

KATE WARD – THE ARTIST'S PATH

FROM HILL END TO HALIFAX...WITH CROWD FUNDING ALONG THE WAY



My experiences as an artist over the past year have led to unexpected developments in my career. I recently participated in two residencies: one in the historic gold mining town of Hill End in NSW; and the other in Halifax, Canada. I could not have predicted how much of an impact both these residencies would have on my personal growth and professional career as an artist.

As a mid career artist I have won a number of awards and competitions for my work and I have participated in exhibitions in Australia and overseas. To evolve my art practice the next logical step was to participate in Artist in Residence programs.

Residencies are important for artists because they provide the time and space to develop ideas away from the usual distractions of life, and allow you to dedicate a period of time to your art practice. Residencies can also assist with new ways of thinking and expose you to different ideas.

In June 2013, I was selected to participate in the Hill End Artist in Residence program which is administered by the Bathurst Regional Art Gallery and is one of Australia's top residencies. My intention was to use the time to research Australia's history, focusing on domestic interiors of the homes of pioneering women. I am interested in the complex interactions within these spaces and the representation of everyday objects that are imbued with meaning and hint at their domestic lives.

Hill End's gold mining history is well preserved with many dwellings remaining from the gold rush era of the mid 1800s and little has changed since. The historic atmosphere provided great insight into my subject matter.

After a month at Hill End, I had compiled a collection of photographs and a sketchbook full of ideas and inspiration. During that time I taught myself many techniques and developed skills I had learnt from short courses I had participated in over the past couple of years. Although a month seemed like a long time, it passed quickly, and the need to remain focused during this time was incredibly important.

The residency at Hill End was followed by an international residency at the Nova Scotia Centre for Craft and Design (NSCCD), Halifax, Canada. I received the letter of acceptance whilst in Hill End and with less than a month to the start of the NSCCD residency I decided to raise the funds to cover the cost of the international flight through an online crowd funding campaign. I had previously supported crowd funding projects and was familiar with the platform Pozible, however there are other sites such as Kickstarter and Indigogo.



When using Pozible, if you fail to meet your target by your specified time, you do not receive any of the money pledged by your supporters. I found that my supporters really got behind my campaign and they encouraged their friends to endorse my project too. That was one of the nicest things I discovered about using the crowd funding platform. There are many people out there who want to encourage and see you succeed.

One of the most important things I found was providing rewards that will appeal to your audience, so that they get something in return for pledging dollars to support your campaign. I offered postcards, limited edition hand printed silkscreen tea towels, hand drawn postcards sent directly from Halifax, ceramic vessels with imagery created during the residency and lino cut images also created during the residency. The rewards ranged from \$10 to \$100 in retail value.

I used all my social media to promote my campaign. This included emailing friends and family, retailers and contacts within the art world, posting it on my professional and personal Facebook pages and sending out an electronic newsletter to a list compiled through my website.

Top left, *Bush Telegraph*; antique velvet covers, perfume case; antique bottles, antique manipulated forks, machine embroidery, resin, silver chain and locket, paper. Dimensions variable. Above, *Basket Rings*; silver, copper, and brass. Dimensions variable. Both works made 2014. Photographer: Christina Arsenault.



Being a little shy about promoting myself and asking for funding, I looked at the project as a way of sharing what I was currently doing with my friends and colleagues.

It was a very short and ambitious campaign, running for 3 weeks. During this time it is common for interest to spike in the first week, drop during the middle, and then pick up again toward the end of the campaign. So I made a point of sending thank you emails, updating the status on my Facebook pages, and sending reminders to my newsletter contacts on a weekly basis.

I found out on the day that I was due to fly to Halifax that my campaign was successful and that I had raised the funds to cover the cost of my flights. I was deeply moved by the support of everyone who pledged.

During my residency in Halifax I continued my exploration into the topic of pioneering women. I wanted to work with a domestic object that would relate and refer to both my experience in Nova Scotia and the history of pioneering women of the area.

I chose the spoon because it is used to identify sunken ships - the style of spoons characteristic of a particular period or fashion in time aid in dating these shipwrecks.

