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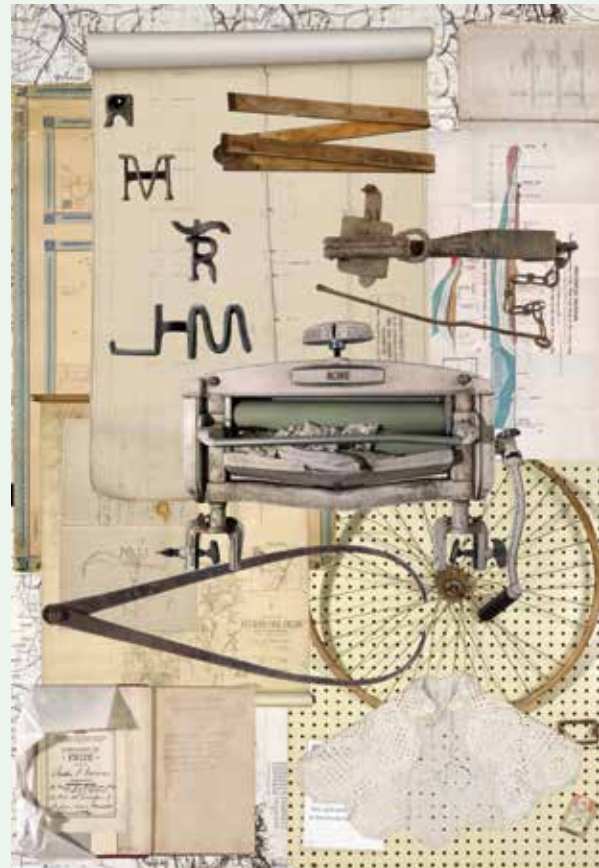
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Artist,  
Object,  
Small Museum

**Nicole Barakat**  
**Aleshia Lonsdale**  
**Fiona MacDonald**

## Obsolete? Artist, Object, Small Museum

Artists Nicole Barakat, Aleshia Lonsdale and Fiona MacDonald apply their creative and investigatory flair to museum collections, in this case to Kandos Museum on the NSW Central Tablelands and Dubbo Regional Museum. The exhibition title Obsolete? Artist, Object, Small Museum, asks a central question: how can ordinary lives, then and now, and provincial objects randomly collected, illuminate Big Picture issues? By using contemporary art's collaborative processes, the artists create a regional historiography to engage with critical national conversations on the events, policy and propaganda that have subjugated Indigenous people and on current environmental and land contest. Their theatrical strategies mix assemblage and performance and re-making or un-making everyday or sublime objects to shed light on who assigns value and, therefore, who claims History.

**Nicole Barakat** transforms traced-linen doilies and souvenir tea-towels collected from her life as an itinerant artist, into conceptual art objects and 'unpicking' performances. Her works are a response to two significant things the artist found on her first visit to Kandos: a wealth of embroidered doilies in the Kandos op shop and a blunt description of an 1823 brutal massacre of Wiradjuri people in the nearby Capertee Valley. To Wiradjuri artist **Aleshia Lonsdale** the past explains the present. Aboriginal cultural objects in museums are emptied of vitality, devoid of explanation, meaning and relevance to the wider collection, presented as curiosities collected during colonial days, relegated or embargoed to boxes in back rooms or floors, or artifacts sit amongst displays of rocks and fossils. How to liberate their strength? Aleshia Lonsdale says, "Until Aboriginal people regain control of the narrative of their history and begin to tell our stories our way the way in which we are represented will remain obsolete." **Fiona MacDonald** puts the proposition that the museum itself is an engineered machine for achieving certain

objectives. She works with photomontage to transform collection registration photographs (taken by Kandos Museum volunteer retired medical photographer Mike Oakey) to propel yesterday's bearers of imagined capital accumulation into heroic action.

