknowledge the *Hysterical Legacies* exhibition takes place on the unceded land of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people and pay our respects to elders past and present. We also acknowledge the traditional owners of the many lands across which artists included in this show live, work and create on.

Hysterical LEGACIES

8-24 October 2025

BIRNBEAL GALLERY
QUEEN VICTORIA WOMEN'S CENTRE (QVWC)
NAARM/ MELBOURNE

Curated by Amelia Saward

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, thank you to all the wonderful artists who submitted artwork and shared not only your creativity, but your stories with us. I'm continually amazed by the uptake this project has had, and couldn't do it without you.

A heartfelt appreciation for the many women, femme and non-binary artists and creatives worldwide and closer to home, who bring their own experiences of illness, disability or bias to the world through art. Thank you for using the often limited energy you have to raise awareness or mutiny, to build community and to make the world a more inclusive place.

To friends, family and colleagues who've provided guidance and support - this project wouldn't be what it is without you.

Thank you to the Queen Victoria Women's Centre for including *Hysterical Legacies* in your 2025 programming and providing an incredible space for women and gender diverse people to gather and hold space.

Additionally, thank you to the City of Melbourne, who have supported *Hysterical Legacies* through the City of Melbourne Arts Grants and to Kyneton Ridge winery and Stomping Ground Brewing Co for your support.

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Hysterical LEGACIES

EXHIBITION SUMMARY

A collaborative visual arts project and exhibition, *Hysterical Legacies* is a response to the ongoing impact of historically sexist narratives, past stereotypes and notions of 'hysterical women', on women and non-binary people's present day experiences of health. Featuring artworks by chronically ill, disabled and neurodivergent women, femme and non-binary people, the exhibition uncovers the collective hidden stories of so many in our community.

We're currently amidst a changing landscape surrounding women's health, with progress acknowledging women's pain, yet ongoing global threats to bodily freedom. The exhibition draws connections between social attitudes, medical practices and perceptions of women's illness - underpinned by prioritising lived experience perspectives.

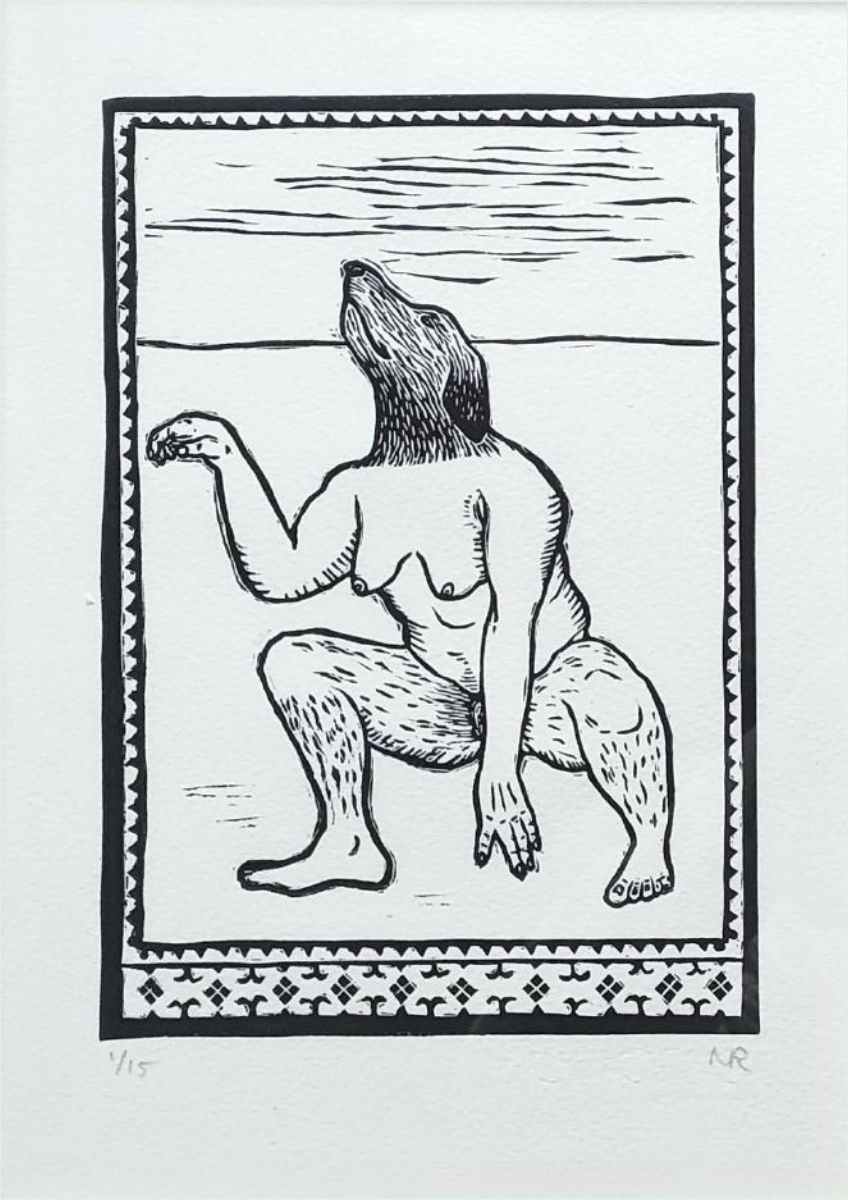


Image credit: Nicole Robertson, *Female Dog I,* Lincocut, 29.7 x 21.0 cm

HYSTERICAL LEGACIES:

Creativity as a Catalyst for Change

A collaborative group exhibition featuring artwork by women, femme and non-binary people with lived experience of chronic illness, disability or neurodivergence, *Hysterical Legacies* references the sexist historic traditions of naming women with unexplained symptoms, physical or intellectual differences, or simply disagreeable traits as 'hysterical'. The project is a manifestation of a desire to share the stories and experiences of those living with chronic illness, disability or neurodivergence, both of struggle, success and everything in between.

Reflecting on their experiences of navigating the complex web of health, disability, medicine and misogyny, the artist's works featured in *Hysterical Legacies* represent a creative reclaiming of our individual and collective experiences. Doing so, the exhibition continues the recent momentum of awareness of the impact of sexism in health, through a creative lens, prioritising the voices of those most impacted.

Hysterical Legacies brings together two sometimes underestimated disciplines - art and history. It draws on art's powerful ability to investigate and shed light on the aspects of society that otherwise pass us by - the emotions and experiences rooted in our human experience of navigating the world we live in, from local community to global cultural climate. Exploring, exposing and teaching us about ourselves and others around us, creativity becomes a catalyst for social change.

