

Staying with the Trouble: Regeneration

Wagga Wagga Art Gallery
Earth Canvas

Staying with the Trouble: Regeneration

Staying with the Trouble is an evolving collaborative project of enquiry between artists Linda Denning, Kim Mahood, Sally Simpson and Wendy Teakel. Their purpose is to explore environmental inter-connectedness and crisis through their creative practices. In its second exhibition iteration: *Staying With the Trouble - Regeneration*, the artists situated their practice at Bibbaringa regenerative farm. Here, they were challenged by farmer Gill Sanbrook to experience and creatively respond to the farm environment and sustainable practices. The result is a record of place, passion and renewal.

In the words of artist John Wolsley, farmer Gill Sanbrook is an artist, whose canvas is the land. She came to Bibbaringa on the south west slopes of NSW, in 2007. Here was a place of bare rolling hills, denuded valleys and weed filled pastures degraded by intensive farming practices. Gill sought to work with the land, not against it. To heal it, to return it to itself. The task she set herself was enormous, involving farming practices which included reducing the stock load, planting trees, renovating paddocks and shaping the land to hold water and increase flows across the land. Bibbaringa is now a place where productive farming coincides with bird song, returned wetlands, native grasses and self seeded

trees which pepper valley floors, and hold the banks of flowing creeks.

Gill holds title over the land, but sees herself as a custodian, not merely owner – the difference being temporal. She is here, and one day she will not be. While she is here, she is responsible, and she will act in its favour. She will set a forward path for others. Gill's statement of purpose for Bibbaringa underpins her practice:

'To be prosperous financially and environmentally and contribute socially. To produce high quantity and quality of nourishing resources. To build the ecology, animals and people to Sing, HUMMM in harmony.

To have a balance of rural, commercial & financial investments. A balanced lifestyle that is authentic and embraces individuality, creativity and holistic thinking.

Show love, gratitude and respect.'

A driving force of the art and regenerative farming organisation Earth Canvas, Gill situates herself as a facilitator for change. She invites artists to Bibbaringa each year to spend time in the landscape, to learn about regenerative practices and to communicate this learning through art. An invitation was extended by Gill to *Staying with the Trouble* artists, following their award winning environmental exhibition, *Staying with the Trouble* held at the Belconnen Arts Centre and Wagga Wagga Art Gallery in 2023. The artists had

adopted feminist environmental philosopher Donna Haraway's 2016 book title *Staying with the Trouble* as both exhibition title, but also as a work process, a means to collectively 'think' through the Anthropocene created environmental crisis, with art making as an instrument of challenge and change.

The artists accepted Gill's invitation and in October 2024 spent a week at Bibbaringa. For *Staying with the Trouble* artists the opportunity to be in residence at Bibbaringa offered an intense period of working alongside each other; literally 'staying with the trouble' engaging with specific place and practice.

As Director of Wagga Wagga Art Gallery I visited the artists at Bibbaringa, in the renovated former wool shed, now a communal space being used as a studio. They had set up at easels and on tables around the room. Some artworks were placed on the floor, others pinned to the wall. They were at the near end of their week and the work was taking shape. At this early stage it was evident each artist had approached from various viewpoints and understanding.

We took a brief walk outside through lush grass to feel the earth underfoot. The ground was soft – alive. After a while each artist peeled off in different directions. Kim up the hill and over, Sally to the shearer's hut, and Wendy returned to the studio. I followed Linda over to a large kurrajong where she had set up camp. Her swag was in the shade of the tree. The tree had cast its spell upon her. For days she sat underneath it and drew, she

looked up at its branches and imagined another time. She slept under it and peeked at the stars and felt the cold and listened to the rustle and the visiting birds. Why this tree? It was old, many hundreds of years. It had survived the years of fire and drought, of land clearing and the fell of the axe to build fences and houses. It had survived and it would see more years.

