

EDITION TWO

MTNS MADE

MTNSMADE.COM.AU



WE ARE HERE

We know what a special place the Blue Mountains is, and how strong, connected and productive our local creative industries are. The sector is an important part of not only the Blue Mountains community, but also our local economy. We have more than double the national average of creative practitioners living and working here, inspired by the time, space and natural beauty this place provides.

Our creative community led the unique collaborative approach to growing, strengthening and marketing the local creative industries, which culminated in the successful launch of MTNS MADE in late 2015. The whole industry came together to create a shared vision of who we are and to celebrate the abundant creativity that resides within our beautiful world heritage Blue Mountains.

This place is home to several film and TV productions, and our local screen industry is growing rapidly. Music is studied, written, recorded, performed and produced here. World class artists, designers and makers practice their craft and market it to global audiences. Varuna, the national writer's house, sits in the heart of the Blue Mountains and feeds the nation's literary soul.

Creative practitioners from all over the world come here to live, to work, and to connect with our thriving creative community. Clients and collaborators seek out MTNS creatives to join them in exciting new works. The MTNS MADE website boasts more than 400 local creative professionals, and this is growing every day. It's an exciting time to be part of the creative industries in the Blue Mountains, and we hope you enjoy reading our stories.

Kelly Heylen
Creative Industries Cluster Manager
Blue Mountains Economic Enterprise

CREDITS

Jacqueline Brinkman
Chief Executive Officer

Kelly Heylen
Creative Industries Cluster Manager

Heath Killen
Designer

Chloe Killen
Writer

Ona Janzen
Photographer

Brecon Littleford
Videographer

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

MTNS MADE and Blue Mountains Economic Enterprise would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of this land - the Darug and Gundungurra people. We wish to pay respect to their Elders past and present and to emerging community leaders.

THANKS

MTNS MADE is an initiative of Blue Mountains Economic Enterprise (BMEE), the peak economic development agency for the Blue Mountains. We would like to thank Blue Mountains City Council, which provides operational funding to BMEE. We would also like to acknowledge the NSW and Commonwealth Governments, which proudly supported the development of the original MTNS MADE campaign in 2015 through a Blue Mountains Flexible Community Grant. Thanks also to Mt Vic Flicks, Mt Victoria and Hat Hill Gallery, Blackheath for allowing us to do photoshoots in your beautiful venues. And mostly, thank you to the wonderful creatives who agreed to share their homes, workspaces and stories as part of the campaign.

MTNS MADE is the cultural identity for the creative industries in the Blue Mountains.

- 🌐 - mtnsmade.com.au
- 📘 - facebook.com/mtnsmade
- 📷 - instagram.com/mtnsmade
- ✉ - hello@mtnsmade.com.au
- 📞 - +61 2 4782 6555

Four local artists reveal what living in the Blue Mountains does for their creative practice.

INSPIRATION POINTS

Here they share the landscapes & buildings that provide spaces to work and to gather inspiration.

Kurt Sorensen *Leura*

"Living and working in the mountains for me is not any more or less inspirational than living in the city or living on the coast, but the landscape and weather is truly unique. You can be intoxicated by the springtime smells or disappear into the blankets of autumn mists, it all melts together to make living here so appealing. Sometimes the appeal is pure sublime beauty, but other times it's the sense of unease and foreboding that gets under your skin and makes you want to figure out why."

"My work is created out of these questions, but having been here for a while now I doubt they will all be answered - such is the mystery of this place."

KURTSORENSEN.COM

Anna Dimezza *Faulconbridge*

"There is an amazing view of the Grose River Valley which is a twenty minute walk down the road where I live. It provides inspiration in my work as a lot of my subject matter has to do with mountains and nature in general. A lot of the colours I use in my work tend to be blue in colour as well, which may be a subconscious link to where I live. I enjoy reading about the history of the mountains particularly about how the townships came into being and the interesting characters that helped shape them. I live close to the Norman Lindsay Gallery and am inspired by his work and the controversy surrounding the way he chose to live his life. The Blue Mountains has provided me with a sense of tranquility more than any other place I have lived in."

ANNADIMEZZA.WIXSITE.COM/MYSITE

Judith Martinez *Katoomba*

"Nestled in the back garden, surrounded by trees and overlooking a small valley, is my studio, which was purpose built four years ago. It is light-filled, warm and small – the biggest splurge, the recycled art-deco lead-light windows. In this space, I am surrounded by the things that inform, inspire and help me to produce my work – collections of vintage photographs, antique clock parts and papers, computer, scanner and photographic equipment. Some times it is pristine, others a complete mess. At the moment, it is the latter, with hundreds of vintage photos thrown around like land-mines – I am hoping for a small 'detonation' some time soon."

JUDITHMARTINEZ.COM.AU

Cindi Drennan *Medlow Bath*

"My work involves producing and directing luminous animated narratives that are projected onto architecture and the landscape. Every project is crafted around the cultural legacy of a place and its people. I use digital teleconferencing to hook up meetings with collaborators as far away as Exmouth or as close as Penrith. It saves all the time, energy and expense usually involved in travel, which is invested back into creative work instead. My office looks out over tall trees, as bird calls echo around the misty hilltops. I am immersed in the creative solitude necessary to develop stories. In this tranquil landscape, all sorts of illustrations, architectural projections, and crafts emerge from the imagination, unfold and bloom."

ILLUMINART.COM.AU

PROJECT

Shhorn is a menswear house by GRACE + SEAN

From a humble home studio in Woodford,
Grace Wood and Sean Tran are creating exquisite,
modern menswear by reconnecting with the
great traditions of felting and weaving.