Meanwhile, the reality that history and its prejudices are not solely in the past, but live in every aspect of why our contemporary world is

the way it is, is openly acknowledged through the project. Artworks hold space and critically investigate the experiences so many of us have faced ourselves, as the direct result of the continuation of historically sexist stereotypes. They shed light on how we got to the reality we live in and (if we listen) can teach us to improve on the mistakes of the past - stopping the cycle of repetition.

'Hysteria' isn't Dead - Sexism and Bias in Health Today

A recent survey by the Victorian Government found two out of three women in Australia have experienced bias accessing healthcare. (1) Research shows women are more likely to die following a heart attack than men, with differences in symptom presentation not always accounted for, misdiagnosis occurring at a higher rate, and a likelihood not to be offered all treatments. (2) Meanwhile, despite 70 percent of those with chronic pain being women, 80 percent of studies are performed on men and male mice, and even though autoimmune disease only affects eight percent of the global population, 78 percent are women. (3) Numbers like these may be surprising to many in the general public, but for too many chronically ill, disabled or neurodiverse women, femme and non-binary people, they are far from surprising statistics.

Contemporary biases and discrimination are a result of centuries of sexism and misogyny, that does not just suddenly disappear, but must be consciously disassembled. Dating back to ancient Greece and Egypt, where Hippocrates and the Kahun Paprys respectively, make mention of a wandering womb or a displaced uterus - blaming this phenomenon for all matter of ailments, 'hysteria' has a long and winding past.

While we're centuries past these times and know a wandering womb is not a physical reality, the legacy of such unscientific ideas unfortunately remains ever present. The lack of knowledge around how sex and gender impacts not only health itself and the process of accessing healthcare, but the cultural and social attitudes

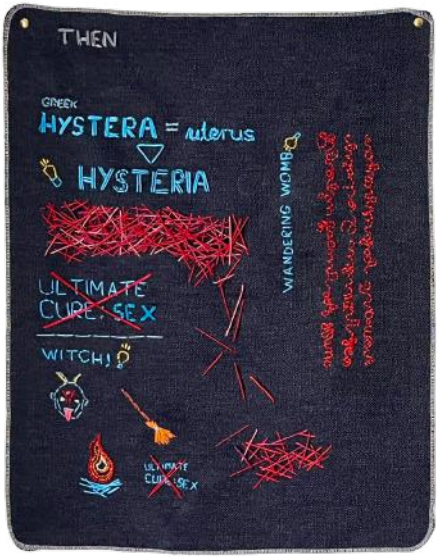
surrounding health and disability leave many dismissed and even gaslit, causing significant negative effects for overall health and wellbeing.

It is a far too common experience for women and non-binary people with chronic invisible illnesses to be labelled as psychosomatic or ‘all in their heads’ and far from a new phenomenon. For centuries, illnesses like Multiple Sclerosis (MS) were often deemed psychosomatic, when really their true cause and biological basis had simply yet to have been discovered or readily diagnosed.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME/CFS) is one of the most notorious illnesses to continually face this dilemma. While recent scientific research is showing multiple biological and genetic differences in patients, we have faced decades of being told there is nothing wrong, pushed into ‘treatments’ which have sent patients into crashes they never recover from. In situations where science has yet to define an answer, medicine seems intent on blaming anxiety, mood or even the person themselves for simply not making the effort to get better. Those affected are often too unwell to raise a mutiny against this behavior and so the cycle continues.

On a positive note, there is progress. The gender bias in healthcare and medicine has been increasingly acknowledged in recent years. Women’s health and conditions like chronic pain and Endometriosis have been given increased media coverage, political consideration and research attention in recent years - hopefully leading to ongoing change. Meanwhile, women and non-binary people are telling their stories of being dismissed by health professionals, especially when it comes to ‘invisible’ chronic illnesses at an ever growing rate. These stories not only illuminate the misogyny of medicine and the healthcare system, but the impact this prejudice has across all areas of life, from education and employment, to family, friendships and relationships.

The dismissal of women’s illnesses, pain and knowledge of our own bodies, is a problem shrouded in a history that is continually repeated.



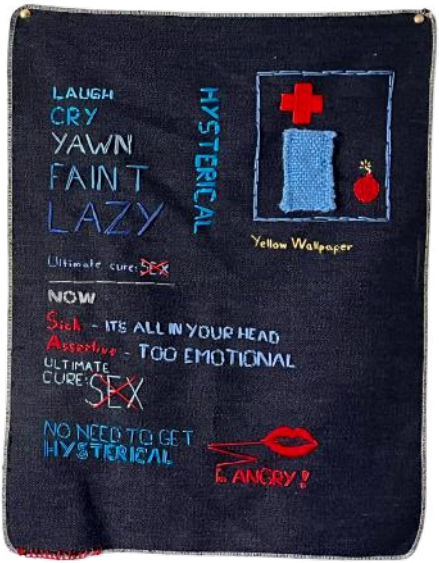


Image credit: (Top) Halle Brown, *The Soul Inside,* Screen print, 31.0 x 43.0 cm. (Bottom) Donata Uncanin, *Hystera = Uterus I + II,* Textiles and mixed media, 65.0 x 49.0 cm.

Wandering wombs, Victorian neuroses and psychosomatic illness: A short history of Hysteria

Notions of ‘hysteria’ and ‘hysterical women’ may be something that many in the general population consider an outdated idea, relegated to the history books - and they aren’t completely wrong. Hysteria and the many iterations of similar conditions or ideologies - ‘weak nerves’ and neurasthenia in the 1800s, and the twentieth-century psychologisation of women’s behaviour and illnesses are indeed outdated.

Derived from the Greek word ‘hystera’ meaning ‘uterus’ - bringing about the now infamous aforementioned wandering womb theory, it was once thought that when the female reproductive system was inactive (in other words the woman wasn’t fulfilling her intended purpose of producing children), her womb would go wandering and cause illness across the body. (4) It was thought to press on organs and thus cause the many varied symptoms thought to be a result of the condition. Hysteria became a catch-all diagnosis for women experiencing symptoms, such as, faintness, anxiety, weakness, fatigue, paralysis and seizures, but also for women who displayed less ‘feminine’ traits - who were too independent, too outspoken or simply disobeyed the gendered social conventions of their time.

