

# IMPRESSABILITY



## Creating A Visual Language

A Regional Youth Support Services, Youth Arts Warehouse project, Supported by the NSW Government through Arts NSW



# IMPRESSABILITY

## Creating A Visual Language

Supported by the NSW Government through ARTS NSW

Co-ordinated by the Youth Arts Warehouse, Regional Youth Support Services Inc.

Coordinator/ Creative Producer: Sharon Aldrick

Project Artists in Residence: Kiera O'Toole, Angelo Kehagias, Gemma Garner

Assistant Project Artist: Lisa McArthur-Edwards

Indigenous Representative and Choreographer : Brett Parker "Billyara"

Young Emerging Artists: Steven Wheatley, Alex Munday, Ling Gribble, Floyd Dewar, Tim Bell, Aaran Erem, Sienna Acquaro, Blake Williams, Nicole Bracken, Tiana May-Fulcher, Jordan Todd, Christopher Donaldson

Costume: Collette Pearson, Cinematography: Daniel Grey, Sound recording: Alex Roussos

NAISDA Dance College Students: Shae Duncan, Casey Natty, Rika Hamaguchi, Rodney Beatty

Manager Regional Youth Support Services: Kim McLoughry

Author: Sharon Aldrick

Title: ImpressAbility.

Published by Regional Youth Support Services Inc. 2013

Photography by Project Artists and Coordinator

Text by Project Artists and Coordinator

The moral right of author has been asserted for project and book.

Blurb inc., provided layout designs and graphic elements and are copyright Blurb Inc., 2009

Blog: <http://impressabilityproject.blogspot.com.au>

[www.youthartswarehouse.com.au](http://www.youthartswarehouse.com.au)

[www.ryss.com.au](http://www.ryss.com.au)

All rights reserved by the Youth Arts Warehouse, Regional Youth Support Services. No part of this publication may be reproduced or stored in any form without prior written permission by the Manger of Regional Youth Support Services Inc.

I

While every reasonable effort has been made to cite the owners of moral rights to individual artworks, it has not always been possible. We extend our apologies. All moral rights remain with the individual participants.

Front cover Image: by Blake





**Our First Day**

Back: Aran Erem, Tim Bell, Blake Williams, Sienna Acquar, Middle: Alex Munday, Steven Wheatley, Floyd Dewar, Ling Gribble Front: Angelo Kehagias, Nicole Bracken, Kiera O'Toole, Gemma Garner

Aran Erem



Nicole Bracken



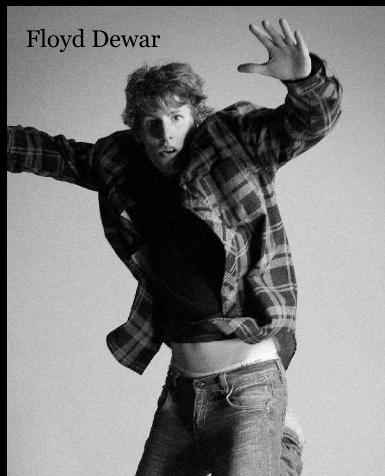
Tim Bell



Blake Williams



Floyd Dewar



Alex Munday



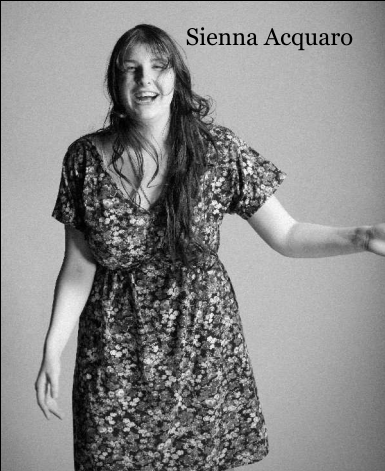
Tiana Fulcher



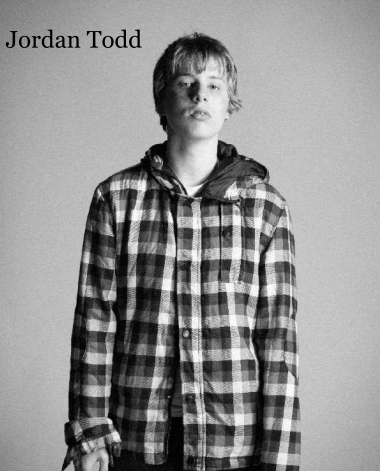
Steven Wheatley



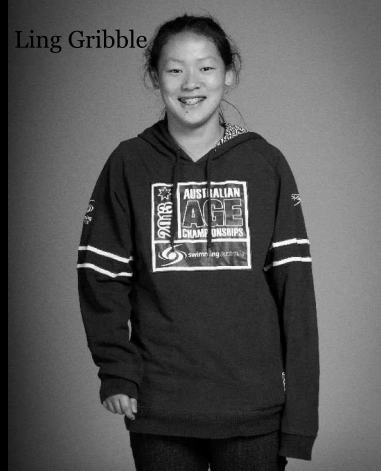
Sienna Acquaro



Jordan Todd



Ling Gribble



Christopher Donaldson





Jordan Todd creating a work with hand made tools

"I enjoyed it, it's been very interactive,  
very involving and lots of fun"- Tim



## ImpressAbility

ImpressAbility is an exhibition of contemporary ideas offering a view across the visual arts, performing arts, photography and video platforms.

This book delivers the journey of the ImpressAbility project and the unique stories and art works created during the shared experiences of all the artists involved.

The project empowered Young Emerging Artists with disabilities of varying degrees to explore their identities through experimental mark making, photography/video and performance art. The aim of the project was to foster the artistic 'identity' of the twelve participants, build artistic confidence and support professional and artistic development of arts practitioners, to contribute to innovation and excellence, delivering broader community outcomes, with engagement of professional artists and emerging young artists on the Central Coast NSW.

This journey of six months was a coming together of creative development workshops held under the guidance of resident artists; Gemma Garner 'Performance Art', Angelo Kehagias 'Digital Media' and Kiera O'Toole 'Mark making & drawing'. The workshops were a process whereby the participants developed their visual language, through a series of visual exercises leading to producing an exhibition.

The Youth Arts Warehouse was transformed into a contemporary exhibition made up of intimate spaces that prompted the viewer in to interact with the work.

### **They included:**

- Three rooms video installation of three performance's
- Wearable Art Sculptures and performance art video
- The Fringe Dance video
- Large-scale photographic portraits of characters
- Large scale drawings
- The cloud room sound interview installation
- Darkened Light Dance and Mark Making video
- Process room and Bulgandry tour room
- Documentary Photography

This project provided a 'safe space' for the artists to work and collaborate in.

Sharon Aldrick  
Coordinator/ Creative Producer



**Sharon Aldrick**  
**Youth Arts Coordinator**  
**Creative Producer**  
**Impressability**

# Artists Statements

## Gemma Garner

Working on Impressability has really reignited my passion, working with Angelo, Keira, Lisa and Colette has inspired me to broaden the scope of the work I do. In my personal practice I like to present simple ideas in an unusual context, to try to represent something emotional in a visual context.



My work is performance based incorporating, music, comedy, theatre and dance, based around social and political commentary. My aim is not to preach but perhaps to present something in an unexpected way so people may think about it differently.

The young emerging artists on this project have been such an inspiration to me and it is a timely reminder for me to stay connected to my own inner voice and to trust my instincts.

## Kiera O'Toole

Kiera O'Toole studied Fine Art at the Dublin Institute of Technology graduating in 2000 and went on to complete a Masters of Philosophy in Fine Art in Newcastle University, Australia in 2013. O'Toole has exhibited widely in group and solo exhibitions in Ireland, Finland and Australia including the National Museum of Australia in 2011. O'Toole has extensive experience in teaching Fine Art as a casual academic, TAFE teacher, Community College and obtained several artists in residencies. As an early career researcher, O'Toole has maintained her professional art practice with her works collected in public and private collections including the OPW.