It is said that Australia rode to prosperity on the sheep's back. For over a century, wool was Australia's main export product and a symbol for the Australian way of life. When wool sales were flourishing, Australia had one of the highest standards of living in the world. However, in the late 1960s this once-booming industry started to fade and today production is largely undertaken offshore. As such, the arts of looming, felting, and garment making have fallen out of fashion, but in the Blue Mountains these traditions continue and are elevated to new standards.

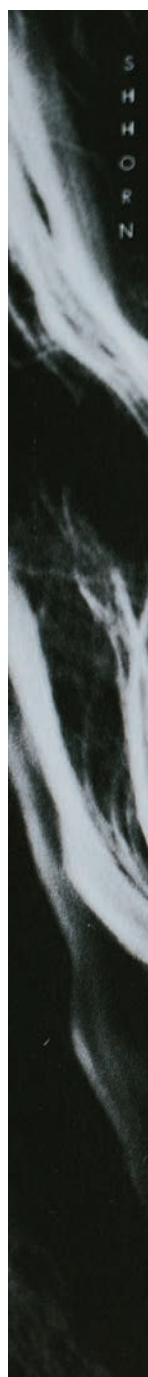
Artist and fabric maker Grace Wood has been a resident of the Blue Mountains since she was a child. Following her graduation from University of NSW College of Fine Arts, Grace undertook an apprenticeship with Dutch textile artist Claudy Jongstra, eventually returning to the mountains to establish her own studio. It is here that she creates her understated felt textiles with a range of natural wools from sources as local as possible.

Working with felt has always been of interest to Grace. "Growing up in the mountains I think I always knew about felt. It's just one of those things that's everywhere. I had an early understanding of it in a more crafty way. In later years, my aunt, a hobby textile artist, agreed to teach me a little bit of felting. We have a farm out in Bathurst, with sheep, and I became interested in how I could use this rural background in my design work...in a really unique and contemporary way."

This distinctive approach can be seen in her collaboration with architect and designer Sean Tran, on their project **Shhorn**. *Shhorn*, a menswear house "guided by experiments in drawing and an exploration of natural materials," began in early 2016 and was one of only four menswear finalists for the coveted International Woolmark Prize. This prestigious endorsement celebrates exceptional fashion from around the world made with Australian Merino wool and has been awarded to the likes of Karl Lagerfeld and Yves Saint Laurent. Shhorn's nomination has led to a significant period of growth for the young business. "The whole reason Woolmark exists," says Grace, "is to promote the wool industry, and the prize is really designed to assist in that promotion. It's fantastic for us in so many ways, starting out. It's helped us figure out how to work together, and it's put us in touch with all these different people from the industry who are helping us source materials."

Sean adds that being involved with the prize has reinforced their desire for a sustainable Australian wool industry. "It has been the biggest step for us," he says. "We really want to support Australian farmers and Australian sheep. Bring the manufacturing back to Australia."

Grace and Sean provide complementary skills and a shared vision that focuses on reconnecting with traditional processes and exploring the cultural value of fashion. The integrity of their business surpasses design and craftsmanship to



thoughtfully consider the unique qualities of their key material. With materiality at the heart of **Shhorn**, there is a bold emphasis on the raw beauty of the wool in its felted form.

“Felt is the oldest textile tradition in the world,” says Grace. The process of creating felt involves layering fleece in different directions and applying heat, pressure, and soap until the fleece locks together to create a sturdy but gentle fabric. The garments made by **Shhorn** are a mixture of felted and woven pieces and their construction is an involved and labour intensive process. The hand weaving process alone involves an initial set up of a floor loom that takes around four days, followed by another four days of weaving, after which the construction of the garment can begin. This lengthy and intricate work is a passion for Shhorn, as well as a defining characteristic of their aesthetic, business practice, and philosophy. *“I think that everyone should be aiming to make beautiful things,”* says Sean. *“The whole idea of industrialisation and production being the beginning of a business, rather than the art of things, has made people think that if something is beautiful then it must be art, rather than saying ‘why not make something beautiful that you can use?’”*

This year **Shhorn** will produce a new range of around twenty unisex garments using their delightfully complex-looking Glimakra loom. *“It’s not as if we want it to be exclusive or limited edition, this is just what we can produce. Shhorn is*

“Every millimetre of these garments passes through our hands three or four times.”

never going to be a label where we can produce 100 things and sell them at wholesale to different shops. Literally every millimetre of these garments passes through our hands three or four times. Nothing goes untouched by us,” explains Sean.

The future for Grace and Sean is the continuation of modest growth. *“We’ve had so many people express interest in what we do. They’re just really excited about seeing these skills brought back to life. It’s inspiring,”* says Grace. However, commitment to the quality of their product, sustainability, and dedication to process is paramount. Sean explains: *“I think we will always be involved in the handwork too. I think society sees that as the bottom end of the food chain, but for us, that’s the top end.”*

The work produced from Grace Wood’s modest studio, overlooking the Woodford Valley, represents the new vanguard for design in the Blue Mountains. The beautifully textural products draw inspiration from the landscape and are transformed into sophisticated pieces worthy of any of the major art and fashion centres of the world.





“I love the wild country,” says Michael Hoffman, an artist craftsman who grew up in the foothills of the Yarra Valley and always wanted to be near the bush. Today his life and work are intimately connected to the Blue Mountains that he has called home for more than ten years. In addition to having a firmly established business, his two daughters are growing up here.

A visit to Michael’s wood and metalworking studio in Lawson demonstrates his deep roots in the mountains community, as it is impossible to imagine even attempting to pack up the great machinery and wood stockpile that he has collected over the years. His studio is a portal to a fascinating world full of warmth and sawdust. It is welcoming, functional and almost museum-like in its orderliness, and ever so slightly overwhelming in its scale. Among industrial sized drills and saws, well-worn workbenches and hand tools, rest interesting objects waiting to be uncovered: a small door from a vintage oven, or sheets of gnarled and twisted timber that Michael has discovered in his travels, all kept for a yet unknown future use.