The tree would become the focus of Linda's work – a metaphor for what was once, what could be and what would be once again. The tree and the land it was rooted in would see the humans out. At Bibbaringa the land – exhausted just 20 years previous – was healing.

Taking note of where each artist was heading in their work, I hopped in my car and returned to Wagga Wagga. It would be another year before I would meet with the artists again, this time at Womboin, near Canberra, where they had gathered in Sally and Kim's studio to reveal the near completion of the project. Evident was the distinctive work of each artist, but bringing it together a simple truth – this is an exhibition as much about a singular person, with passion, belief, and felt obligation, as it is about land and regenerative environmental practices.

Sally Simpson's charcoal drawings are cascading scrolls which suggest both the topographic fall of land and water. Within each work a human shadow is cast. The shadow is of Gill, the one who curates place, whose mark is upon the land. These shadows

also recognise millennia of human presence, of living in harmony with and shaping place and conversely the darker shadow of the Anthropocene. In this era humans have taken the trees that stabilise the earth and offer habitat, they have dug it up, put chemicals upon it, and killed and soured the soil. In ignorance and greed they have over stocked and overgrazed, they have created monocultures, burned fossil fuels and heated the planet so few can survive. So much has been lost. In Sally Simpson's work this terrible picture is reworked by the artist to honour one human who seeks to do otherwise and to remind us that in the face of environmental history, human presence is fleeting. Nature left to her devices, will reclaim the earth.

Wendy Teakel's series of pastel, charcoal and pokerwork drawings follow her decades long practice of observing cultivated agricultural land practices; the traces made by tractors and harvesters, and broad acre plantings which leave a bruised earth. Inserted in this body of works are bold graphic forms – somewhat mysterious and runic in character, they dance above sketches of delicate blown grass and seed heads, mycelium threads / the fungal colonies which tell of healthy soil. A closer interrogation reveals these graphic forms to not be ancient portentous symbols, but to indicate paddocks, their strange shapes drawn up by Gill. They are a refutation of the old farm paddock with long straight fence lines to hold and manage cattle. Gill redrew the land to create over 100 paddocks, each to follow the curve of the land, to enhance the natural flow of water and for cattle to be

regularly moved and the land to be rested with time to recover from footfall and pasture loss.

In her privileging of these paddock shapes, the artist affirms the curatorial practice and success of the farmer. The shapes which 'dance' across each work represent the beat and pulse of a healthy thriving landscape.

Perhaps most telling of this landscape in full bloom are the rich green, blues and lavender toned works of Kim Mahood. These works in pastel and oils are a surprise from an artist who is most comfortable with the sparse landscapes and red and orange hues of arid Australia. In conversation and in her artist statement Mahood remarks that she felt deeply challenged to consider the unfamiliar at Bibbaringa. In doing so she has leaned into the abstracted roots of Modernist landscape painting to produce loose and rolling undulations, blowing trees and deep shadows. Paddocks appear as patchwork, a bird's eye view of all that is below. Here Bibbaringa is verdant, glorious and pulsating, and here the triumph of Gill Sandbrook's achievement is fully expressed.

In viewing *Staying with the Trouble – Regeneration*, audiences are invited to engage further with author Donna Haraway's seminal text and ideas *Staying with the Trouble – Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (2022).

Dr Lee-Anne Hall
November 2025

Linda Denning
Kim Mahood
Sally Simpson
Wendy Teakel

Linda Denning

The ancient kurrajong is deeply rooted in the landscape, balanced and enduring. For the artist this is both shelter and sentinel, a resolute witness to time.

Once part of vanished rainforests, this magnificent species now endures on drier slopes, embodying resilience, shade, and quiet strength. In its presence, Linda feels modest awe: the tree anchors both land and self, offering continuity and hope in an age of climate change.

Linda Denning works with dry pastels and charcoal, their earthy textures layered to reveal both the history of the mark and the textures of place. Her process echoes the land's own rhythms of change and endurance. Through drawing she seeks to express the elemental energy held within Bibbaringa and to honour making as an act of witness, care, and connection.