The spoon became a metaphor for the experiences of pioneering women, symbolising nurturing and referring to the hardships and lack of food the pioneers experienced during the early years of Canada's history. Scenes I had sketched of the historic houses in Nova Scotia were ultimately represented on this most domestic of objects.

The two month residency provided the opportunity to work across the different studios within NSCCD which included ceramics, wood, textiles and jewellery. This enabled me to explore ideas in materials new to me such as wood and metal.

Testing out different techniques and materials led me in new directions, some which were influenced by ideas I had during the Hill End residency. It was great to have the time to further explore these ideas, and working alongside ten other artists who were also participating in the residency made for a highly creative time. I began to incorporate found objects into my work and my interest was piqued to work with metal.



Top of page, *I am made of cobweb*, 2104. Slip cast porcelain, copper wire. Dimensions variable. Photographer, Christina Arsenault . Middle image, *Maud's House*, 2013. Embroidered antique linen napkin, cotton thread; 40cm x 25cm. Photographer: Andrew Sikorski, Art Atelier Photography. Bottom image, *Nature v's Nurture*, 2013. Antique silver spoons, copper wire. Dimensions variable. Photographer: Andrew Sikorski Art Atelier Photography.



During my time in Halifax I met some of the lecturers at NSCAD and was impressed by the high quality of work produced by their students. It was then that I decided that I wanted to return and learn the skills of jewellery making.

Thus it came about that I undertook some courses at NSCAD at the beginning of 2014. This experience was incredibly enlightening as I was exposed to so many new ideas, artists and inspiration.

Wanting to continue the exciting journey of learning and discovery I applied to study for a Masters in Fine Arts across the disciplines of textiles, ceramics and jewellery. My application was accepted and I will commence the MFA program in September 2014. This is incredibly exciting as only ten students are selected to participate each year.

I was fortunate to have been chosen for the two residencies last year which created a different path for my art career. Keeping an open mind and getting out of my comfort zone led to new opportunities. I have been swept in directions that I would not have dreamed possible a year ago and I have met so many fabulous people along the way.

The career of an artist has many twists and turns, all of which are made possible with a curious mind and tenacity of spirit. Who knows where it will take me next? □



A Residency Checklist

- ♦ Speak with other artists who have participated in the residency prior to going to get an idea of what to expect.
- ♦ Make a list of the things you want to achieve, it's easy to lose track of why you are there.
- ♦ Take a copy of your proposal to keep you on track.
- ♦ Whilst initially challenging, the restrictions of a residency can provide an opportunity to grow.
- ♦ Be open to mistakes, as these can turn into opportunities, the results of which are unpredictable, exciting and original.
- ♦ At the end of a residency write down what you achieved, and what you would do differently. These are things that seem so obvious at the time, but when rushing from one project to the next, they can be lost or forgotten. It helps you to look back and appreciate exactly what has been achieved.
- ♦ Be open to new experiences and possibilities.

A Crowd Funding Checklist

- ♦ Research what platform to use, and be aware of the charges each site will apply to your campaign. You may need to incorporate these costs into your final target goal.
- ♦ Be mindful just how long the rewards you offer are going to take to create. There is no point offering a reward that is going to take too much time to make.
- ♦ Allow a couple of days to prepare your information for the campaign including putting together a video about your project to upload to the site.

Kate Ward is a multi-disciplinary artist creating works that span textiles, printmaking, ceramics and jewellery. She graduated from the Australian National University (ANU) School of Art with a Bachelor of Visual Arts in 1998 with a major in Textiles and minor in Printmaking. She has received a number of awards and her work is in public collections in Australia, New Zealand and the UK. www.kateward.com.au



Top of page left, *Genteel Poverty*, 2013. Antique silver spoons. Dimensions variable. Photographer: Kate Ward. Top of page right, *The Travellers*, 2014. Antique kitchen strainers, brass, copper and aluminium, machine embroidery, resin. Dimensions variable. Photographer: Christina Arsenault. Above, *Scenes from Haefliger Cottage and Hill End*, 2013. Slip cast porcelain, cobalt blue imagery. Dimensions variable. Photographer: Andrew Sikorski, Art Atelier Photography.