PROFILE

MICHAEL HOFFMAN

is a craftsman working in Lawson

Michael Hoffman came to the mountains ten years ago to make a home to raise his young family. What he has found here is a place of limitless inspiration for his hand-crafted furniture and goods.

Michael's first significant influence in the world of woodworking was his grandfather. *"He was a welder and boilermaker, a very practical man who could make just about anything. He used to just pick things up on the side of the road and make things for us grandchildren or people on his street. That's influenced me a lot. I pick stuff up from the side of the road now too."*

In terms of his work, Michael struggles to define exactly what it is that he does. When pressed however, he would call himself an artist craftsman, as he builds functional pieces of furniture with a unique aesthetic. *"Some days I feel like an artist, some days I'm just making things, but there's always a craftsman aspect to it,"* he says. *"Doing quality work is really the most important part of it though."*

No two pieces he creates are the same as they depend on the particular desire of his client. Some request work that is highly refined, while others prefer pieces with a raw finish. *"Every job is different. Most of my work is based on commission and I do all sorts of things. Some are purely functional but others allow me more leeway with the design,"* he explains. *"I like to leave elements of where the piece has come from, be it the shape of the tree, or chainsaw marks, or something that shows the processes that were involved in the making. I'm not really into rustic though, so I like to use those elements in a really considered way."*

For Michael this considered approach gives him great pleasure. He acknowledges that finding solutions for the unique problems of each job is part of what he enjoys the most. This can sometimes require him to make bespoke tools or modify existing processes to complete a job. His current work, for instance, is on a commission for a modern dining table that features a custom-made joinery system designed to allow the table to be easily dismantled for moving or repairs. In addition to achieving this functionality, the table must also retain both the beauty and structural integrity essential for each piece that heads out the door. This attention to detail and commitment to elegant problem solving sometimes keeps Michael awake at night turning the problem over in his mind until the solution is found and he heads back into the studio to try something new.

The closeness to nature that life in the mountains provides has influenced Michael's work in numerous ways. Whether through collecting found materials, or simply through the inspiration gained when hiking or camping in the wilderness, the natural world offers him unlimited stimulus. Now, his eldest daughter is developing a keen interest in what he does, and showing promise as a budding apprentice. Whatever the future holds, it seems certain that Michael will continue to thoughtfully and unpretentiously produce some of the best handmade furniture that you can find not only in the mountains, but also around the country.



NICK MCKINLAY



PHOTOGRAPHY



BLACKHEATH

NICKMCKINLAYPHOTOS
.FORMAT.COM

PROJECT

Sitting Places is a photographic series by NICK MCKINLAY

Mountains born & bred photographer Nick McKinlay returned home after an overseas sojourn to establish his career and create a special project featuring local people's favourite places.

In small towns across Australia, young people are often torn between staying for the comfort and ease of familiar surroundings and leaving to pursue opportunities in the city, with many unlikely to return. Nick McKinlay of Faulconbridge has forged his own path. He left, seeking education and experience both in Sydney and overseas, but has since returned to not only help create a community of likeminded people, but forge a pathway for his career as a fine art and commercial photographer. For Nick, this was a deliberate choice: “You don’t really come up here by accident.”

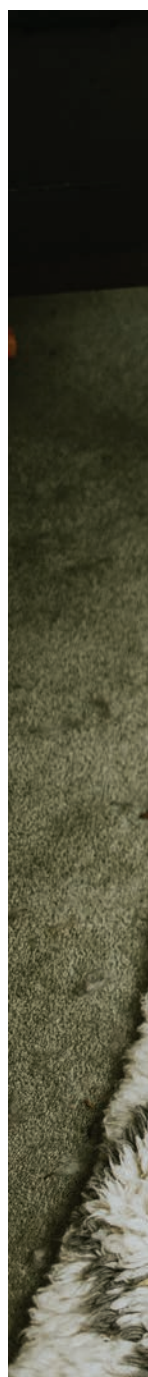
Nick came to photography after studying early childhood teaching and completing an exchange program in Denmark. “Initially that was only going to be a six month period, but I ended up staying on for longer. I really wanted to meet people and see gigs, so I started offering to take photos in exchange for entry. It was just fun really, and it continues to be.”

Upon returning to Australia, he felt a distinct pull to return to the Blue Mountains. With a fresh perspective from his time away, Nick found his niche among friends in a diverse group of artists and designers. Now he resides with several of them in an expansive estate house in Blackheath that affords him the space for a dedicated studio and provides peers to collaborate with on various projects.

In a dreamlike fantasy that heralds back to the rambunctious soirees for the Sydney elite at the Hydro Magestic or the bohemian parties of Norman Lindsay, Nick and his housemates host ethereal gatherings of likeminded individuals at their sprawling mansion. In keeping this tradition alive, they tap into the vivacious spirit of the place and maintain a lively connection to the past. This unique relationship between past and present in the mountains feeds Nick’s practice. “*This place hasn’t really gentrified in a significant way, so you’ve still got quite unusual buildings and architecture and other interesting things to find. That’s what I like to take photos of.*”

While many of Nick’s clients are based outside of the mountains, much of his art-based practice takes place here. His Instagram account showcases shots from the local bushland, staged photos in lush gardens, masked people peering through fog, and the deep bush-plum decor of the western line trains. His images are rich with colour, which, he explains, is ever present in the mountains: “*You find a lot of colour here. It changes colour every day out in the garden. At the moment it’s super green, but a month ago it was pink and purple and silly.*”

While the beautiful surrounds of the Blue Mountains feature in Nick’s photographs, it is always with a distinctly human element. Nick’s recent series *Sitting Places* (2016), exhibited in the window gallery of Atelier in Lyttleton Stores, Lawson, is one such example and a defining moment in his burgeoning





career. In a series of contemplative photographs, Nick has captured people of different ages and backgrounds resting in their favourite place. Some are in their homes or gardens, while others are in wild bush settings. However, all evoke a thoughtful mood and invite the viewer to meditate on why that particular place was chosen. *“The fact that these people choose a certain place to sit tells you a lot about them,”* he explains.