## Angelo Kehagias

Angelo Kehagias is an established professional photographer working primarily in the music, and advertising industries. He is renowned for his distinct style of portraiture, which departs from the traditional headshot style, and seeks to create narratives within the image that reveal another dimension to the subject.

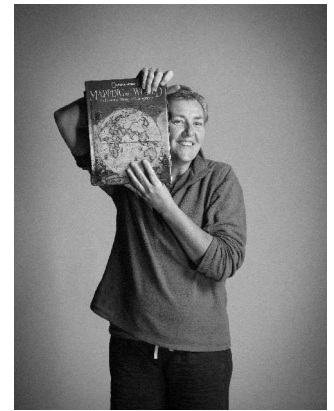


"Before I became a photographer I was shy and introverted. Give me a camera though, and I become the master of my own creation. Having the outlet to create an image, gives me the confidence to direct my subject. I see those same qualities in a lot of the artists in this project, and for me that is the main objective, to empower them with the self-belief, and courage to create.

The digital mediums of photography, film and design, are already common place in modern society, where they are used as a universal visual language, that transcends the limitations of the spoken word. This project empowers young people with disabilities, by arming them with the methods & systems to harness this dynamic medium for their own self expression".

## Lisa McArther-Edwards

My work is about a sense of belonging. Having grown up all over Europe, the landscapes, languages, cultures and symbols differed. Through my sculpture and printmaking practice I explore place and identity in my art. My work reflects where I belong.



Becoming involved with this project has allowed me to experience the process of discovering and communicating identity through the marks we make and the way we use our bodies to convey who we are.

For me this project has allowed me the honour to witness the young emerging artists discovering their own ways to communicate and to find the strengths and powers within themselves, and to understand themselves and their place within their own environments. To empower them to continue their own journeys of self-discovery and their own art practises with confidence

Alex Munday

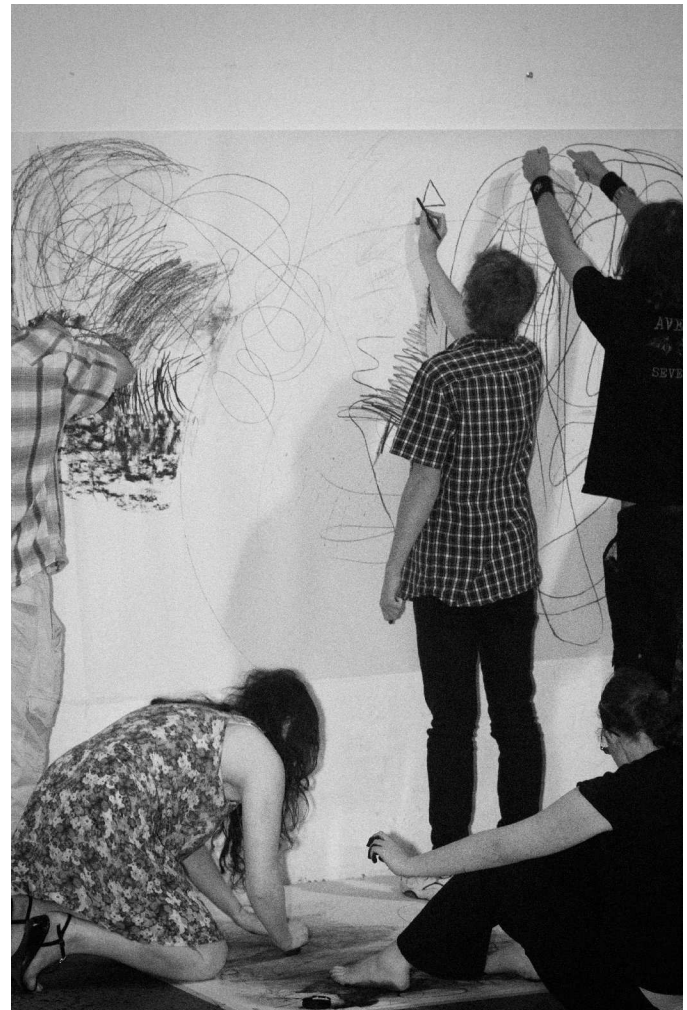
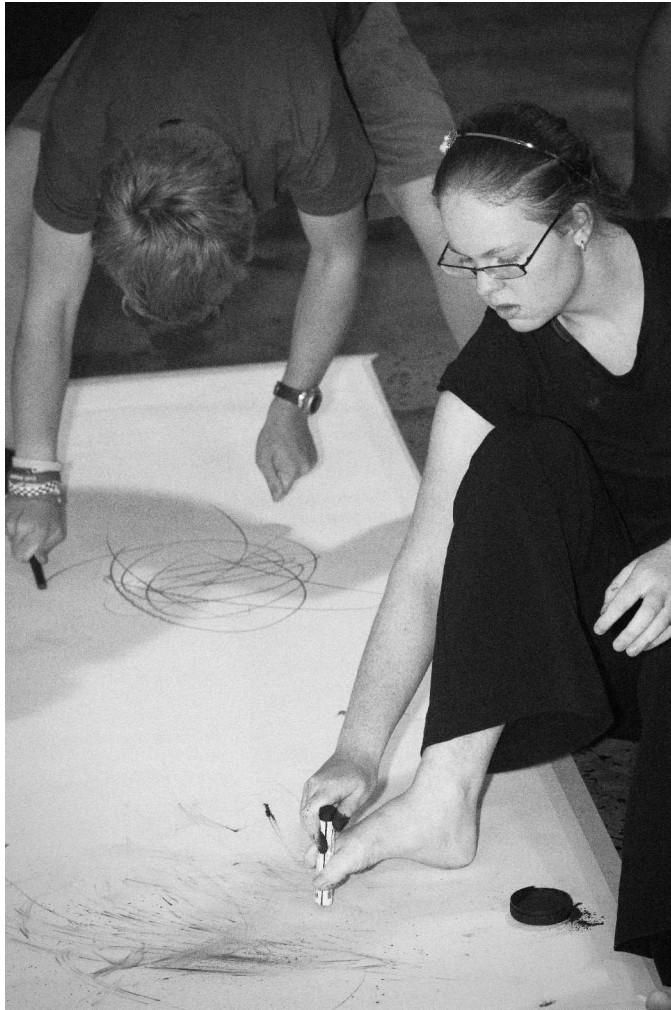


## In the Beginning

In the beginning of the series of workshops, the artists were divided into groups according to the young emerging artists artistic inclinations. The group was led by an 'artist in residence' specialising in their professional practice enabling the emerging artist to be taken on a intensive mentorship. Gemma 'Performance Art', Angelo 'Digital Media' and Kiera 'Mark making & drawing'. The artists all collaborated together to produce work for the final Exhibition.

Some artists decided to  
be  
involved with  
two art practices

# Workshops



**Day 1. Mark Making Exercise.**

Each of the young emerging artists had a very different approach and style of drawing, this led to discovering their own visual language.