Using the new photographic technology of the nineteenth century, French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot had images of his ‘hysteria’ patients taken to show the physicality of their symptoms and provide scientific evidence. The now somewhat infamous book containing these images is a stark reminder of the reality many women of the era faced - as subjects, specimens and curiosities to be studied, often without consent. Charcot also expected patients to ‘perform’ at his famous Tuesday lectures, where under hypnosis they were tormented and at times bribed into exhibiting symptoms to fulfill doctor’s expectations. (5)

Women in the Victorian era were seen as prone to ‘weak nerves’ a result of their more fragile state. Neuroasenia was seen as common

in women, who were either overstimulated by modern life or unable to cope with expected domestic duties. Common treatments included the 'rest cure' (involving forced bed-rest with no intellectual stimulation), as is referenced in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's classic short story *The Yellow Wallpaper* or nerve tonics, many of which contacted lithium salts or even cocaine.

It was later that Sigmund Freud (who had studied under Charcot) and his partner Joseph Breuer asserted that cases of hysteria did not originate from the nervous system physically as Charcot claimed, but were a disorder of the mind, brought on by any number of emotional traumas. While the establishment of psychology and acknowledgment of the many physical effects mental health can have on the whole body has value, the unfortunate result was decades of psychologising physical illnesses as 'all in the head', often with disastrous consequences.

The problematic expectation created by Charcot's medical photographs, of women as fragile and weak, predisposed to erratic and 'hysterical' thoughts or behaviour, and the prevalence of this notion throughout the Victorian era, is something many people likely see as irrelevant to our present day lives. However, the notion of women being unreliable witnesses of our own illnesses is something still deeply entrenched in modern medicine. Even though the medical understanding of female biology has progressed, cultural ideas of the expectations of women and of female bodies, reflect the dominant social thought of the time, one that is not as progressive as perhaps often thought. (6)

The misogynist beliefs of the ancient world, the Victorian era and beyond, have no place in current day health, medicine or social thought. Unfortunately, as far too many women, femme identifying and non-binary people know far too well, 'hysteria' is not only a historical concept. It still influences the way women's health, bodies and illnesses are treated both in healthcare and broader society into the present day.

As a society we are grappling with the ongoing realities of institutional misogyny and prejudice and the reality is that there is

Image credit: (Top) Melanie Hoult, Holding (I don't know what you expect) 1, 2 and 3, Photograph, 59.4 x 42 cm. (Bottom) Nix Briarwood, The Mother Wound, Oil and acrylic on canvas, 30cm x 60cm.

still a significant way to go. This progress depends on our ability to question and re-evaluate so many of the narratives ingrained in the cumulative psyche. One of these narratives is that of the 'hysterical' woman.

The more we talk about, share and bring light to what so many women and gender diverse people have experienced and continue to go through, the more we can slowly change the narrative and build a culture of respect and equality. A culture where the remains of 'hysteria' and 'hysterical women' will no longer be a part of our health experiences or our daily lives.

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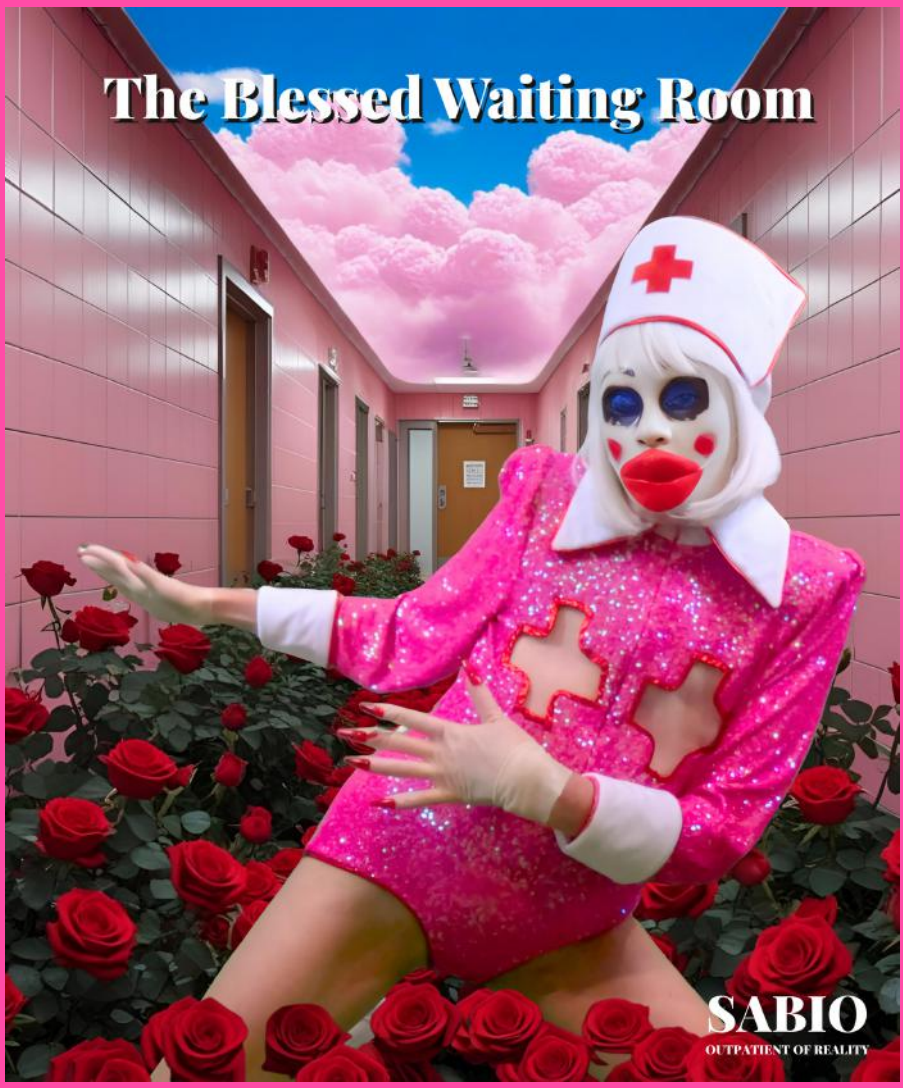


Image credit: Sabio, *The Blessed Waiting Room*, Digital collage print, 61.0 x 51.0 cm.

PROJECT CURATOR

AMELIA SAWARD

Amelia is a multi-disciplined creative practitioner, and arts professional based in Naarm/Melbourne. With a background in art history and curatorship, she balances a creative practice encompassing curation, visual art and writing, with professional roles in arts development, administration and communications.

She has a particular interest in the relationship between art and social change, the re-evaluation of historical narratives and in art practices rooted in feminist and disability activism, informed by her own lived experience of chronic illness. Her practice seeks to build and advocate for accessibility and inclusion within the arts industry

Amelia's previous curatorial projects include *Mass Isolation Australia* for the Ballarat International Foto Biennale and shows at George Paton Gallery and Noir Darkroom. She has exhibited at Unassigned Gallery, Linden New Art and Trocadero Art Space, among others, and her images also appear in publications including The Suburban Review and Gems Zine. Amelia's writing has been featured in publications including, ABC Everyday, Ramona Magazine, Bramble Journal and Jacaranda Journal.