To undertake ***Sitting Places*** Nick advertised locally, asking for participants, and was pleasantly surprised by the response of people wishing to share their favourite location with him. *“I just asked the participants where they liked to sit, and that’s where we took the photo.”* Interestingly, the open nature of this callout, propelled by a desire to use photography as a way to meet and connect with people, echoed his initial foray into photography in Denmark.

There is a true intimacy to this series. None of the subjects face the camera: instead they are lost in a quiet reverie. A woman tends to her young daughter in their warm, sun-kissed lounge room, surrounded by records and personal ornaments. An older woman sits on the front porch of her house, cup of tea in hand, black and white cat on her lap, looking out over her garden to the afternoon sun illuminating the native scrub across the road.



Nick’s personal favourite is the father of one of his teaching mentors: *“This particular man likes to go down to the back of the house where he lives with his daughter. He’s not particularly mobile, needing a motorised scooter to get around, and so the fact that he made an effort to go to this particular spot, and that it was of interest to him, made it interesting to me.”* Using natural lighting, and showcasing the warm and gently worn textures characteristic of the local area, Nick’s photography speaks to the quiet, humble, domestic side of life in the mountains. These moments feel honest and natural, and are representative of a thoughtful photographer with a bright future.



Rachel Peachy and Paul Mosig, artists and designers, found themselves in Melbourne ten years ago questioning where their lives were headed. They met while studying art in Canberra, and moved south in hopes of finding a home filled with culture and adventure that would nourish their creative development. While in Melbourne establishing their graphic and web-design business, **Racket**, they found many of those things, but there was something missing – space. Space to live and grow and be inspired.

Towards the end of their time in Melbourne, Rachel and Paul started searching for somewhere they could base themselves permanently. *“We had our house in Brunswick and a studio in the Nicholson building, but with our young family we found getting to and from the studio ate up so much time...we ended up working many strange hours,”* says Paul. So, map in hand, they began checking interesting locations against their criteria.

They focused on NSW to be closer to family, looking for somewhere their young son, Sascha, could play and grow around nature, and of course affordability was an important consideration. *“This move was definitely about facilitating a more interesting and flexible life,”* says Rachel.

They quickly realised that the Blue Mountains ticked almost all of their boxes: it was a place of great natural beauty, had a burgeoning cultural scene, and they were able to afford a house large enough to operate as a living and studio space, while also accommodating Rachel’s mother in a separate annex. *“We were interested in finding somewhere that could house all our needs,”* explains Paul.

However, their move to Katoomba was not simple. The house Rachel and Paul bought was formerly a commercial property, ill-equipped for living. They began an arduous renovation while Rachel was pregnant with their second son, Jack. *“There were carpets filled with mites, there was no bathroom, we cooked on portable gas cookers with the windows open in this little weird galley kitchen...it was pretty feral. We didn’t know anyone here either, and for a while we were asking ourselves: why did we do this?”* says Rachel. *“It wasn’t an easy move.”*

Slowly but surely the warmth of Katoomba’s community drew them in and soon enough they were living in the place they had been hoping to find. *“We’re definitely mountains-y people. We like cold climates, we like mountains, we like moody places that have changeable weather that alters the feeling of the place. Each little village here is different. We chose Katoomba because it’s so easy to get around. I can walk to the Co-op or the train station. It feels small and intimate but open and connected at the same time,”* says Rachel.

PROFILE

RACHEL + PAUL

are artists & designers working in Katoomba

Place is at the very heart of what
Rachel Peachey & Paul Mosig explore in
their work, and so the place that they chose
to call home was always going to be special.



Now that they are firmly established, Rachel and Paul are exploring possibilities for making a greater contribution to the local cultural landscape. Recently returned from a lengthy stay in Europe, travelling and working on art projects with various groups and institutions, they are hoping to incorporate some of the revitalising ideas they encountered into their life in Katoomba. One such plan is a communal arts space that will evolve its use and purpose over time. Paul acknowledges that being able to travel has helped them think differently and expand upon their art and design practices: *"I think going away is really healthy, and this space we've just created is inspired by some of the places we worked at in Berlin, which had a partly commercial use, but were also more flexible."* While they embrace the slow and calm nature of the mountains, they also hope that this will spark some fresh creativity and group activity.

Living in the mountains has afforded the pair the ability to develop their work in many ways. While they had been exploring similar tonal qualities and subject matter for several years, they found that living in the mountains helped them slow down and develop the confidence to create clearer and more considered images. *"Instead of putting ten ideas into the same piece of work, we now focus on each idea individually,"* says Rachel. *"Our artist practice is based on a few different processes, one of which is field studies where we go out into particular landscapes, often in the natural environment, and return to it many times until we discover what makes that place interesting. Another process is play, at its most fundamental, without a particular outcome in mind. We will often work with our kids, and sometimes with objects or tools that we bring into the space, and we will combine these processes to interpret the space and develop some type of concept or storytelling from it."*

In the Blue Mountains, Rachel and Paul have found a place where they can develop their art and raise their family in a stimulating environment as part of a community. *"We're very happy here,"* says Rachel. *"It is exactly what we wanted it to be. We were able to go away for a year and a half and come back. We've got a garden that's slowly developing. In life I have always wanted to have a sense of time passing, to see the development of space and time, and it's been perfect for that. Just as we imagined."*



“I’ve done a lot of plant learning here. I go on the same walks everyday and I get to see the life cycle of the local plants - not just seeing a plant at one particular stage - so I’m given a deeper understanding and I think that has definitely had an impact on my work.”