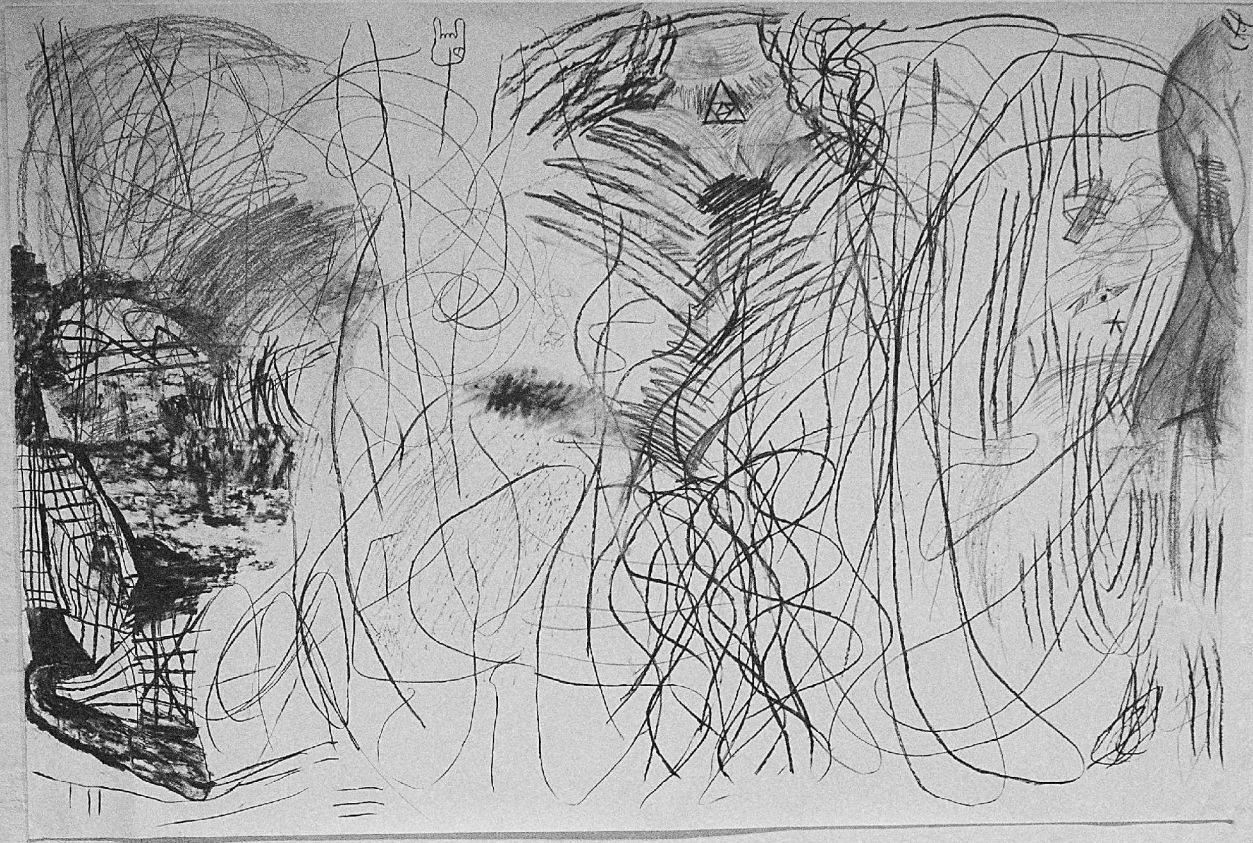
A black and white photograph capturing a dense, intricate thicket of bare tree branches. The branches are dark and gnarled, creating a complex web of lines that fills most of the frame. In the lower-left foreground, a wooden lattice structure, possibly a fence or a screen, is visible, composed of several horizontal and vertical slats. The background is a bright, almost white area, which could be a snowy field or a very bright sky, providing a stark contrast to the dark branches. The overall composition is highly textured and visually busy.

**"It's a visual feeling"**  
**- Aran**

## Mark Making / Drawing

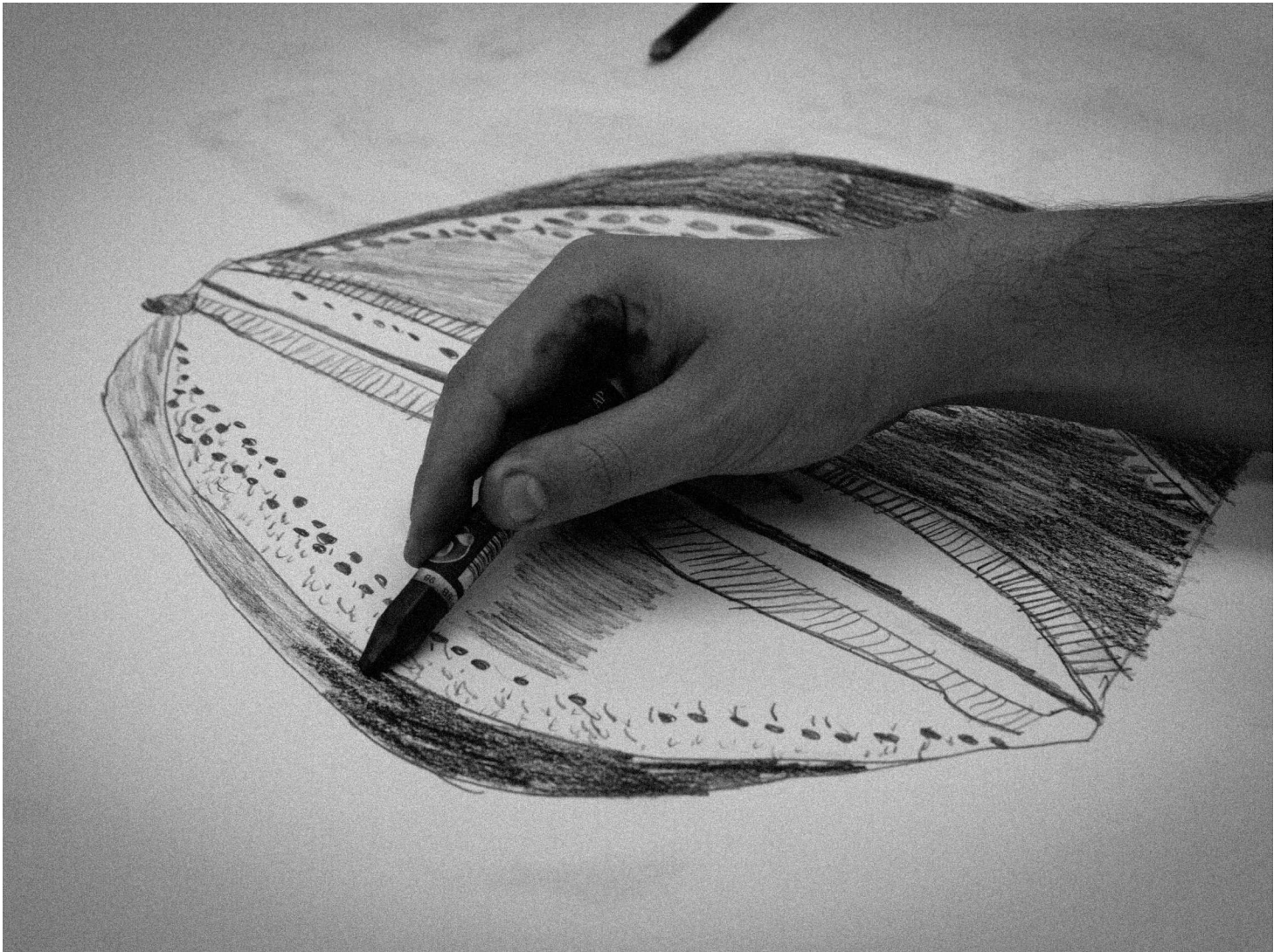
Video footage was made in the first workshop recording the act of mark making as a group. Gestural lines and remnants of individual's actions of making marks on vertical and horizontal surfaces, showcase the varied marks from linear broad sweeping lines to whole handprints imprinted into graphite and charcoal powder. On the left, intense, structured, conscious lines demarcate itself. While on the right, lines traverse and negotiate with short, sharp lines or curvy and wistful lines. Embodying the relationship between the individual's movement and lived experiences, the lines become a site for the conscious and unconscious to encounter, where they become lines of identity.