She holds a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) and a Master of Art Curatorship from the University of Melbourne, where she received a Miegunyah Project Award from the Ian Potter Gallery of Art.

ARTISTS

ALI GRIFFIN / ALICE MARIE MARTIN / ARLO CARRACHER / AUTUMN TANSEY / AVEN HODGES / BELLE ZIPPER / BERNIE WHY / BILLIE MORRIS / CATHERINE IVREA / CEE FRANCES / DANA KABAILA / DANIELLE COOK / DELPHINE BYRNE / DONATA UNCANIN / EDEN MENTA / EUGENIE GULLIFER-LAURIE / FRANZISKA HANNIG / GALLATEA.X / HALLE BROWN / HOLLY GOODRIDGE / JORDAN DERWENT / JORDAN WOOD / KELLY MCCABE / LARISSA MACFARLANE / LISA MABIN / LISA PLANT / LIU LIU / LUCY NGUYEN / MARILYN TUNA / MEGAN WILLIAMS / MELANIE HOULT / MICHELE FOUNTAIN / MICHELLE HARRINGTON / NICOLE ROBERTSON / NIX BRIARWOOD / PAULA JASMINE / POPPY FOWLER / PRIYA GANDHI / PRUE STEVENSON / RACHEL EDMONDS / RASA KABAILA / RUBY WYATT-CARTER / SABIO / SALLY TOWNSEND / / SINÉAD CREANEY / STEPHANIE ELICIA RUSHWORTH / STEPH WATT / SUNNIVA INNSTRAND / TESS HIDER / TINA SHEERS

Image credit: Larissa MacFarlane, *The Kryptonite of a sensitive superpower*, Linocut, 34.0 x 31.0 cm.

ARTISTS

ALI GRIFFIN
Ali Griffin is a multidisciplinary artist whose socially engaged practice centres on visibility, storytelling and social justice. Through large-scale mixed-media works, public art and participatory projects, she reclaims space for women's voices and histories. Her current work celebrates the wisdom and power of women, challenging subjects such as ageism and gender bias. Griffin's art invites conversation, transforming overlooked narratives into bold, unforgettable visual legacies.

ALICE MARIE MARTIN
Alice Marie Martin is an emerging multi-disciplinary fine artist residing in Narrm/Melbourne, Australia. Her practices delves into themes of invisible and chronic illness, exploring her own – and others – experiences regarding this topic through visual narratives and self-portraiture. Martin's practice currently examines notions of metamorphosis, identity, and the intricacies of the human form, offering an introspective dialogue on the unseen and often overlooked aspects of life.

ARLO CARRACHER
Arlo Carracher (they/he) is a disabled nonbinary ratbag / educator / gardener living, working and resting on unceded Boon Wurrung land.

AUTUMN TANSEY
Autumn Tansey is a visual artist, curator and writer with a concept-led practice. Working across photography, video, projection, installation and sculpture; Autumn creates dynamic imagery and installations responding to site, materiality, and politics informed by life with chronic illness and disabilities and the climate crisis.

Since completing a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Photomedia) in 2010,

Autumn has been the recipient of various awards, residencies and commissions including; National Gallery of Victoria's 'NGV Studios' Residency, Kayell Australia Excellence in Photo-Media Award, and the Alliance Française Prize for Monash University Graduates. Recent highlights include the Incinerator Art Awards 2024 (finalist), 2023 Dear Agnes commission, and Climarte Poster Project III.

AVEN HODGES

Aven Hodgess is a Melbourne based artist, who's work is intuitive and process lead. Aven makes abstract figurative images to engage the mind, the eye and to speak to image making.

BELLE ZIPPER

Belle Zipper is an transgender woman living with disability – and an emerging artist. She recently finished as a collaborating artist in residence at the Yarra Sculpture Gallery Summer 2025 program. Her art was exhibited as a finalist in the 2022 Midsumma Australia Post Art Award, and her fiction writing was Highly Commended in the 2022 Wheeler Centre Next Chapter writing competition.
A decade ago, aged 44, she was diagnosed with a degenerative neurological disease. Within a few days, she started waking up to a painful memory that she had buried many years earlier: that since the age of 7, she wanted to be a girl. Hence … an adventure of a lifetime began.
Belle's art draws attention to the two domains both fighting for control of her body: as a transgender woman trying to be who was born to be, and a disease that is ripping that body apart.

BERNIE WHY

Bernie Why, BSc (Hons), AuDHD, cPTSD, Zzz. I've lived an eclectic array of almost-structured lives, that knitted together an unwieldy web of conflicting realities. It's a good thing I'm a Libra.

BILLIE MORRIS

I am a visual artist working and living in Naarm*, (Melbourne) Australia. My work mostly revolves around the human form, our distortions and rituals.
I create based on my personal experiences of chronic pain,

Danielle Cook, *Reflections*, Graphite on paper, 34.2 x 34.4 cm (framed).

instability of physical health, dysmorphic identity. I'm obsessed with our obsession to document and lean into this in my visual work. Fatigued by the often exploitative nature of the 'art world' I am passionate about making my art both accessible and cherished.

This has led me to extend my practise beyond the walls and into salvaged textiles, and wearable objects, into hands and onto bodies; art shouldn't only be gazed at from a distance but integrated into the way we dress, costumed, and consumed with fervor. Collecting, archiving, and reworking discarded materials is special - It rejects the ethics of mass production in favour of care, memory, and repair.

I hope my creations encourage you to feel empowered in your surroundings and in yourself.

CATHERINE IVREA
Catherine Ivrea is an emerging artist who has participated in several collaborative exhibitions and competitions around her new found home of Naarm/Melbourne.

CEE FRANCES
Sissyfist is wet pink paint between your fingers and the rhythmic crunch of gravel kissing boot. Once an academic; now a lover of shiny things, fighting fascism and touching moss.

DANA KABAILA
Dana (she/her) is a neurodivergent woman from Naarm (Melbourne). She works as a counsellor with neuro-nonconforming folks and studies Narrative Therapy to strengthen her social justice approach. Dana is aphantasic (cannot see images in her mind), so paints with the use of reference images and the forgiving medium of acrylic paint. Dana paints her figures to reflect her fascination with ancestral mythology, dreamwork, nature and symbolic meaning. These topics are also explored through her role hosting The Jungian Coaching Room podcast. Dana is mother to a wild and wonderful kid and has published local playground reviews for The Rotunda independent newspaper.