Edith recalls her first glimpse of the Blue Mountains, spied when flying out of Sydney airport for an overseas adventure. “I remember flying over the Blue Mountains and thinking what is all this *delicious greenery*? From that point it was in my mind.”

Growing up in rural Victoria, Edith's love of drawing developed early as a family activity. She describes her early illustrations as having many similarities to her current work, being largely inspired by the natural world. “*It was mostly plant based. Plants or little collections of shells, things from holidays, rocks.*”

After studying a Bachelor of Arts (Textile Design) at RMIT in Melbourne and a brief study exchange at Estonian Academy of Arts, Edith moved to Sydney where she began working in textile design. On her days off she would wander various National Parks and visit the Blue Mountains with her trusty bike, studying foliage and developing her style. Eventually she could no longer resist the pull towards full time illustration: “*I would often come home from work and stay up drawing...I couldn’t wait to get home.*”

Her decision to move to Blackheath was prompted by a timely opportunity with some new friends, and she was pleasantly surprised by how much she enjoyed it. “*It always seemed like quite a big move, and I think for a lot of people it does, but it’s actually really easy to live up here.*”



EDITH REWA



VISUAL ARTS



BLACKHEATH



EDITHREWA.COM

PROFILE

EDITH REWA is an illustrator working in Blackheath

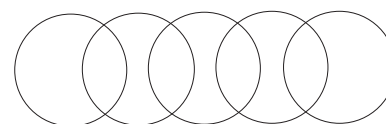
A life-long love of plants and nature lead
Edith Rewa from her home in Tasmania to
the wild hills of the Blue Mountains where she
continues to grow as an artist & businesswoman.

As a result, Edith has found herself strongly connected to the local community. *"It's been a very lovely social time,"* she says. *"I think when people make a decision to be up here, it's because they have a set of ideals that other people who have made the move share. It's just been very easy to meet people and get to know them because of that."*

Since moving to the mountains, Edith's illustration work has flourished. Working in the specialised field of natural history illustration, the mountains has given her unbridled opportunity to connect to the natural landscape that she loves. *"I've done a lot of plant learning here. I go on the same walks everyday and I get to see the life cycle of the local plants - not just seeing a plant at one particular stage - so I'm given a deeper understanding and I think that has definitely had an impact on my work."*

This gentle consideration of the natural world is representative of Edith's deep connection and can be seen in her recent work of vivid Australian natives, where yellow wattle fireworks and soft pink bracts of protea sit against a celestial darkness. *"I wanted to evoke the sense of it being part of a museum collection, an artefact that we should really look at and study its beauty,"* she says. *"It's the sense of it being magical, and something that I see as a really precious thing, and so I want to try and portray whatever I'm drawing in that way."*

Edith's illustration work is in high demand, appearing on books, packaging, and textiles, while all aspects of her business are managed from her Blackheath studio. She says that building a business in this way has brought her closer to the Blackheath community: *"I love going down to the post office. I could send my orders out in Express Post bags but they're so nice down there. It's just the small things like that, to have those daily routines where you get to know the local people."*





“I think when people make a decision to be up here, it’s because they have a set of ideals that other people who have made the move share.”

Currently Edith is working on an exhibition set to launch in April, where she will be showcasing illustrations based on the plant life endemic to her new home in Blackheath. She has also illustrated a new book, written by her mother, and following several successful fashion collaborations with the likes of **Gorman** and **Milk & Thistle**, she is planning the introduction of a small, ethical clothing line.

The Blue Mountains will continue to be a place to live, explore, and build her growing business. She describes what continues to capture her interest about the area: *“The time I’ve had here has actually allowed me to be quite selfish. While I miss them, being away from family and friends and other things that keep you busy allows you to focus on what you really want to do, and what you really enjoy. I’ve done a lot of that here, and the solitude allows me that creative freedom. When you’re in the hustle and bustle of the city, I think it takes a bit longer to get to that point. I don’t know if I’d be at the point I am now if it wasn’t for that time and space.”*

JOURNAL

The making of LYTTLETON STORES in Lawson

Lyttleton Stores, the brainchild of Jacinta Carmichael-Parissi & family, has a rich personal history with a unique connection to the very fabric of Lawson.

The story of Lyttleton Stores in Lawson is foremost one of family. The management is shared between two sisters, Jacinta and Adelina (Nina) Carmichael-Parissi. Jacinta primarily oversees **Pantree Produce**, an organic grocery store stocking mostly locally sourced produce. Nina is focused on **Atelier**, which offers a range of hand-made artisan wares, again with a focus on local designers and makers. Their parents, Erst Carmichael and Cesidio Parissi, are investors in the business and also assist with day-to-day operations and long-term planning. Plus a larger family has bloomed through the operation of Lyttleton Stores, to encompass the local and creative communities who have embraced it with open arms. But this tale is also infused with the subtle fragrance of fate.

The seed of Lyttleton Stores began germinating many years ago with the arrival of Erst and Cesidio in the Blue Mountains in the 1970s. Seeking a sustainable way of living for their young family, Cesidio nourished his love of cooking in the peasant tradition of his Italian ancestry, while Erst continued her passionate advocacy for organic food. The two quickly became politically active within the community and played a major role in saving the historic Lawson Community Hall from demolition. Jacinta notes that her family has taken deep inspiration from this act and the many others of its kind. *“That’s probably where our love of heritage comes from, that constant exposure we got from our parents trying to save old buildings.”*

As children in the mountains, Jacinta and Nina (along with their brother) had an idyllic time. *“We used to roam around the bush, build cubbies, and throw fruit at each other. We used to cook. I grew up on Honour Avenue and my friends and I would make things and have stalls out the front of our houses,”* says Jacinta. Interestingly, this highlights just how far back she started conceiving of what would eventually become Lyttleton Stores. *“We made bookmarks, and pressed flowers, pretend dyes, cakes, and things that probably weren’t really edible. We would harvest stuff from our backyards too - apples and peaches and plums,”* she adds.