**Kiera O'Toole**  
**Artist**



"Finding out my true Identity, that's what this project is all about"- Nicole

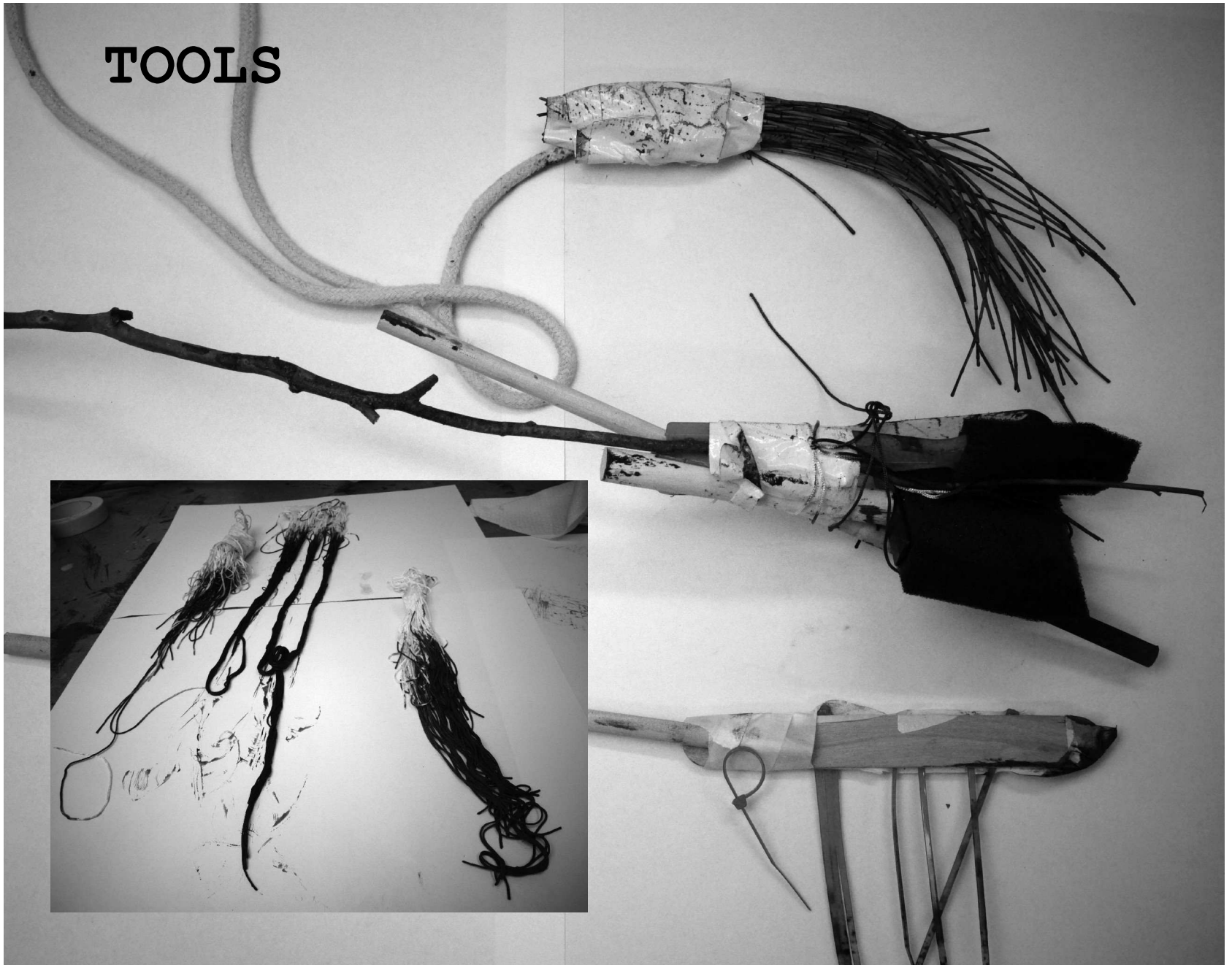




In the 'Mark Making' workshop the young emerging artists, explored their visual language through both experimental and conventional mark making. Choosing favourite objects for their 'identity box.' Aran used conventional drawing methods to recreate his shell, which resulted in a stunningly original charcoal sketch.



# TOOLS

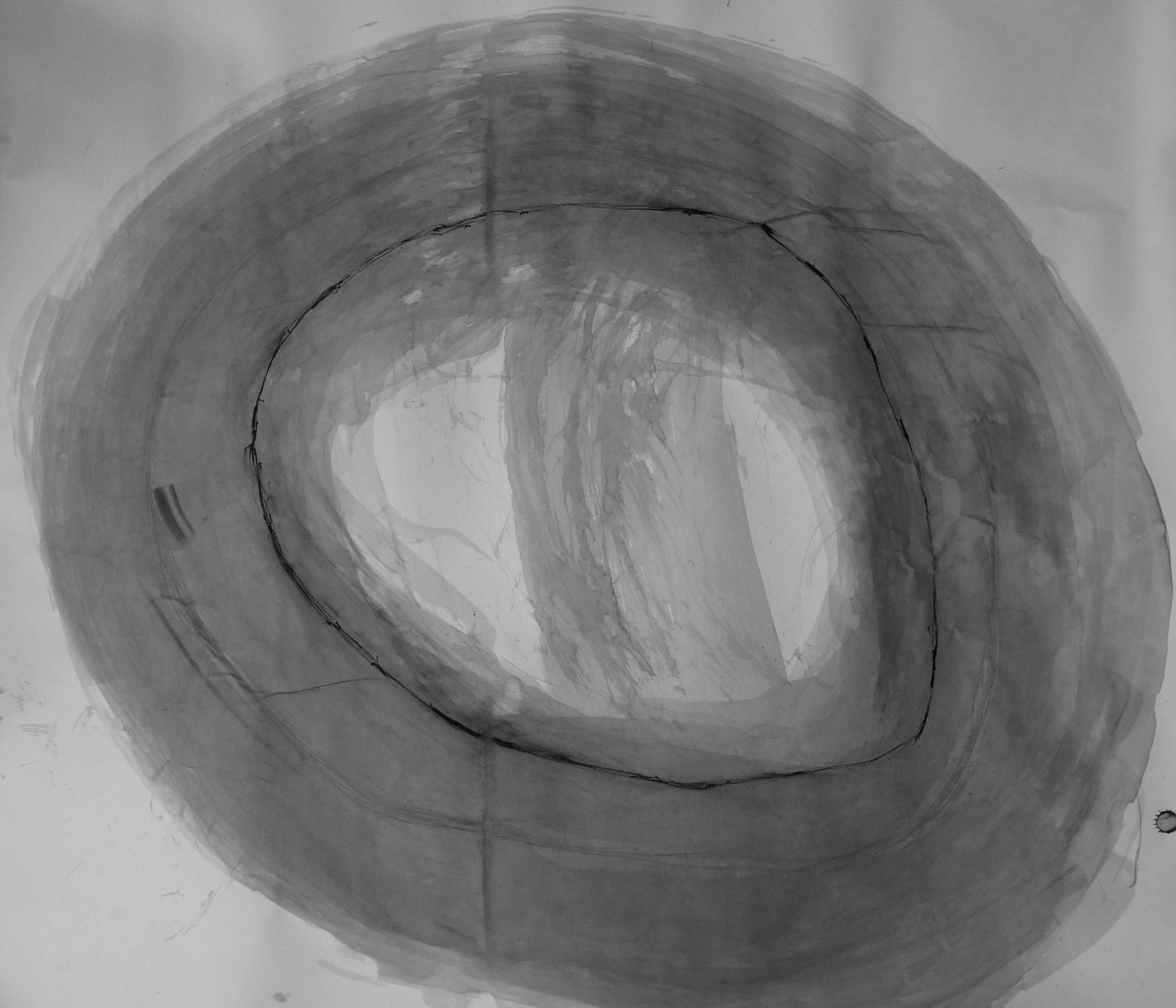


The young emerging artists created hand made drawing tools from materials such as weeds, sticks, threads, masking tape, sponges and traditional materials such as graphite sticks, charcoal sticks and powder.



