



Resilience in Regional Creative Arts Communities CASE STUDIES: **Sandra Hosking**



Place of arts practice:
Bendigo

Website/contact details:
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Personal vision and background

‘Come to terms with what you want to get out of your art.’

Sandra is a ceramics and mixed media artist, based in Bendigo. She has had all sorts of creative practical experience, as she says ‘going a long way back’. She has done cooking, sewing and writing, ran a café for two years, and has been on the jobseeker market. When she started studying art from 2011, in a local TAFE course, Sandra was encouraged by her colleagues to talk about art, tools and concepts, the why of creating work. This has led her to explore many media, building her skills in drawing, painting and ceramics.

She now sees herself as a creator or maker in any format, using anything that is convenient. This has included feathers and other materials from her environment, discovered on her walks around Bendigo.



Trio of feathers 2015
Ink on paper
28x20cm

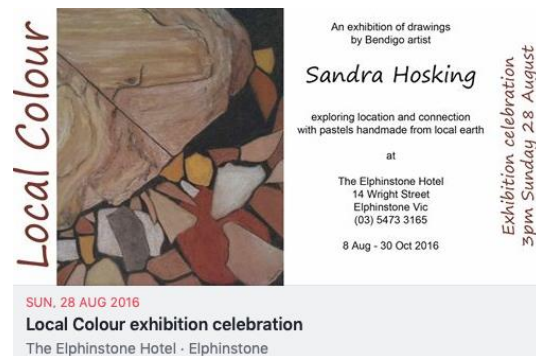
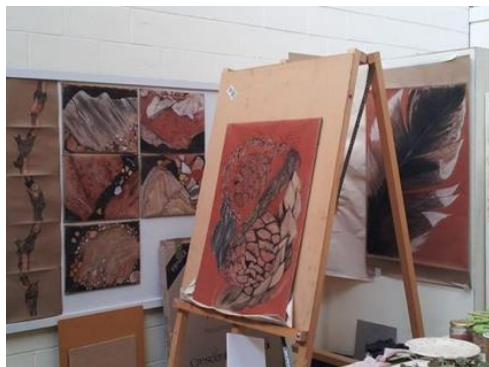


Natural pigment drawing using handmade pastels made from local rocks 2015



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Sandra has shaped her creative opportunities in Bendigo. Her attitude is that it's not about someone else making life easier, or the artist needing more support from others. That's not how life works, she says. 'The artist needs to 'go out and get it yourself'.



Studio work 2014 (on left), and notice of her Local Colour exhibition (above) in 2016.

Networks are vital to Sandra, and when she studied art she started exchanging ideas with other students, in particular with Patrick Thwaites. Their discussions led to the emergence of The Avenue Studios, an artist-run space starting with weekly life drawing and becoming more formalised as issues such as public liability intruded. The Avenue Studio assists emerging artists; there is still life drawing, but also mentoring of artists, and letting of spaces which are currently occupied by visual artists, musicians and yoga classes.



There are public presentations and exhibitions. Arts networks are often ad hoc and word-of-mouth...and The Avenue Studio is central to supporting this.

Bendigo Artists Inc is an artist-run, not-for-profit arts group operating out of The Avenue Studios. There are training sessions, exhibitions and guest painters.



Portrait Practice October 2019



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Personal engagement with community resilience building in arts practice

As is evidenced by her engagement above, Sandra is strongly focused on the arts within her community. One of her series of workshops, supported by the City of Greater Bendigo, focused on the 'Masque Project' (see details below). These workshops lead to conversations about damage, who the artists are, and development of a greater acceptance of themselves through these masks. The project became a process of coming out of a 'shell' or dark period. This project and process is energising and responsive to both the artist and their environment.



The Masque Project involves clay firing a series of masks, to retain their earthiness. These masks and other naturally shaped works have been embedded with pieces of local earth, rock or plants to represent how humans are influenced by the environment around them.

