Fiona MacDonald is known for her installations of bodies of work that draw on local cultural traditions, social and natural history. Neglected archives and personal collections, redolent of private meaning, graphic and decorative arts and crafts are often source for her work. Her installations take the form of conversations about undercurrents in social processes of inclusion and exclusion. Her work has been seen in major contemporary exhibitions such as the Biennale of Sydney, Adelaide Biennal of Australian Art and Australian Perspecta. She has exhibited in Tokyo, Paris, London, Washington DC and New York.

Selected exhibitions and projects include Local Studies, Global Reach: A View from Central Queensland Archives, Artspace Mackay, Mackay; Lobby, Fold, Spin a suite of three exhibitions in New York at Pace University and Daneyal Mahmood Gallery, Chelsea (2007) created in collaboration with Ricky Subritzky; Dream Home, Gilmore, Washington DC, USA (2006); Strangely Familiar, UTS Gallery, University of Technology, Sydney (2005), One Square Mile, Museum of Brisbane, City Hall Brisbane (2003); The Australia Projects: Federation Festival, RMIT Gallery Melbourne (2001). Her concept for the Sea of Hands proposed to ANTaR by AAAR1 proved a powerful tool for Australian Reconciliation.

Fiona MacDonald is represented by The Cross Art Projects in Sydney and Galleysmith in Melbourne.
FOREWORD

Fiona MacDonald is Wollongong City Gallery’s 19th resident artist since 1991. Although originally conceived as a program to assist and provide professional development opportunities for local artists a decision was made to expand and diversify the program in 2009 to include more established artists as well as artists from outside the Gallery’s regional boundaries.

In 2009 Fiona MacDonald was the first artist to be invited to participate in the residency program. Fiona’s art practice straddles the local/regional and the metropolitan/global. Often using historical/archival material as the springboard for her work the artist focuses close attention on the local to create art that speaks of broader concerns. During her time as resident artist in the Wollongong City Gallery she has created a suite of watercolours that focuses on community activism in the Illawarra. The exhibition juxtaposes these works with selected work about place and identity.

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There was a Time of organised mass movement. Miners marched, students stormed, people protested, unions built. Fiona’s work has shifted to more demotic and community-oriented. Public art projects themselves have the blurred and stretched look of home video. The artist cuts up and re-assembles the earlier project as an archival work, she reminds us that public art projects themselves do not guarantee monumentality or even permanence. In this case, the airport was sold after the Olympics to Macquarie Bank and the artworks removed for advertising. Public Private (2007) shows the Bay’s shapes radically altered by globalisation and convenient planning deals.

Local Studies

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Local Studies: Legend and Legacy

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Cover image: Local Studies No. 3 (Strike for Eight Hours Bank to Bank), 2009, watercolour on archival paper, 73 x 53cm, photograph by Bernie Fischer.

Local Studies No. 6 (Meeting at Shellharbour), 2009, watercolour on archival paper, 73 x 53cm.

Local Studies No. 11 (Merv Nixon in May Day, 1972), 2009, watercolour on archival paper, 53 x 73cm.