**Siena**

This process encouraged the young emerging artists to explore their visual language through mark making with drawing tools and expressive movements.





"We had to draw something on art paper that meant  
identity to us.

We picked an object that we liked to draw,

I choose a really big awesome shell that I liked.

Then in our art diary we drew what it was going to look like,  
mine looked like a big map, meaning I am always on a mission for  
something.

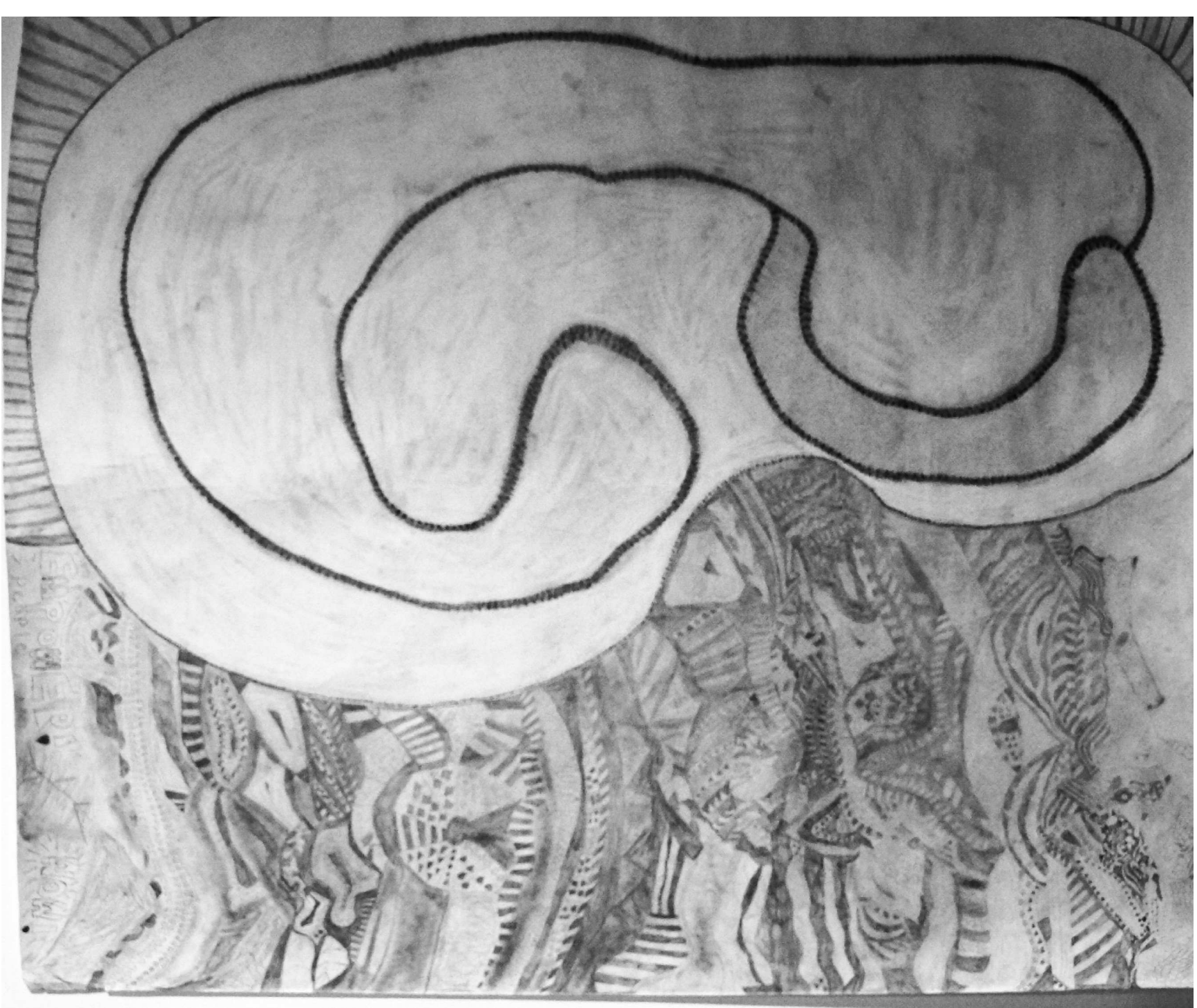
That's what mark making is, something that comes out of you."

Nicole

Opposite page: "Globe" by Aran Erem

Following Pages: "Mapping my Identity" by Nicole Bracken

"Shell Study" by Aran Erem





## Photography

### DOCUMENTARY PHOTO ESSAYS

The documentary photo essay was an ongoing collaborative task that was undertaken by the artists throughout the entire course of the workshops. The artists were introduced to the various styles of photography, the first of which was documentary photography or 'story telling' through images. At different stages during the workshops the young emerging artists were chosen to act as documentarians, and capture images which told the story of the ImpressAbility project. The young emerging artists were asked to concentrate on essential photographic skills, such as composition, exposure and controlling depth of field.

# Still life and logo design



At the beginning of the project the young emerging artists were given an identity box and a visual art diary to keep reference ideas and to use the box to collect objects that had personal significance. The objects were used in the digital media, performance art, and mark making workshops.

In the Digital Media workshops the artist were further exploring the theme of identity by creating their own personal logos. The artists were set the task of taking a 'still life' photograph of one of the objects from their identity box and then incorporating that into their logo.

## BIOGRAPHY PORTRAITS

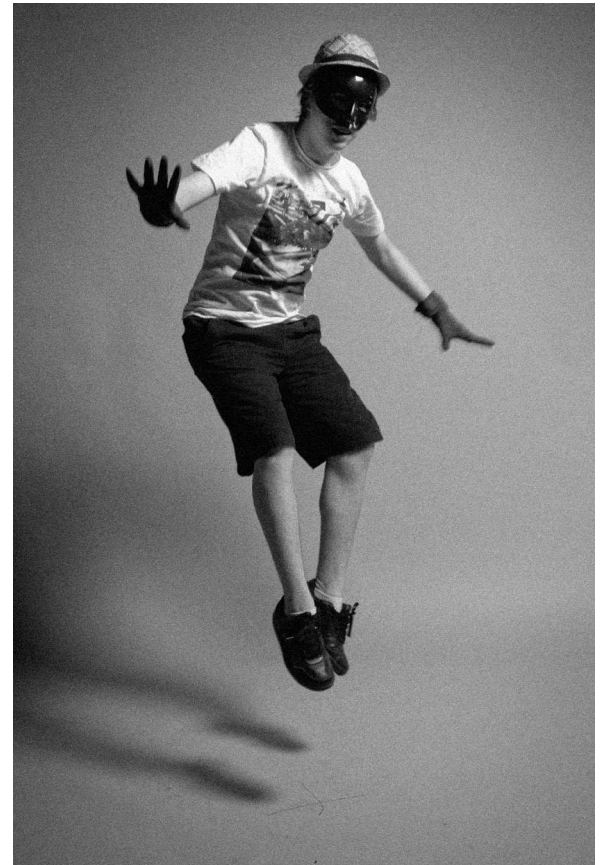
The young emerging artists began their exploration of 'identity' through the biography portrait sessions. The sessions were an introduction to the art of portrait making. Using a simple studio photography lighting set up, the artists were required to capture the 'essence' of their subject.

Artist in residence Angelo Kehagias mentored the young emerging artists by encouraging them to communicate with the subject and vocalize their artistic vision. In turn, the portrait subjects were encouraged to communicate and collaborate with the photographer artist in order to achieve their goal.

Some of the subjects were shot whilst jumping on a mini trampoline. The jumping motion helped to create animated expressions expelling self-conscious poses when in front of the camera.