DANIELLE COOK
Upcoming artist, Danielle Cook, is a visual artist based in Geelong, Aus, exploring mediums such as lino print, drawing, painting and textiles. Danielle's art delves into the subtleties of human experience, weaving together surreal, realistic and symbolic styles to explore the emotional landscapes of her subjects. Through a strong focus on portraiture and layered symbolism, Danielle creates evocative artworks that invite deep reflection.

DELPHINE BYNRE
In my varied and diverse approach to making I seek to reveal the uncomfortable realities of being a settler, woman and mother in contemporary Australia. Works weave together contemporary female oppressions and injustices, gendered violence, and limiting perceptions of motherhood, drawing connections between past and present. By using a range of mediums such as digital collage, fabric, various forms of moving image, ready-made objects, sculpture, painting, performance, musical scoring and soundscapes my work gives its audience a full sensory and immersive encounter within the space.

I often engage with ancient symbolism and ritual methodologies to interrogate contemporary feminist issues, grounding lived experience within broader cultural, political, and spiritual contexts. My work asks its audience to consider how feminism and motherhood intersect with their own lives and communities. At its core, my practice seeks to transform negatively charged feelings into spaces of empowerment and healing resonances for the feminine collective within all human beings.

DONATA UNCANIN
Donata Uncanin is a multidisciplinary artist working across textiles, photography and installation. Her practice centres on embodied storytelling, often weaving together the beauty of nature with social critique and sensory experience. She explores themes of memory, transformation and resilience, and their connection to mental health.

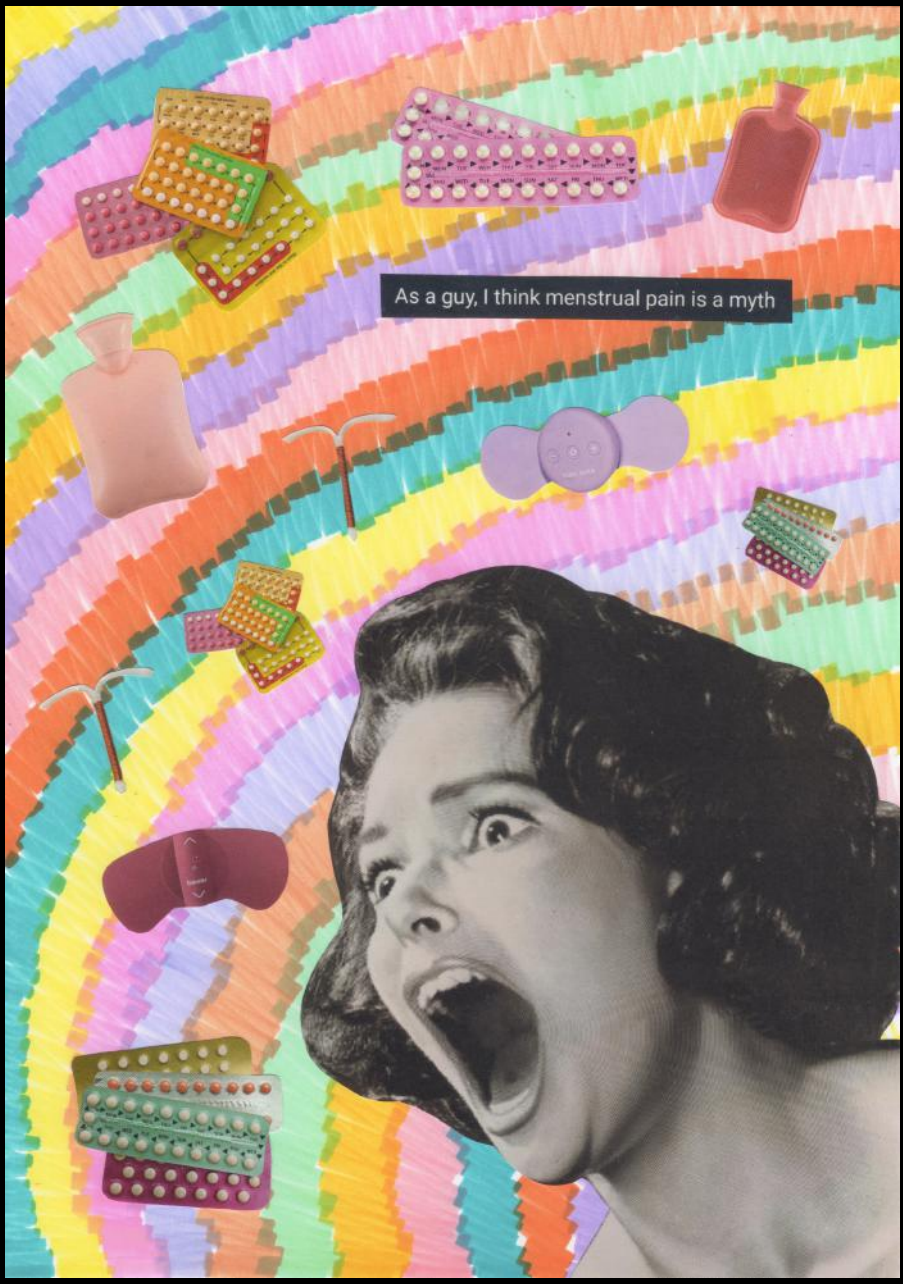


Image credit: Galatea.x, *Period Pains #3*, Collage, 42.0 x 29.7cm.

EDEN MENTA
Eden Menta is a multidisciplinary artist working across photography, collage, drawing and painting.

Their practice draws on personal experience to question cultural assumptions and unpack ideas surrounding disability, identity and mental health. With quiet resilience, Menta navigates complex subjects while creating space for reflection and connection. Since joining the Arts Project Australia studio in 2013, Menta has developed a distinctive visual language grounded in observation and emotional nuance. In 2024, they presented their debut solo exhibition The Little Things We Fight For as part of PHOTO24 (2024). Recent group exhibitions include Protest is a creative act (2025) at the Museum of Australian Photography; Portrait23: Identity at the National Portrait Gallery (2023), the national touring exhibition FEM-AFFINITY (2021); Who's Afraid of Public Space? (To the Street) at the Centre for Contemporary Photography (2021) and the Ballarat Foto Biennale (2019). Menta's work is held in private collections across Australia. Eden's Instagram is @lil_e_mental

EUGENIE GULLIFER-LAURIE
Eugenie is a 26 year old multidisciplinary artist in Naarm/Melbourne. They make work about their experiences of chronic illness, queerness, neurodivergence, and mental health, and the complexities of the relationship between mind, body, and identity, exploring the hidden details that exist in their intersection. Eugenie's work references historical and contemporary discourse on afab bodies and healthcare, and explores mysticism, alchemy, medicine, and dreams. They are currently a Fine Arts Honours candidate at RMIT.