Linda Denning, *Breath*, 2025
charcoal and pastel on paper



Staying with the Trouble Regene

Linda Denning
Kim Mahood
Sally Simpson
Wendy Teake



Kim Mahood, Breath 2025
pastel and oil pastel on paper

Kim Mahood

For Kim Mahood, most comfortable with arid landscapes, it was a challenge to arrive at Bibbaringa and be confronted with a landscape to which she had no prior connection, and a theme that was not primarily about drawing.

She first spent her time at Bibbaringa attempting to establish a connection and understanding of the place, exploring the lay of the land – driving, walking, climbing, sitting, observing, listening, drawing – trying to decipher the underlying logic of the country, and how the principles of regenerative farming worked with that logic.

In time Kim became captivated by the intersections of geometry and topography. Tree lines and tracks did the work of perspective. A verdant patchwork of paddocks and laneways overlaid the slopes and hollows of the rolling hills, managing the movement of stock; contoured banks slowed and diverted the flow of water; dams trapped and contained it.

Drawing functioned as her method of inquiry. The works trace the relationship between landform and human intervention, reflecting Mahood's attempt to understand place through careful looking and the disciplined act of mark-making.



Kim Mahood, 2025, installation view
Photo: Wagga Wagga Art Gallery

Sally Simpson

The underlying theme prevalent in all of Sally Simpson's work is that we are inseparable from nature. The cast shadows in this series belongs to Gill Sanbrook, whose farm, Bibbaringa, is the regeneration site the group of artists responded to.

The physical elements of the site are in constant flux – granite, earth, trees, soil, animals, decay, light, shade, water, the work of composition and decomposition. Gill is an integral part of the nurture and regeneration of the farm. Her cast shadows are both presence and essence – moments of observation and decision-making, moments of absorption into the chemistry of Bibbaringa.

The artist's own process mirrors that of regenerative farming. It requires attention, observation, balancing the need for order with the surrender to random and unpredictable influences. It is a perpetual oscillation between seeking and losing, applying proven techniques yet feeling her way toward resolution.



Sally Simpson, *Shadow and Substance 1*, 2025
charcoal on drafting film

Sally Simpson, 2025, installation view
Photo: Wagga Wagga Art Gallery



Wendy Teakel

“Walking the paddocks at Bibbaringa, I felt the quiet resilience that defines the land. The gentle softness underfoot and the subtle, almost imperceptible pulse of life within the soil became tangible sensations. Beneath the surface, the microbiome works ceaselessly and unseen, turning what has fallen into renewal and threading vitality through every root and stem. The farm unfolds like a vast, breathing carpet, embroidered by the farmer’s hand and by the intricate living systems that sustain it through constant regeneration.”

In her studio, Wendy translates these sensations into material form. Working with Kozo paper and Hahnemühle-mounted panels, the artist uses pokerwork, collage, charcoal, and pastel; choosing materials that are earthy and tactile, attuned to the pulse of place. The geometry of paddocks, the rise of tree lines, and the shimmer of grasses become compositional threads, echoing the quiet reciprocity between land and hand, where creation and renewal move in continuous rhythm.