This page: Jordan by Alex

Opposite page: Floyd by Tim, Sienna by Blake, Tianna by Floyd,  
Blake by Joran





## Performance Art

Drawing on the themes of visual language and identity the performance art group began to form characters through a series of performance workshops. Touching on acting techniques, comedy, silent films, mime and movement, the young emerging artists were encouraged to look within to embellish their performances.

Nicole, Steve and Sienna performed silent improvisations that were both powerful and funny. The emerging artists showed great dedication and focus and were very open and willing to try everything. The artists created characters, using their own identities they discovered how they could bring these characters to life by using costumes, sound and movement.

The resulting performances gave us a glimpse of the emerging identities and remind us all of the "parts" we have to play in different areas of our lives.

"We were invited into their private chambers to witness The Queen, The Bride and The Archer as they transcend hardship and uncertainty with strength and resolve."

**Gemma Garner**  
Artist



# Physical Comedy, Mime & the acting techniques of the silent movie era



## **Steve & Sienna**

"At all the other places, it's like sit still and be quiet, but here it's the opposite" - Sienna: The Bride



**Steve & Nicole**

"Here we can just create our stuff and it can't really be wrong"  
- Nicole: The Queen





# Three Room Identities- Performance Art Video's

## **The Bride**

The character of the bride began to appear in the first workshop. Sienna being complimented on her long hair, complained she sometimes felt tangled up by it and trapped. This became a metaphor for rising through the mire of things that hold us back. The bride emerges not to greet a husband, but to push through the boundaries of her own fear to stand proud and triumphant.

## **The Archer**

Steve shared with us a very intimate story in his powerful portrayal of this character; we see the wounded warrior after a great battle, he is far from defeated. As he removes his bandages, and looks towards the sun showing he is ready to seize victory and that nothing will stop him.

## **The Queen**

From the first improvisations Nicole began to inhabit this character, a young queen taking charge of her kingdom and making her displeasure known, she demands to be heard and taken seriously. We watch her summon all her fury and see her truly come into her power.

The Digital Media Team took documentary photo's of the actors



**Blake & Steve:**

"It's not like any other acting I've done before, but I'm starting to really get it"

Steve: The Archer

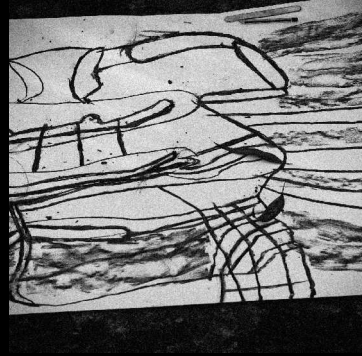
**Site Tour / Site Specific Work**



**Bushwalk to  
Bulgandry  
Aboriginal  
Site**







On-site at Bulgandry Aboriginal Rock Carving

Left to Right : Sienna, Swirl of Water by Aran, Nicole, Drips of Water by Nicole, Gemma, Alex, Tim, Banksia by Blake, Floyd



"I like pictures to make order. I put everything into  
this project"- Alex

Photograph: by Alex Munday

## BULGANDRY ENGRAVING SITE

The artists and the young emerging artists visited the Aboriginal site of the Bulgandry rock carving in Kariong, N.S.W. After a tour of the carvings by Gabi Duncan, the artists and young emerging artists joined in an Aboriginal celebration dance. Developing the notion of experimental mark making to find a personal identity that is connected to place, participants fashioned drawing tools and explored the environment through experimental drawing processes. Sienna traced the shadow of a tree moving in the wind, Aran carved found sticks and employed them as drawing implements and created large-scale gestural drawings with ink and water. Nicole created hanging bags of charcoal powder with water that dripped onto paper. The marks were manipulated by the artist's hand and by the environment resulting in ambiguous drawings that are intimately tied to the site.



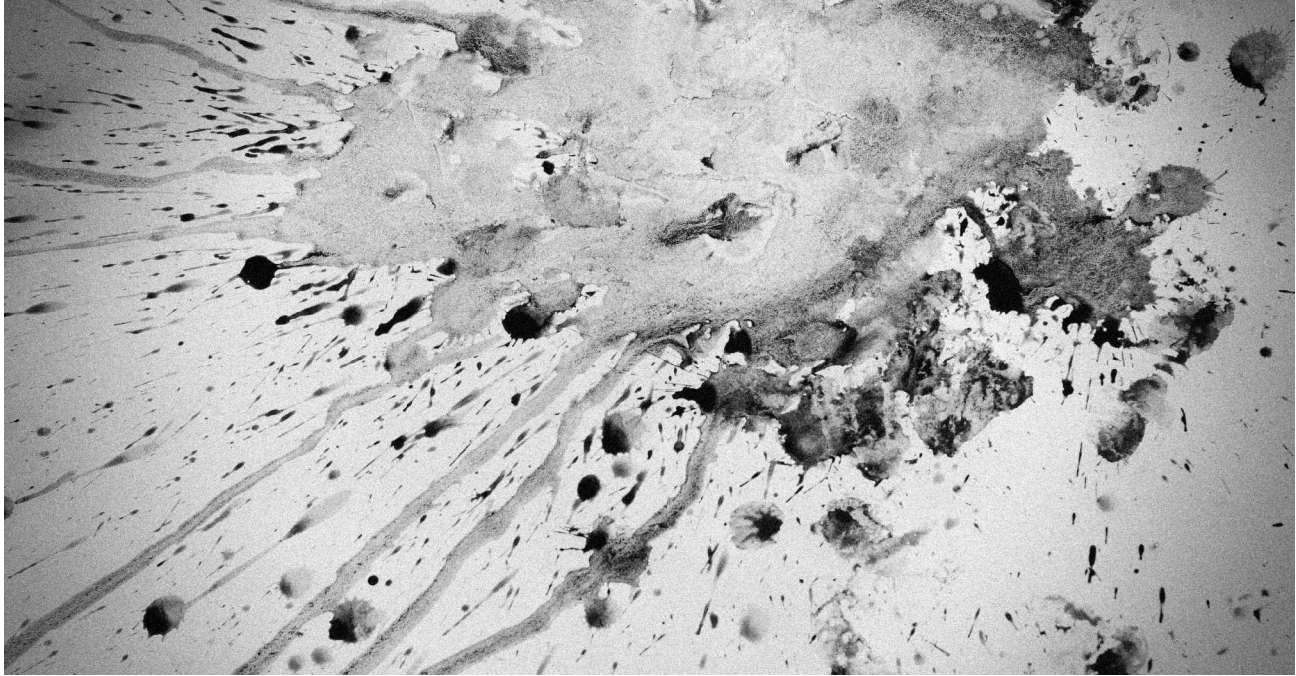
Photograph By Tim Bell

Sienna creating a site specific work.

Charcoal was attached to a branch using string and then Sienna manipulated the tree to make the marks on paper.



# Working on site



The emerging artists participated in various artistic responses to the surrounds. The young emerging artists took photographs concentrating on close ups of textural elements and abstract forms created by nature. Alex took photos of banksias and scribble gums, while Tim concentrated on scenic landscapes.