FRANZISKA HANNIG
Franziska Hannig lives in Germany and has been suffering from the chronic illness ME/CFS for four years. After she was no longer able to work as a teacher, she began drawing colorful and often very detailed infographics about ME/CFS, which contain information about the medical and scientific background, but also address life with the illness. The graphics are used for educational purposes, for

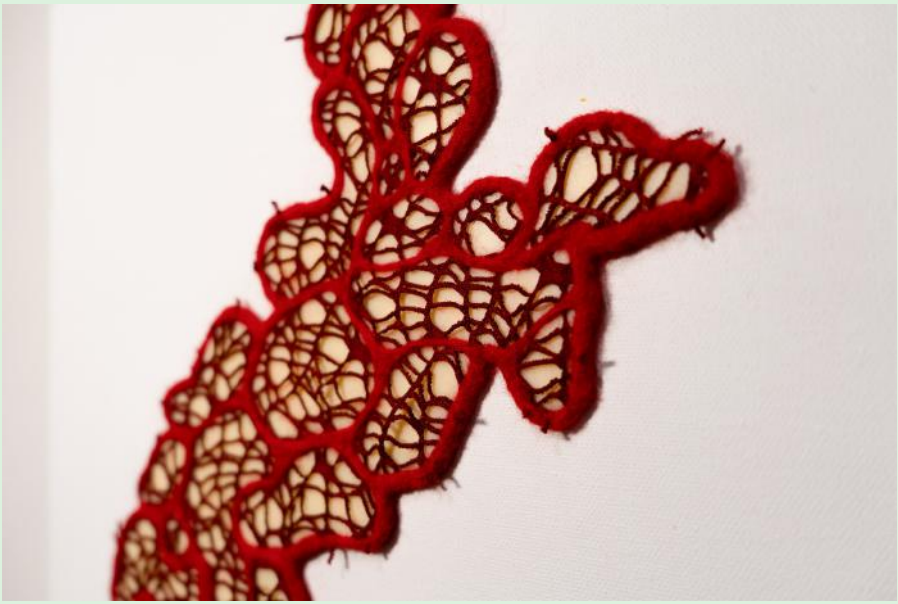
example in training courses on ME/CFS, to raise awareness of the disease, and were part of two exhibitions on ME/CFS in 2024 and 2025. Franziska also enjoys illustrating and painting.

GALLATEA.X (TAYA VAN BEUGE)
Taya Van Beuge is an emerging collage and mixed media artist. She has always had an interest in art which led her to study Art History. Her artistic practice is inspired by pop culture, with her works often including imagery or figures from popular media. Her artworks have a playful nature, an abundance of colour and are made from common materials such as paper, textas and stickers.

HALLE BROWN
Focusing around the idea of Visually being eviscerated, working with the Fat Queer body, Halle creates work through various mediums, but works through a Printmaking informed lens. Her work explores the anxiety around being perceived as a fat queer person, and the visible judgement they experience out in the world, feeling like they have to 'spill their guts' to explain their body, so prevent the preconceived ideas people have from a first glance at their body, their being. Halle situates her work firmly within the Intersectional Feminist lens, often tapping into the Feminine Rage that all women experience collectively.

HOLLY GOODRIDGE
Holly Goodridge is a neurodivergent artist working across wearable textiles, installation, and participatory practices. Her work explores neurodivergent embodiment, sensory politics, and collective care, creating immersive environments that invite audiences to slow down, touch, and connect. Currently in her final semester of an MFA she has shown across multiple Melbourne-based contemporary galleries including Mailbox Gallery, The shape of rest (2025), Bus Projects, Shrine to the childhood friendships we wish we had (2024), Assembly Point, Wrestling Before the Gateway (2023) and Seventh Gallery, Through the Doorway (2022).

JORDAN DERWENT
I'm a proud disabled woman from the Shoalhaven who spends their



I**mage credit:** (Top) Liu Liu, S*kin Graph 2*, Mixed media, 40.6 x 40.6 cm. (Bottom) Dana Kabaila, *Gabija,* Painting, 21.0 x 29.7cm.

time in the company of their 6 goats, 2 dogs and 3 ducks, when not searching through old newspapers and state archives, or watching birds outside.

JORDAN WOOD
Jordan Wood is an artist living and working on Dja Dja Wurrung Country. Over the past 15 years she has exhibited across Australia and internationally. Drawing upon personal histories and collective experiences, her work collages movements and responses as caught in the body, traversing the spaces between histories and fictions, artefacts and debris, questioning what we conceal and allow exposed.

KELLY MCBABE
Kelly McBabe is a queer, disabled, femme who mostly crafts from her sickbed. She's inspired by colours, the 60's/70's, queer/disabled/feminist history, community and her peers, and the music of her youth. Mediums include whatever takes her fancy and whatever she can afford.

LARISSA MACFARLANE
Larissa MacFarlane (they/she) is a proud Disabled Mad artist/activist, of Scottish descent, living on the unceded sovereign lands of the Kulin Nation. They have been working in the Disability Rights and Self Advocacy movements for over two decades since acquiring a brain injury in 1998. Larissa is known for their bold public artworks, using printmaking, street art, performance and community art, promoting Disability Culture, identity and Pride. In 2017, they were the creative producer of Australia's first Disability Pride murals. They have worked in the Disability sector as a consultant, trainer, violence prevention educator, mentor, speaker and arts worker. In 2025, as chair of DRC, they coordinated Victoria's first ever Disability Pride flag raising

LISA MABIN
I'm just a girl doing her best. Art is a big word for what I do. Using textiles and embroidery as a medium has supported me to connect to an ancient craft done by women across the world in many

cultures. Art has always been an avenue of emotional processing for me. Growing up I did art therapy and I continue to practice this when I can. For me there is something deeply empowering about creating something from nothing for no purpose other than your own. Art has helped me find myself and reconnect to what makes me who I am when I've felt lost in the world. As a woman with hidden and dynamic disabilities and chronic illness, it's helped me find ways to feel like myself again. It's helped me process big feelings that pass through me and ground myself in unsteady times. For me art is not about the product but moving through the messy process of creating it.

LISA PLANT
I love collage as a form of self expression, especially with moving states solo. I love the Melbourne arts scene and the depth that comes with art. I study history and have been passionate about women's rights since I was an early teenager.