Here or there, artists, local historians, small museums and regional galleries and Indigenous custodians and communities are taking part in similar dialogues. To expand the conversation the artists are joined by eminent historian **Lyndall Ryan** from University of Newcastle and curator **Matt Poll** whose exhibition No Stone Unturned — Aboriginal Scientific Knowledge (2015, Macleay Museum at Sydney University), unlocked knowledge systems. Professor Ryan recently launched the Map of frontier massacres in Eastern Australia 1788-1872 as a significant step and focus on the recognition of the periods of violence in Australia's history. The map overturns assumptions that this land was not fought for by the first peoples. The map is an interactive part of Obsolete? at WPCC.



## ARTWORKS

Cover	(Top) Aleshia Lonsdale, <i>Inconvenient Truths</i> , 2017, Installation, stones, red carpet, broom. (Bottom left) Aleshia Lonsdale, <i>Stone without Stories</i> , 2017, stone tool assemblage (detail). (Bottom right) Fiona MacDonald, <i>Obsolete? 11</i> , 2017, Photomontage, source images courtesy of Kandos Museum.
Left	Nicole Barakat, <i>Meditation</i> , 2017, embroidered textile.
Back Page	(Top) Aleshia Lonsdale, <i>Mediation/(Souvenir/Sovereign)</i> , 2017, in-situ performance documentation. (Bottom left) Fiona MacDonald, <i>Obsolete? 13</i> , 2018, Photomontage, source images courtesy of Kandos Museum. (Bottom right) Lyndall Ryan, <i>Map of frontier massacres in Eastern Australia 1788-1872</i> . Courtesy University of Newcastle.

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS AND HISTORIAN

**Nicole Barakat's** practice has been influenced by workshops in communities, for example at the Pioneer Women's Hut and Quilt Museum, with Minto public housing tenants and Shadow Places with the Narrandera Textiles Group (for Sydney Design Festival at MAAS in 2016). Of her work 'Mediation (Decolonisation)' made in-situ in Kandos Museum for Cementa 2015, the artist says these re-worked embroideries are, "a metaphor for unlearning her colonial education and the need for active listening and re-learning."

The practice of **Aleshia Lonsdale** (Tirikee) incorporates painting and weaving into sculptural and installation work hence fusing traditional and contemporary styles. She tells stories about the not-too-distant past: especially the legacy of stolen identity as Stolen Generations traumas continue to play out for her extended Wiradjuri (with connections to Wonnarua and Worimi) family. In Dubbo she is repatriating and reanimating objects from the historical collection.

**Fiona MacDonald** is an artist who is the honorary curator of Kandos Museum. Fiona MacDonald has form with taking aesthetic liberties with archives and collections. Cyclopaedia, a series of collages of the extensive collection assembled by Colonial Secretary Alexander Macleay, was the first contemporary exhibition at Elizabeth Bay House in Sydney. MacDonald has continued on her archive-specific pathway interweaving stories about power relations: communities, dispersals, strikes and struggles.

**Lyndall Ryan** is Research Professor in the Centre for the History of Violence in the Humanities Research Institute at the University of Newcastle. Her work on the early history of relations between Aborigines and white settlers in Australia, Tasmanian Aborigines: A History Since 1803, (1995 reprinted 2012) pioneered a field that documents survival and celebrates struggle.

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Curated by **Jo Holder**





EXHIBITION PUBLIC PROGRAM: CONVERSATIONS

Saturday 21 March, 11AM

Working It Out, **Matt Poll**, Assistant Curator, Indigenous Museum Collections and Repatriation Program, Macleay Museum, Sydney University and Mapping Massacres, Professor **Lyndall Ryan**, University of Newcastle, in conversation with the artists.

EXHIBITION DATES

24 March to 17 June 2018

VENUE

Western Plains Cultural Centre  
[www.westernplainsculturalcentre.org](http://www.westernplainsculturalcentre.org)  
 76 Wingewarra St, Dubbo, NSW 2830

CO-ORGANISERS

The Cross Art Projects & Kandos Museum  
[www.crossart.com.au](http://www.crossart.com.au) | [www.kandosmuseum.org.au](http://www.kandosmuseum.org.au)