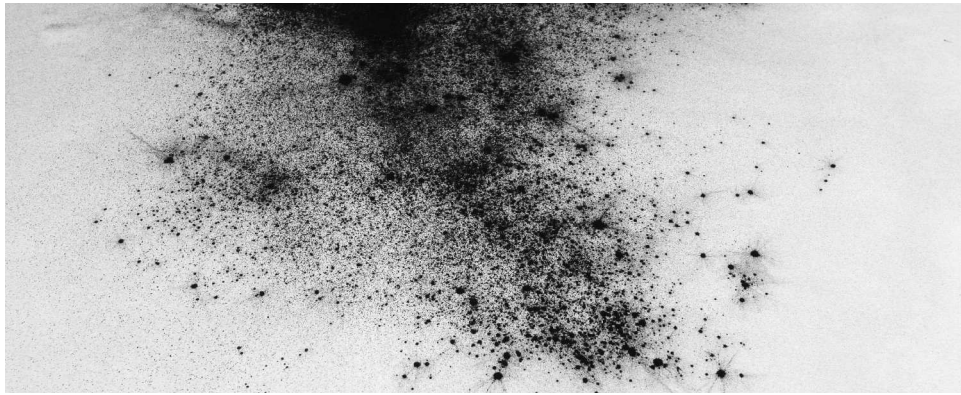
Opposite page: Nicole, Kiera, Gemma and Gavi participating in Dance, Aran making his mark, Nicole and her interesting technique, Tiana and Blake taking shots of the environment



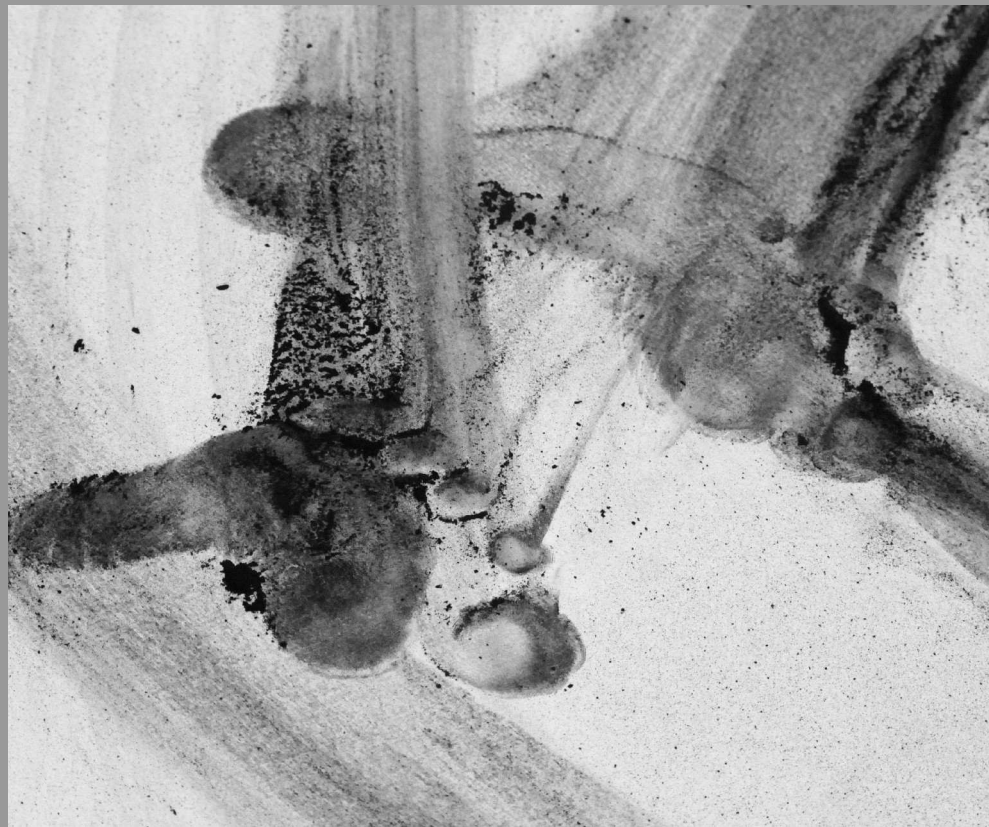
"Birds" by Ling Gribble



Performance Art / Video Installations



"Darkened Light":Kiera lays the charcoal dust for the dancers to make their marks on, while the mark makers take their place.



## **Darkened Light-Video Installation**

Darkened Light is a mix of traditional Aboriginal movement incorporated with contemporary dance styles to show a dark and light interpretation of certain feelings, which can overcome someone who has anxiety, depression or is just different.

The piece has a lot of ground work, showing the struggles people face trying to “Make their Mark” in life. The pressures young people face every day from others to fit into society can send one on a high and low, which can change a person’s direction in life forever.

On the lighter side, it all ends with the flight of the eagle representing ones journey to now feeling free, flying fearlessly and looking down in reflection on past struggles. Now living with a powerful mindset, gliding peacefully on the wind and then landing with pride finally knowing one’s self and feeling a sense of accomplishment.

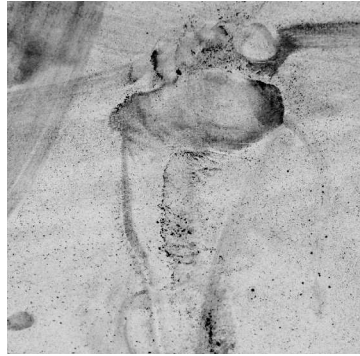
Choreographer – Brett Parker “Billyara”



## **The Marks**

**The artists collaborated with NAISDA dance college students. A dance movement depicting mental illness was translated in an abstract freedom of expression, through the tracing of movements with charcoal and Charcoal powder on paper.**





Left to right: Back Row **Brett Parker, Casey Natty, Blake Williams, Aran Erem, Lisa McArthur-Edwards, Angelo Kehagias, Kiera O'Toole** Front Row **Sharon Aldrick, Tim Bell, Shae Duncan, Sienna Acquaro, Rodney Beatty, Rika Hamaguchi**





Wearable Sculpture Video Performance

"It was really fun doing the sculpture dance and working with everyone"- Jordan



## **SCULPTURE AS A DRAWING SURFACE**

In the theme of experimentation with mark making, the emerging artists constructed sculptural objects from Paper Mache that were developed from their observational drawings of their objects. These sculptures became wearable three-dimensional drawing surfaces, for a performance that explored the notion of personal space. During the performance, the emerging artists moved in their own ways and at their own pace, communicating with their body movements as they also made marks on each other, some avoiding the intrusion into their space while others permitted the act. The resulting video documents these acts of mark making and their personal visual language.

# The Fringe Dance Performance



Gemma and Keira collaborated together with Floyd and Jordan on the 'fringe dance'.

Through a series of interactive movement workshops and playful collaboration, Floyd and Jordan created these dynamic performance pieces for film. The fringes were dipped in ink and then used to make textural whip like marks onto paper. Floyd making quick Thai Chi movements, while Jordan making slower more emotive movements. Resulting in a zen like piece of art.

"It was great being part of everything, I enjoyed finding my own personality"- Floyd



## HERO PORTRAITS

The 'Hero' portraits are the culmination of the creative process that was undertaken through the Digital Media Photography workshops. This collection of portraits encapsulates the various practices, and concepts introduced in the workshops.

The emerging artists developed their own 'Hero' character which is made up of aspects of their own identity and rounded out by their imagination. The 'Hero' characters were brought to life first through a series of 'brainstorming' sessions to develop the characters.

The young emerging artists then consulted with costume designer Colette Pearson, working together in the creation of their costumes and props made from a combination of recycled materials and various objects that were sourced and customized for the purpose of the shoot.

The final step of the process was the photo shoot. The artists wore their costumes and became the 'Hero'. Not only were they the subject of the shoot, but they also took turns photographing and directing each other.

The 'Hero' characters are essentially a physical embodiment of the artist's identity. In turn, the photographic portraits that they captured, are a crystallization of their newly discovered visual language.



## **TIANA FULCHER (AKA ANGEL PATROL)**

Angel Patrol is a direct line to God, she is Gods messenger of choice. Angels usually appear either in all their heavenly glory or in the form of a human being, but they're pure spirits can manifest in any physical form. Angel Patrols pure spirit is that of a horse. If God decides to communicate with a terrestrial being, he chooses Angel patrol to do his bidding.

In the book *Angel Horses*, Allen and Linda Anderson write: "Horses are sensitive to everything and everyone around them. This makes them both receptors and messengers for God, Divine Spirit, the Sacred, or whatever you want to call the love that flows through all creation. Perhaps because they are prey animals, horses have had to learn to tune in to the slightest changes in their inner worlds and outer environments ... If you are ever in doubt about the direction to take in your life, and you need a second opinion, you couldn't do better than to listen to a horse's advice."