After high school, the sisters parted ways and left the mountains in pursuit of their individual interests. Nina completed a Bachelor of Visual Arts with a focus on Jewellery



and Object from Sydney College of the Arts in 2012, with first class honours. Since this time she has successfully run her own jewellery making business, selling her work at market stalls and festivals around Australia. Jacinta also spent many years in Sydney as an artist, supporting her practice by working at a food co-op in Manly and travelling as much as possible. But the idea of a store like Lyttleton was always quietly growing in the back of her mind.

Eventually Jacinta left Sydney to live in a remote part of South Hobart. *“It was beautiful, it was on top of a hill at the bottom of the world and looking out over valleys and mountains.”* While attending art school and trying to build a sustainable farm, she attempted to open the store. Although it never fully eventuated, the desire remained.

Back in Lawson, a rare opportunity was presented to purchase the building that Lyttleton Stores is now based in. The building and its surrounding productive garden was originally Lawson’s local produce store, continuing as such until the 1960s when it took on a mixed use with the sale of antiques and clothing. *“I’d coveted this place forever,”* says Jacinta.

“And I had always wanted to do something in it with ideas that had been forming since I was a kid, in terms of a multi-faceted project that a lot of people could be involved in, a collaborative project.”

GOODS AND GOOD TIMES

Jacinta is well aware of the serendipitous nature of the Carmichael-Parissi family’s decision to establish their shop in this space. *“It was a fateful, but such a positive, obvious thing for our family to do - to take on one of Lawson’s heritage buildings, and to be a part of Lawson’s living history. Rather than preserving it, we are conserving it,”* she proudly explains.

Now, Lyttleton Stores is continuing the historical and cultural lineage of the space by hosting workshops and exemplifying a cultural movement focused on food and design. Nina explains: *“I think a lot of people view Atelier as a luxury item shop, but that’s not what we’re trying to achieve. We’re actually trying to increase the value you place on your day-to-day items. We want to be able to sell locally made items using local materials, designed for a particular purpose. Atelier is supporting local artisans, as well as farmers, and bringing it all together so that you can make beautiful food with your beautiful equipment.”* As such, the pair has an exacting eye when selecting their suppliers in order to ensure that what they sell adheres to their standards of sustainability, transparency, and most importantly, beauty.

Jacinta and Nina found early in the process of opening the store that the local community seemed to be waiting for them to arrive. Locals watched with curiosity as paper was pasted over the windows when renovations commenced, they craned their heads to see through the dusty gloom inside, and when the stores were finally opened they visited



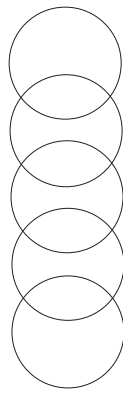
“It was a fateful, but such a positive, obvious thing for our family to do - to take on one of Lawson’s heritage buildings, and to be a part of Lawson’s living history. Rather than preserving it, we are conserving it.”



JACINTA + NINA
CARMICHAEL-PARISSI



RETAIL



with gifts and patronage for the new owners. “Most of our customers are local people within walking distance and they come in regularly for their basics,” says Jacinta. “They also come in when they know they have to get a present or something special.” Nina agrees, explaining that many of their customers are “already informed of how wonderful the items in Atelier are. The store speaks for itself.”

Since opening, the stores have become a hub for the creative community of the mountains. Regular exhibitions are hosted for artists, many of whom have become friends. Increasingly popular workshops are run from the space covering a range of topics from arts and crafts, to gardening and pickling. Also, nearly everyone who works in the store has his or her own creative practice. Both Jacinta and Nina acknowledge that this extended community has contributed to the growing vision of the store. “I think we are part of a special movement that’s happening now in the mountains, and I think we have been able to contribute positively to that movement by being able to create jobs for people who would otherwise not have something that they feel passionate about, and that supports their work as an artist or musician,” says Jacinta. “It’s quite a collaboration.”

In creating something that is new yet familiar, respectful of its heritage as well as focused on the future, Lyttleton Stores has helped make connections and create opportunities for the local community. Jacinta explains that this generous benefit is a remarkable feature of living in the Blue Mountains. “It attracts people who want to be here, or feel like they have something to be here for, and then somehow you naturally connect up with other like minds.”

While **Pantree** and **Atelier** are flourishing, Jacinta and Nina are focused on bringing the full physical and philosophical potential of the project to life. In addition to the continued development of the garden and workshop space (**Preserve**), a kitchen is under construction that will eventually be used to create food and goods for the store. Having all five spaces activated and working together is the ultimate goal for the sisters. In this, Lyttleton Stores is much more than a general store. It is the embodiment of a constantly evolving discourse about ethical practice and a vital polestar for the local community.



LAWSON



LYTTLETONSTORES
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When Rachel Gordon found herself spending another hour in gridlocked traffic taking her young child to a park to play, she knew something had to change.

As a highly sought after actor working on stage and screen, Rachel's work and home were based in Sydney, but increasingly she found herself longing for a life in the bush, similar to that of her childhood in Townsville. *"We were always out at the beach and playing in the yard for hours. We'd just roam and be wild and it's so important to me that my kids have that same type of experience."*

After six months in a rental property, Rachel and her family purchased a house overlooking the vast bushland in Leura, and have not looked back. *"For so long I had been searching for a place that feels like home,"* says Rachel. *"I love the fact that my kids are growing up in the bush. That they know the names of different birds and flowers, that they know to be careful around snakes, and that they're so in touch with the seasons. That's important to me."*

However, it has been essential for Rachel to maintain a connection to Sydney, where most of her work continues to come from today. Of the inevitable travel, Rachel considers it an unexpected benefit. *"I really love the train ride. I find it such a special time. As a mother who's constantly busy, it's just my little pocket of the day."*

"I love the fact that my kids are growing up in the bush. That they know the names of different birds and flowers ... and that they're so in touch with the seasons. That's important to me."