This project (illustrated on left) included workshops with people making masks of their own faces, and then firing them, but not in a standard kiln. This method enables the effect of fire on the end product to become more clear.

Sandra loved the colours and textures in the masques (on left) she sent to the Ferntree Gully Community Arts Centre for Immerse 2016.

Identification of issues and gaps in regional creative sector

There are several barriers Sandra has identified as a Bendigo artist. One is the difficulty of exhibition spaces not being affordable in the Bendigo region. She knows that it is vital to have public exhibitions, to help her to continually challenge her forms of art, and to curate and professionally present her work. Small spaces may be sponsored through grants, and Sandra has been open to many exhibition opportunities, such as at the Castlemaine Festival, The White Shoe Box, Bendigo Street Festival and the Bendigo Library. Being ready for challenges is vital to her as an artist.

However the local community does not generate an artist's career, as that community is not generally purchasing local art. This is a difficult environment for commercial galleries, and finding funds to continue to exhibit artwork is an ongoing concern. Crowdsourcing is not a reliable method of funding, for example, and artists have gone on to other careers, supporting their art as a sideline.

Another barrier for artists is the inner critic, and resulting lack of confidence. It takes quite a bit of confidence to network and exhibit, particularly if the artist has an introverted approach and expectations of being isolated and content in a studio.



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A House Divided
charcoal on paper
66x46 cm
*Exhibited Brunswick Street
Gallery 2014*



*Detail, White Shoe Box
Gallery exhibit
Theatre Royal
Castlemaine State Festival
2015*



*Pop up studio in Killians Walk
Bendigo Street Festival 2016*

Potential strategies for building regional creative sector resilience

There is no doubt, Sandra says, that the City of Greater Bendigo Council is active and offering options, but artists need to be self-starters and freelancers in developing careers. Emerging artists, who may often be introverts wanting to just get into their studios and not leave, need to find ways to look outwards beyond the studio walls. Coupled with issues of fundraising for emerging artists, and a local community not particularly engaged in buying local art, artists need to have more freelancer thinking. This requires finding some way to increase national and global reach.

Purchasing of exhibited artworks comes more from others coming into the region. There are outlets such as within Castlemaine, which runs two shows per year for local artists. The audience for these shows is broader and will travel for artwork, possibly as a result of the biennial festival and increased reputation as an arts community. The Rotary Easter Art Show is another option, although this may be too big for emerging artists who are just becoming known. Sandra suggests layers of engagement, starting with spaces and events with a focus on local artists, then expanding to the larger shows.

Radio is a good option for developing the layers of engagement approach, with the ABC supportive of promoting local shows. Thinking smaller can also help in containing costs, as forms of crowd funding or grants are difficult to obtain.

Creative thinkers have great value, an ability to think differently, but this does come with issues of resilience. A way to build up confidence in this skill is to develop free spaces for students and emerging artists for end-of-year exhibitions. This can help to build up artist resilience and esteem, getting involved with what's already available and cultivating the belief of emerging artists in themselves as professionals.

Digital Arts Stories – art popping up all over...

The following art essay explores the diversity of Sandra's artwork. She has a great curiosity to collaborate with others, and to find many different ways to present her work through exhibition.



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*Masques of Influence exhibition
Exhibit B Bendigo 2017*



*Seven Turns fabric sculpture installation
The Capital
Picture Ulumbarra 2015*



*Exhibition at White Shoe Box Gallery
Theatre Royal
Castlemaine Festival 2015*



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Entwined

A land of drought
and of flood
Humans
Nature
Intertwined.
No matter what we
Humanity
do
She is ready to engulf us.
Respect
Kindness
She must be treated with.
Only then
we
Humanity
will survive.



Words by: Sharon Greenaway



Artwork Title: Entwined Artist: Sandra Hosking
Medium: Digital



Entwined
Digital
Bendigo Library, Write on the Fringe 2015

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Researched and written by Dr Karen Le Rossignol, Deakin University, August 2020.