LIU LIU
Liu is a Chinese-born, Melbourne-based interdisciplinary artist exploring bodily trauma, neurodivergence, and cultural identity through sculpture, textiles, and digital fabrication. Working with felt, silicone, clay, and other hybrid materials, Liu transforms experiences of surgical alteration, migration, and sensory perception into tactile landscapes. A Master of Fine Art candidate at RMIT University, Liu merges a background in graphic design and tattooing with experimental processes to examine the tension between fragility and strength.

LUCY NGUYEN
Lucy Nguyen is an emerging textile artist whose practice explores the interplay between fabric, texture, and storytelling. Working primarily with fabric collage and embroidery, she creates layered works that evoke both intimacy and expansiveness. Her pieces often depict flowers, rolling landscapes, and natural forms, drawing inspiration from her personal experiences and deep appreciation of the environment. Through her tactile approach, Lucy weaves together memory, place, and emotion, inviting viewers to reflect on their own connection to nature and the world around them.

Image credit: Tess Hider, *Your blood test looks great*, Soft sculpture, 70.0 x 50.0 cm.

MARILYN TUNA
As an emerging artist and writer, I am driven by the desire to highlight the raw strength and resilience found within communities navigating life with both visible and invisible disabilities. My work challenges socially constructed views of disability by shifting the focus from limitations to abilities.

My passion has always been helping people—listening to their stories, understanding their struggles, and supporting them in their growth. This drive has only deepened through my own experiences

transitioning from an international elite athlete to a woman who has undergone over 11 invasive surgeries, spent countless hours in rehabilitation learning to walk again, and still occasionally relies on a walking aid. I have spent years as an outpatient at King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women, navigating the complexities of chronic illness while striving to maintain financial autonomy as both a mother and a woman. These experiences have shaped my perspective, reinforcing my belief in the power of resilience and transformation.

MEGAN WILLIAMS
Megan Williams is a bed-based artist and full-time sick person. Her work explores the embodied realties of her life with severe Myalgic Encephalomyelitis and the conceptual possibilities of collage as inherently disabled medium.

MELANIE HOULT
Melanie Hoult is a neurodivergent and multiply disabled interdisciplinary artist based in Naarm. She is drawn to working with natural materials, with a particular love for installation and ceramics. She is passionate about social justice, the environment and our place in it.

Melanie is a member of SLOWPOKE - Slow Power Collective and makes functional ceramics as Night Forest Studio.

After many years of holding on to - and refusing to let go of - her desire to make art while life (and the health system) had other ideas, Melanie has spent the last few fighting back.

MICHELE FOUNTAIN
Michele Fountain is a Naarm / Melbourne artist working across print, photography, textile, sculpture and installation. She is interested in the unseen worlds carried on underneath everyday visible life. Her current work is concerned with navigating otherness and alienation, particularly in the context of neurodivergence and queerness.

Michele completed a Master of Contemporary Art at the Victorian College of the Arts and was a 2024 recipient of the Lionel Gell Excellence Award. She has shown in group and solo shows across Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales.

She was a resident studio artist at the Burrinja Cultural Community Centre in Upwey, Victoria from 2015 – 2019.

MICHELLE HARRINGTON
I make art in artsehole hell disappearing down various rabbit holes of stuff until individual sculptural paintings emerge from the chaos.

NICOLE ROBERTSON
Nicole Robertson (she/her) is a printmaker specialising in linocut. Originally from the United States, she completed her Bachelor of Visual Arts at Southern Cross University in Lismore, New South Wales in 2012. She now lives and works on Wurundjeri land in Naarm/Melbourne. She translates her experiences of suburbia, chronic illness and dating through the humourous and brutally honest lens of her artwork. Using mythological imagery and grotesque gestures, she aims to articulate the emotional landscape of everyday life.

NIX BRIARWOOD
Nix Briarwood is a non-binary artist, living on the stolen land of the Wurundjeri people and the Kulin nations, in Naarm (Melbourne). In their work, they explore themes of mental illness, inter-generational trauma, and the societal marginalisation of individuals who deviate from the prescribed norm. This series of paintings puts emphasis on the intensity of shame placed on AFAB people when it comes to seeking treatment, how both our mental and physical

Image credit: Steph Watt, *Show + Tell,* Mixed media, 70.0 x 20.9 cm.

pain are frequently dismissed by a healthcare system which was built on (and still continues to perpetuate) the misogynistic bias in all medical practices, how that bias impacts us as individuals, and how that impact spreads through families and into the wider community.

PAULA JASMINE
I'm Paula Jasmine, and I'm a Melbourne-based artist. I have completed a Bachelor of Visual Art at ECU in 2018, and since then have gained my qualifications in Art Therapy and Counselling. Being fascinated with human psychology, my work is an exploration of my own inner world and experiences, manifesting as expressive self-portraiture often featuring fantasy and surrealist elements. My art is unapologetically personal, raw and confrontational.

POPPY FOWLER
Poppy Fowler is an artist and activist living on Wurundjeri land, working with watercolour and fineliner. Going by the artist name 'Flilou,' she uses whimsical illustrations and scenery to prompt meaningful discussions on gender equity, human rights, queer joy, life with chronic illness and more. Alongside these themes, her work often features elements of witchy goodness, books, community, and the small joys in everyday life. When she isn't creating for 'Flilou', Poppy works in policy and advocacy for gender equity through research and development initiatives- often designing community projects with an arts focus and communicating her research findings through illustration.

PRIYA GANDHI
A recovering perfectionist and overachiever, Priya Gandhi was forced to slow down when her mild covid infection turned into debilitating long covid. She turned to art to help her explore and repair her relationship with her body and new reality. When not trying out new art mediums, Priya works in sustainability, making buildings and places better for people and the planet.

RACHEL EDMONDS
Rachel is an artist of many forms. Having spent most of their

professional career as an actor and writer. They are best known for their roles and disability advocacy in the Melbourne and Geelong theatre space.

They started painting four years ago and are completely YouTube trained. They took on painting as a hobby with every intention of being absolutely unapologetically terrible at it. Over time their skill and paintings improved. Rachel is also a proud disabled parent. They want to express their thanks to Amelia for including their work as part of the exhibition.

RASA KABAILA

Rasa is a published Author and Poet. Rasa is also a Nurse Practitioner who specialises in mental health and runs her own practice. Rasa's first book 'Put some Concrete in your Breakfast: Tales from Contemporary Nursing' was published by the international publisher, 'Springer Nature' in 2023 and has been read by over 16,000 readers worldwide. Rasa is a paid writer for Ausmed and has had a number of articles and poems published with the Australian National University Feminist Magazine 'Bossy'. Rasa's poetry has been published in the Poetry Anthologies 'Tamba', 'Poetica Christi', 'Bossy' and 'Mid North Coast Libraries Summer Poetry Competition 2023-2024'. Rasa has a poetry blog on the international poetry hub 'Write Out Loud'. Rasa performs regularly at poetry events in her new home: Port Macquarie, NSW. Rasa was an active performer at poetry slam events in her hometown: Canberra, ACT and won several of the 'Slamboree' poetry slam events in the region. Rasa enjoys writing about the humorous and odd interactions that we have in life, the deeper sides of vulnerability within the human experience as well as natural beauty. Rasa is neurodivergant who has an autoimmune disease. Rasa is an Australian/Lithuanian woman who connects deeply with her Pagan ancestry.