In a practical sense, the commute provides her with a transitional time where she can mentally move from her home life into the skin of her latest character and back again. *"It's like a little bubble that train ride, and I can go from one reality to the other."* She elaborates: *"I did a job earlier this year for Channel 7 called **The Secret Daughter** and I was playing this woman who was completely devastated, completely manipulative, and acting in really inappropriate ways, because she was in grief. So I had to go to work and do that, and then come home and I have these two tiny precious babies, a five and a three year old, and I just want to nurture them and be in the little cocoon of our family home. So it was a really important transition period. I could regroup and prepare myself between those two states. I think I would have found it really hard if we lived closer to the set, and I'd had to make that transition in five minutes."*

PROFILE

RACHEL GORDON

is an actor living in Leura

As the in-demand star of television shows such as *The Moodys & The Secret Daughter*, as well as on stage with *Melbourne Theatre Company*, Rachel Gordon has found solace among the trees.

Living in the mountains has provided Rachel with a harmonious life/work balance, as she is able to nurture both. *"I've had a great year for work, but I've also had such a nice time with the family here. Work is so important to me, but my family is too and I think the two inform each other. It's really lovely here in the mountains to have the beauty of nature to nourish your spirit."*

In particular, Rachel enjoys maintaining an equilibrium between the rapid speed of professional work in the city and a slower, more relaxed approach to personal life in the mountains. *"I can work at quite a high pace, and sometimes I actually crave that, but I also find that I need a place like this to slow down and get perspective, and to remember what's important. That's what the mountains really gives me."*

Interestingly, having the time and space away has meant that Rachel is able to engage more with the city than she did when she lived there. *"When I was living in the city, I had easy access to all these amazing things, but I never went. Now I make plans and get the most out of what's on offer. I think you do take things for granted when they're so accessible."*

Another important component of living in the mountains for Rachel is the vital sense of creative energy to be found here. *"I feel more creative since moving here. I think largely because now I'm just so in touch with what's important. It's*



so important for artists, actors, anyone in the creative fields to have space. I think I've met more artists and musicians and creative people here than I have anywhere else too."

In terms of day-to-day life, Rachel enjoys the simple pleasures the environment and warm community provide. *"Bushwalking has been amazing. I have a great group of friends here and we head out on the full moon and do crazy secret women's business. That community aspect has been really important in general really, and it's something that I haven't found elsewhere. My kids have so many 'aunties' here now that are watching them and helping them grow up. And really what this place has afforded me is so much family time. We take the kids down to Minnehaha Falls or Cahill's Lookout and just spend time in nature. Actually so much of it is just the same domestic stuff you'd do anywhere, but it's all in such a beautiful, enriching, environment."*



MICHAEL JOY



SCREEN



LEURA



MICHAELJOY.COM.AU

PROJECT

Cul-De-Sac is a television series by **MICHAEL JOY**

Leura based filmmaker Michael Joy has achieved a first for the Blue Mountains: a prestige television series shot on location with a completely local production team.

When director and cinematographer Michael Joy isn't traveling the world making advertisements for the likes of Nivea, Dove, and Jacob's Creek, he works from his home base in Leura on personal and experimental projects. One such venture is his television series, ***Cul-De-Sac***. A truly local project, ***Cul-De-Sac*** is entirely produced and shot in the Blue Mountains, featuring local cast and crew. A significant achievement made all the more impressive by the fact that the series is completely improvised.

In the tradition of directors such as Mike Leigh and Christopher Guest, Michael has combined his deep knowledge of cinema, meticulous planning skills, and commitment to hard work in order to create a unique working model for the improvised series. The development phase for ***Cul-De-Sac*** took several months, with Michael carefully plotting the visual language of the story as well as the entire narrative arc. He then worked one-on-one with each actor, employing various improvisation techniques in order to imbue their characters with a rich history, often extending back multiple generations.

"Some of the development took place on location, but much of it happened at my house," says Michael of the mechanics behind the pre-production stage. "Initially I kept the characters separate from one another - it was just myself and the actor. We would go through lots of note taking and discussion, forming ideas."

When he felt the actors were at pivotal points of understanding or character development he would share with them key pieces of information designed to enhance the character's complexity. By having a deep understanding of each character, what their motivation was, and how they would interact with each other, while still allowing each actor a certain amount of ownership over their character, Michael is able to see the story unfold as it is captured by the cameras. This fascinating technique was also used in Michael's debut film, ***Men's Group***, which he wrote and directed. Critically praised, the film was awarded Best Feature Film, Best Script, and Best Actor at the 2008 Inside Film Awards.

In many of Michael's projects, he is driven to achieve a genuine sense of truth and honesty. In ***Cul-De-Sac***, this is achieved by inserting characters into real situations with non-actors. For instance, in one scene a main character is shopping for groceries and filmed making her transaction with the woman who actually works in the store. The directive was simple, to treat the actress as though she were any other customer. Another scene features a character played by local icon Tiriel Mora, drinking in the early hours at the infamous Gearin Hotel in Katoomba. His drinking companions are the patrons of the pub that day, and his interactions and dialogue with them were created entirely in the moment. This exploration of character through the juxtaposition of actors and non-actors is enjoyable for Michael, as he is able to weave his story into the fabric of the real world.





“Initially I kept the characters separate from one another - it was just myself and the actor. We would go through lots of note taking and discussion, forming ideas.”