Tiana Photographed By Alex Munday



## **Alex Munday (AKA TIGER MUNDAY)**

Tiger Munday is a photographer, a dandy and a rabbit-in that order. He keeps himself busy fastidiously photographing everything and everyone. He is the unofficial documentarian of the Impressability project, always popping up unexpectedly with his camera, and capturing the decisive moment. Forever on the run, forever trying to be in two places at the same time, he is always muttering 'oh dear, oh dear, I shall be late...'

Alex Photographed by Tiana



## **JORDAN TODD (AKA POP TART FRED)**

Pop Tart Fred inhabits a dream world of candy delights ,with its own cast of cool kats. Roads made of licorice. Rainbows made of skitels. Trees made of mars bars. Rivers flowing with Dr Peppers, that he floats along on a mattress made of pop tarts The Cat in the Hat creates carnage. Willy Wonka fills your pockets full of candy. Harry Potter and Artemis Fowl fight evil with magic .

In the hours between sleeps Fred obsessively draws stick figures, and feeds his imagination with books. His favourite bedtime companions are Dr Seuss, and Roald Dahl.

Jordan Photographed by Blake



## FLOYD DEWAR (AKA MALCOLM FUNCTION)

Malcom studied on Gallifrey to become the next doctor, however his poor aptitude in algebra was his downfall. In a fit of anger and frustration, he hijacked a beaten up tardis from the parking lot, and operated as a rogue doctor on a mission to destroy mathematics in the school curriculum.

Malcom also has a penchant for flannel, and obsessively reads the Tales of Sherlock Holmes.

Floyd Photographed by Jordan





**TIM BELL  
(AKA EDGE TERRIBLE)**

Edge has an aversion to sports, and is on a mission to destroy all types of balls or any sport related equipment. He likes to relax by listening to heavy metal music at extreme volume levels.

He lives on a strict diet of Slayer, pizza, video games and barbecued leather upper.

Tim Photographed by Floyd



## **BLAKE WILLIAMS (AKA THE SHADOW PROPHET)**

The shadow prophet moves between the realms of past, present and future. He is neither good nor evil, part angel, part demon, a purveyor of darkness and light. He speaks in riddles that may portend doom, or shed the light of hope. What you choose to do next is up to you...

Blake Photographed by Jordan



**The ImpressAbility Exhibition**

"It's been a very exciting opportunity to try out new things and learn new skills"- Blake



This Page: The ImpressAbility exhibition setup

Opposite Page: Gemma in the crowd at the opening on July 5th 2013, Three rooms video installation, view of the opening, Mayor Councillor of Gosford Lawrie McKinna presenting Tim with a certificate with the Youth Arts Coordinator Sharon Aldrick



**Special thanks to the following people:**

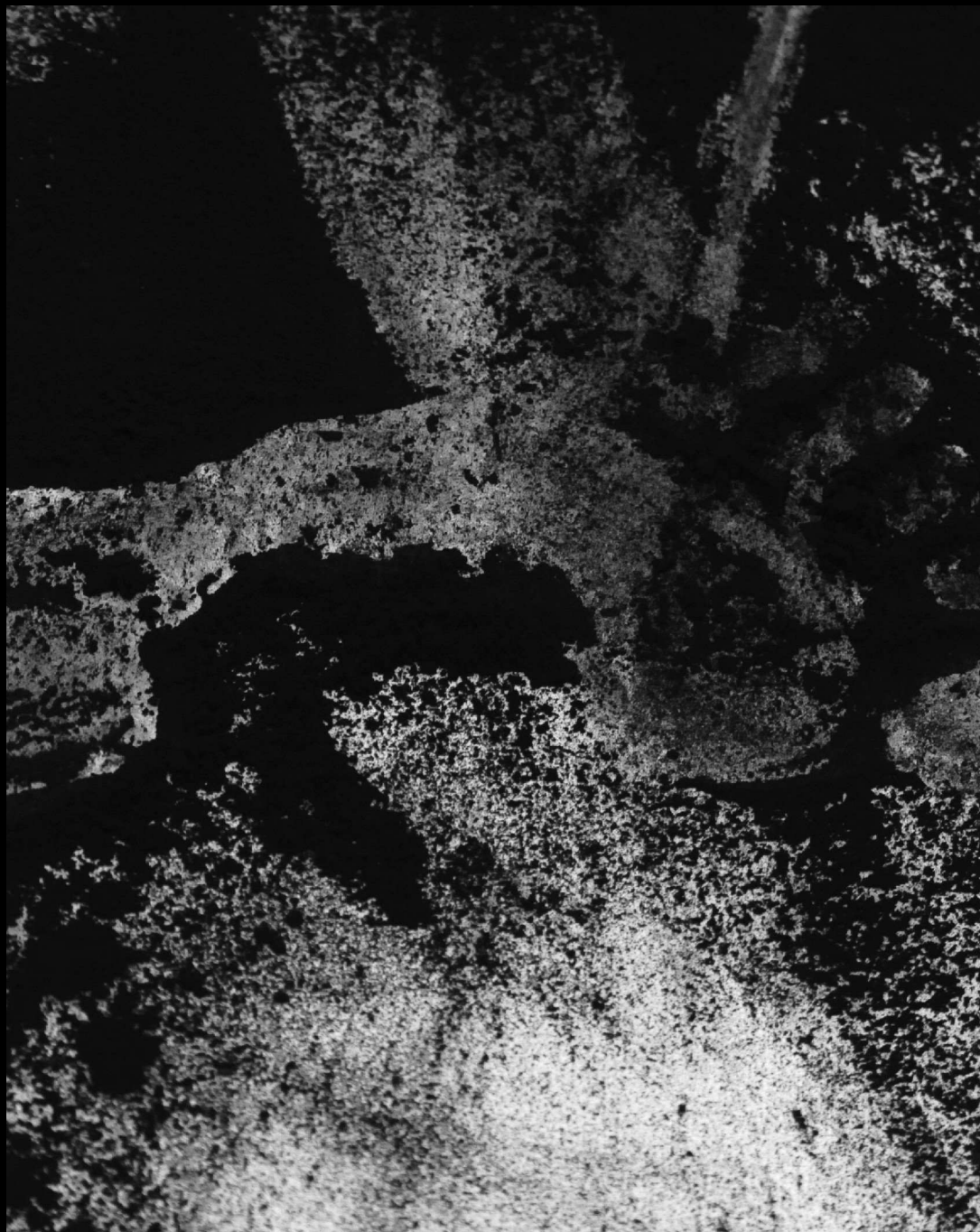
Ray Southeren, Stewart Eldridge, John Coddington, North Gosford Rotary, for making the wall installation.

Regional Youth Support Service's staff and volunteers, including Jamie McKenzie and Gail Consentino, make up, William Ho, support.

NAISDA Dance College and the Naisda Dancers and Brett Parker.

Collette Pearson, Costumes, Daniel Grey, Cinematography, Alex Roussos, Sound recording, Grady Henshaw, lighting & Sound, Frank, Oliver, Saskia & Elliott , Technical, Paul Easter & Jamie Conroy, Install Assistant, Gotye, Music (wearable sculpture video) World Wide printing Erina, Gavi Duncan, Gabrielle Sommers & Elio Gatti  
All our Artists, Parents, Family and Friends.

**Stake holder support:** Liz Carter, Regional Community Creative Producer Art Central / Regional Development Australia Central Coast, Belinda Speziale, Case Manager CCDN, East Gosford, Jodie McKay, Service Support Development Officer, ADHC, Hunter Region, Jamie Conroy, Response Training.





Trade &  
Investment  
Arts NSW







I feel like a  
part of  
something,  
**together** we  
have **created**  
something  
**amazing!**