RUBY WYATT-CARTER

Ruby is a young mixed media artist and musician based in North Victoria. They started exploring the use of collage as a means of utilising easily accessible, often discarded or recycled materials, a discovered a unique visual language. Through thought-provoking

Jordan Wood, *You*, Ceramic, 16.5 x 13.5 x 6.5 cm.

self-portraits, Ruby confronts deeply personal ideas related to gender identity, mental illness, family trauma, and recovery. Their work invites viewers to engage with these challenging topics and encourages empathy and understanding. In addition to paper collage, Ruby works in various mediums, including digital art, sculpture, watercolour painting, acrylic painting and textiles, constantly pushing the boundaries of their artistic expression.

SABIO

I am a multidisciplinary artist working across sculpture, couture, performance, film, large-scaleinstallation, projection mapping, and digital experimentation — often merging medieval craft traditions with contemporary animation, immersive technologies, and AI-generated imagery. My practice thrives on immersive transformation, creating fully realised worlds from the ground up.

From 2006 to 2018, around 80% of my professional time was devoted to commissioned work — designing and fabricating for major institutions, feature films, theatre companies, and large-scale festivals. Clients and collaborators included Marina Abramović (Private Archaeology, MONA), Sydney Opera House, MONA FOMA, Ten Days on the Island, Dark Mofo, Terrapin, The Nightingale (feature film), Rosehaven (TV series), and numerous music video productions. The remaining 20% of my time was spent developing my own independent works.

Since 2018, that ratio has reversed — with 80% of my time now dedicated to my own large-scale, original works and 20% to commissioned projects. This period has seen the creation of Rattle Ground (2022–2024, $40,000 DarkLab initial funding, plus further funding), The Emergency Dollhouse (2023, self-funded, 64 sold-out shows in a four-level heritage building), Lost Ovaries in K Block (2023, Royal Hobart Hospital), From Scapegoat to God (2025, The Theatre Royal, Hedberg Theatre), and The Operated and the Intervening Gloves (2025, Saigon Experimental / Contemporary Art Tasmania) international touring show.

I design, construct, direct, and perform in every aspect of my work — from writing and costuming to staging, sound, and film. My

career reflects a trajectory from high-profile, client-driven commissions to a fully realised, self-determined art practice that merges meticulous craftsmanship with wild, ungovernable creative energy.

SALLY TOWNSEND
Sally Townsend is a mixed media artist living with MS in the Yarra Ranges. A live music photographer for a decade before the pandemic shut everything down, Sally was able to get back in touch with her love of painting for the first time since she studied art after high school.

Having now had a recent diagnosis of Multiple Sclerosis, her work reflects the themes of grieving multiple things at once, navigating PTSD, disability, isolation and responding to the world.

SINÉAD CREANEY
I am an artist who creates hand-drawn, colourful, psychedelic illustrations that celebrate play, surrealism, and creativity. Working primarily with paint pens for their versatility and control, I explore subjects such as the female form, moons, mushrooms, faces and hands - often anthropomorphising objects to give life and personality to the inanimate.

My work is inspired by colour, strange shapes, and organic patterns, and I embrace a loose, stream-of-consciousness approach that allows narratives to emerge spontaneously. I enjoy the rough, lo-fi quality of my drawings, where imperfections are part of the process and add to the energy of the piece.

I believe art should be accessible to everyone and my illustrations invite viewers into worlds that are whimsical, playful, and surreal. With a background in Art and Philosophy, as well as experience as a community artist and events manager, I am passionate about bringing creativity into public spaces. I am particularly interested in working with festivals and events, where art can be experienced as a joyful, shared encounter.

I**mage credit:** Delphine Byrne*, Life-Death-Life*, Oil painting on MDF board, 45.0 x 38.0 cm (framed)

STEPHANIE ELICIA RUSHWORTH
Stephanie Elicia is a Melbourne based artist working across printmaking and mixed media. Colourful and joyous with a naïve illustrative style, her works often draws inspiration from native flora, fauna and childhood nostalgia, with a hint of humour. Through playful imagery she reclaims softness and intuition as strength, while inviting reflection on connection and identity.

STEPH WATT
Steph Watt is disabled/chronically ill designer, best known for playfully exploring colour and form with their arty design project Dorkus Design. Living and resting in Naarm/Melbourne.

SUNNIVA INNSTRAND
Sunniva Innstrand is an interdisciplinary artist from Norway based in Berlin, Germany. She holds a Master of Fine Arts as well as a Postgraduate of Fine Arts from the Weissensee Academy of Art Berlin. In addition to a handful of other conditions, Sunniva has been living with post-viral ME/CFS since 2018. As someone living with several chronic conditions and severe disability, the artistic process has become her sanctuary, and she continues to create art to help her process and endure

TESS HIDER
I am a multidisciplinary artist currently focusing on soft sculpture and craft materials. My work looks at personal experiences with disability and chronic pain, and the complex interactions and connections within community.

TINA SHEERS
Tina Sheers works from her studio in Heyfield, creating artworks from found and salvaged objects. She especially likes working with recycled materials and creates colourful handmade papers turning them into gift tags, bookmarks, cards, and framed artworks.
Tina is an artist exploring different mediums to see what emerges. Much of Tina's art practice is influenced by her Autism and ADHD. She experiences both intense focus and moments of distraction, which often lead to playful and unexpected experiments in her work.

Her daily creative process is about combining found objects, upcycling materials, and mixing different mediums to see what emerges. Tina works in phases where she dives deeply into one technique or material, then shifts to another as inspiration strikes.

Recently, Tina has been exploring lino printing, using her handmade paper as the canvas.

The subject matter in some of her works feature faces or intuitively convey her present state of mind or emotions, serving as a personal way for her to process and reflect on her experiences as an Autistic person.

Tina is the Director of the Autistic Women's Association and is currently serving on the Wellington Shire Disability Advisory Committee. Tina is a member of the Papermakers of Victoria and Baw Baw Arts Alliance.

Image credit: Sally Townsend, *You Can't Escape*, Acrylic on canvas, 20.0 x 20.0 cm.

Hysterical LEGACIES

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