As one would expect, the landscape of the Blue Mountains has played a strong role in the development of **Cul-de-Sac**, both in terms of the way it has inspired the story and in the natural setting. *“I feel very connected to the environment here,”* says Michael. *“It’s so completely different to where I grew up [in Perth]. There is a lot of seasonal change, even day-to-day. I mean yesterday it was 30 degrees: today it’s 12. Being here really did highlight the idea of creating an environmental story.”*

Michael’s innovative methodology has also been applied to the show’s funding model. In a reverse finance model, participants in the show are investors. Interestingly, the project’s investors extend beyond cast and crew to include local real estate agents in exchange for the use of office space

and shooting locations. Depending on the work or service provided, those involved receive points (amounting to a predetermined total budget), which they will receive a return on once the show is purchased and released. *“One point equals one dollar,”* explains Michael. *“This model worked very well for **Men’s Group** where we returned about 97 cents on the dollar, which, for an independent film about blokes talking about how bad their lives are, is pretty good.”*

The next step for Michael is to bring **Cul-De-Sac** to the world. The series pilot will be released online for free later this year in order to build an audience. At the same time, Michael will focus on pitching it to various networks with the ultimate goal of making it part of the prestige television landscape.

While Michael has lived in many cities in Australia and overseas, it is Leura he has called home for the past 10 years and he has no intention of leaving. *“I love it. I find it very calm. I just feel at home here, and very relaxed,”* he says. *“Recently a friend of mine who’s considering moving up here said that they hadn’t made it up because they were worried about the cold - and they pointed out that I don’t get to experience that all the time because I travel so much. That is true, I do go away, but I think what that does is it gives me a really great perspective on how wonderful it is here. I was just in Tokyo, and Tokyo is an extraordinary place - but there’s no space to have a garden there, for example, and to have that here is just so special.”*

A day with **EMMA MAGENTA** in Medlow Bath



**MORNING
RITUALS &
MAGIC**

**ENCHANTED
FORESTS &
DISHWASHERS**

A common refrain among those who live in the Blue Mountains is that their arrival here felt as though they had finally come home. For artist, author, and director, Emma Magenta, this is not too far from the truth. Emma spent much of her childhood visiting her grandfather, a ceramic artist in Blackheath. So when she moved to Medlow Bath in 2013 with her husband and two children she was in familiar surrounds. *“The community was pretty embracing, pretty lovely,”* says Emma. *“I don’t think I ever even really entertained the idea of going back to the city after we arrived.”*

Emma’s life in the mountains is one filled with ritual, creative discipline, and joy. She begins each morning with the goal of not reaching immediately for her phone to check emails and social media. *“I think once you set that path, the creative mind takes a back seat,”* she explains. Instead, in a small but purposeful act of meditation, she takes a moment to appreciate the nearby forest from her bedroom window, and holds that moment of peacefulness as long as possible.

After a warm shower in the cool darkness of dawn, Emma enjoys a quiet cup of tea while the morning breaks. Soon she is surrounded by a flurry of noise and activity as her family eat breakfast and get ready for the day.

Once her children are at school, she will visit Anonymous in Blackheath for a coffee. However when a tight deadline is looming this stop is often avoided, as the bustle of the local café can be a delightfully distracting social event. Nevertheless, Emma generally finds that other people with busy creative lives understand her need for focus at times. *“I’ve found the community to be incredibly supportive here,”* says Emma. *“People are very non-judgemental and we give each other the freedom and the room to just be themselves.”*

Then it is time to work. Recently Emma’s days have been filled with script writing for a short film scheduled to shoot and screen in 2017. Requiring quiet and focused attention, this new discipline has been a stimulating challenge. The film, **Remembering Agatha**, delves into magical realism to tell the story of a mother, overwhelmed by family obligation, who discovers a portal to her childhood self through the dishwasher. Set to debut at the Adelaide Film Festival, the hybrid live-action and animated film is a prologue to a television series with the ABC that will further explore issues to do with love and life as humans in the time of capitalism.

On other days, her schedule is less structured and she can be found in her studio, among a tangle of art supplies and collected curiosities, listening to music and producing new artworks. These vary in kind as Emma may be working on another picture book (having written and illustrated



several for adults as well as children), or her acclaimed animated television series, or creating art for exhibitions around the world. She is currently represented by Hat Hill Gallery in Blackheath. Regardless of the project, Emma’s illustrations are largely improvisational and she enjoys the focus and solitude that the mountains provide. With this appreciation she lovingly describes her home and studio in Medlow Bath as *“a refuge within a refuge.”*

Emma acknowledges that the move to the Blue Mountains prompted a reconsideration of not only the subject matter of her work, but also her approach to life. *“When I got out of the city and arrived here, I started thinking - do we need to be this cynical? Is there something more beautiful that we can celebrate in art that doesn’t have to be about our tragedies? I think there’s actually a lot of humour that can come from our problems and our wounds.”*

When the workday winds down, it is time to shift back into domestic mode, collect the children from school and settle into the evening routine. Dinner will be prepared either in the kitchen or the backyard around the fire pit. The children might eat while Emma casually works alongside them (dining with her partner a little later), or the entire family will eat together taking turns to tell stories about their day.

However, in the hustle of family life Emma always ensures to take some time for herself by enjoying an afternoon stroll through the bush. *“This walk is my everyday happy place. I do it in the afternoon, and now that we’re on daylight saving time it’s glorious because I can do it later, but while it’s still light. The mood and atmosphere changes every time. Even though it’s the same walk, it’s always a different experience.”*

Now a permanent and settled mountains resident, Emma reflects on how the mountains have imbued her life and work with new meaning. *“There’s just something so magical about the land. We’re lucky to live here. Being here took away all the constructs of personality. It dissolved those things in my life and my art. Today, and what I’m moving towards, is less of my personality as an artist, and more of the outcome of my investigations.”*



EMMA MAGENTA



VISUAL ARTS



MEDLOW BATH

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