Wendy Teakel, 2025, installation view
Photo: Wagga Wagga Art Gallery



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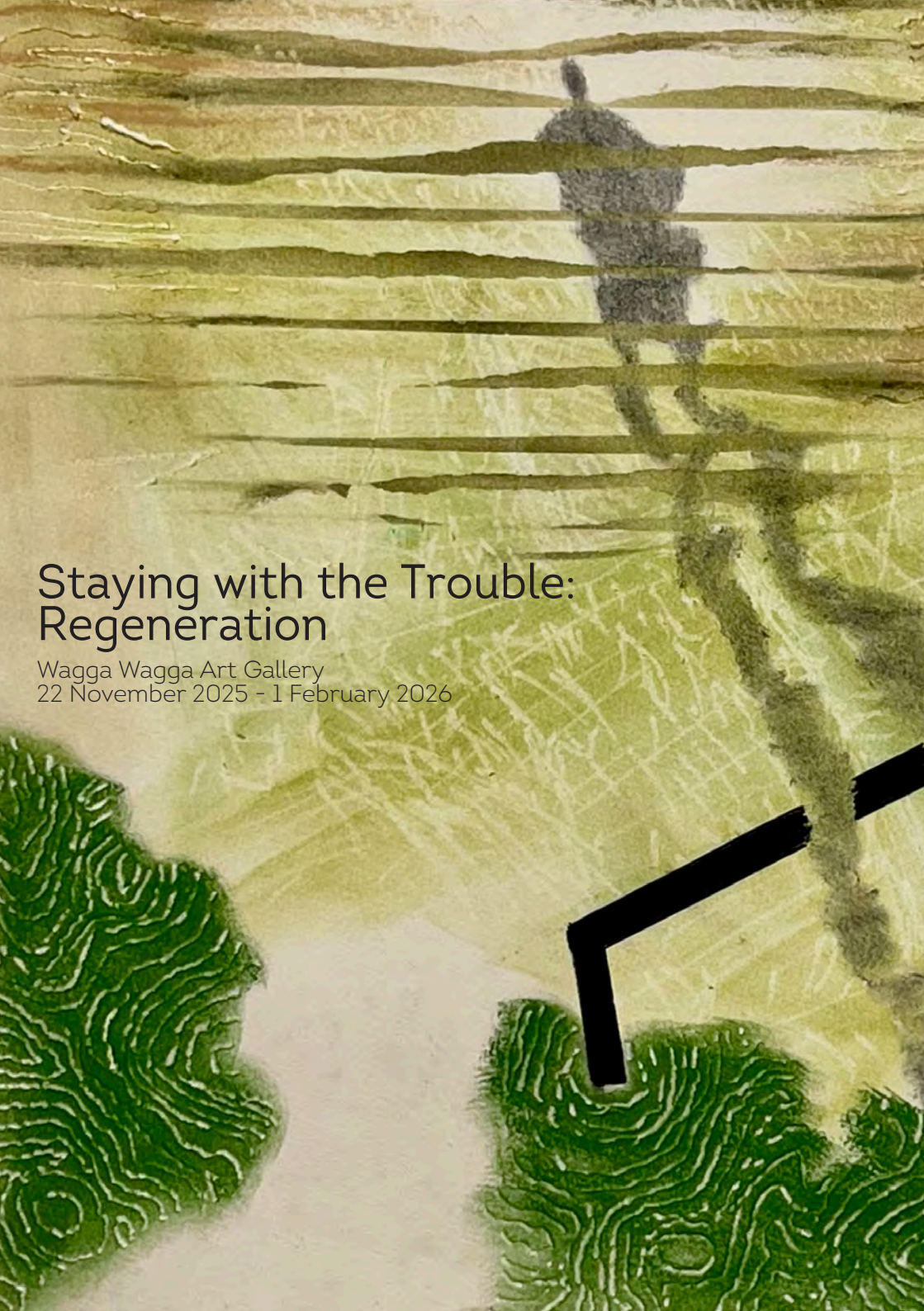
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WAGGA WAGGA
ART GALLERY



Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, a cultural facility of Wagga Wagga City Council, is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW.

An abstract artwork featuring horizontal bands of varying shades of green and yellow, creating a textured, layered effect. A dark silhouette of a person stands in the upper center, facing away from the viewer. In the lower right, a thick black line forms a sharp corner, pointing towards two green, textured shapes that resemble stylized trees or foliage. The overall composition is layered and textured, with a mix of organic and geometric forms.

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Wagga Wagga Art Gallery
22 November 2025 - 1 February 2026