

MEDIA RELEASE

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Emerging Regional Artists taking their Creativity to the Next Level

Five emerging regional artists across Western Australia will each receive up to \$5,000 to develop their creativity through Regional Arts WA's Next Level Regional program through the State Government's Regional Arts and Cultural Investment Program.

Over the next 12 months, the five recipients will undertake artistic and professional development programs as well as raise their profiles, with the support of established artists and mentors, to take their arts careers to the Next Level.

These emerging WA players in the regional arts scene are artist Bridget Baldock (19) from Cape Burney, writer Rose (penname Sita) Bennett (24) and filmmaker Frank Bennett (20) both from Yallingup, Broome artist Bronte Berenger (26), and Geraldton based sound designer Dane Yates (26).

- **Bridget Baldock** says; *"The grant will help to work towards having a future heavily involved in art therapy and educating young minds on how to handle mental health issues. I want to push my current practice further by educating younger people on how art can be used as a therapy."*
- **Frank Bennett** says; *"The Next Level Regional Grant has expanded our possibilities enormously and blessed us with the confidence and means to carry out our creative endeavours with far more ease and fluidity than previously available. It has meant that we can focus on the important things, and keep compromises to a minimum, which is absolute gold when it comes to allowing any creative process to flow. We have been able to increase the production quality of the short film, bring the freedom of time to reality, and as a whole improve our capacity to create, grow and experiment as artists which is priceless."*
- **Rose (penname Sita) Bennett** says; *"The value of this grant could not be understated! I have been working as a cleaner and in other unrelated jobs to support my creative pursuits for years now. I spend the majority of my outside time working on my books, screenplays and refining the crafts of acting, writing, and all it takes to be an independent artist. Already, I have felt a great sense of relief and freedom in knowing that with the support of this grant I can spend a little more time focussing single-pointedly on these projects, and have already made some good ground."*

- **Bronte Berenger** says; *“The Next Level Grant has opened up many doors to bring creative activities to the community through my work with young people in Broome. It has also given me the backing to fully explore and work on a series I have been slowly progressive over the last year, work that connects to the Broome and Australian experience. It has allowed me to make fuller connections with the creative community in Broome and hopefully expand on how people engage with the creative arts.”*
- **Dane Yates** says; *“The grant has been a great help, financially aiding travel for artists from different regions. The grant also allowed us to spend a bit more time in the gallery which led to creating more content than originally planned so now we are hoping to release multiple short films that will then make up an online exhibition as opposed to a standalone AV work.”*

The Next Level YCulture Regional proudly partners with Healthway, promoting the Drug Aware message and is supported by the State Government’s Royalties for Regions Program as part of the Regional Arts and Cultural Investment Program, and Regional Arts WA.

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Media Contact

Weng-Si Cheang –Regional Arts WA Program Manager

P: 08 9200 6202 | Regional Freecall: 1800 811 883 | E: wcheang@regionalartswa.org.au

****To see full Next Level artists bios and statements, please see the Support Materials (next page).***

SUPPORT MATERIALS

Next Level Regional Grants Recipients

1. **Bridget Baldock | Cape Burney | \$4,380**

Emerging artist and arts worker Bridget Baldock (19) will develop two frameworks for engaging community arts workshops under the mentorship of qualified art psychotherapist Janeen Cameron. The frameworks will be delivered as, one for community art activities, and one for workshops to be co-facilitated with mental healthcare providers in the Mid West region. The workshops will be targeted for children, youth, and people with disabilities.

Bridget Baldock says:

“The grant will go towards mentoring sessions with Art Psychotherapist Janeen Cameron. The work I’ll be doing with Janeen includes twelve sessions that will go over eight months. We will develop two frameworks/templates for art activities and workshops. One for general art workshops where people can walk up to engage with then walk away having learnt a new skill, and a more mental health-oriented framework that I would co-facilitate with schools, headspace and disability support organisations etc. The mental health workshops will be aimed at more targeted groups such as children, youth, and people with disabilities. I would hold at least one workshop of each in collaboration with the North Midlands Project, through their 2020/2021 program. I plan for the workshops to be hands-on and will definitely be involving natural materials.

My recent pieces have been mark making created by handmade natural brushes. The nature that surrounds me inspires me the most. I find that when making my own brushes I really connect to my artworks more than I would if I used an ordinary paintbrush. The aspect of the unknown and unpredictability of what way the ink will flow motivates me to explore and push each brush further and further”

“The grant will help to work towards having a future heavily involved in art therapy and educating young minds on how to handle mental health issues. I want to push my current practice further by educating younger people on how art can be used as a therapy.”

2. **Frank Bennett | Yallingup | \$5,000**

Yallingup filmmaker, musician and writer, Frank Bennett (20) will work on the development of two new collaborative works with South West artists, furthering development of creative skills through experimentation. Through this project Frank will produce a short film based in the South west and begin the development of a full-length feature film screenplay / treatment.

Frank Bennett says:

“These projects are driven by a passion and love for art and creation that seems to run far deeper than any of my personal preferences, and I can honestly say that I had no choice in the matter of embarking on them... The ideas simply came and I was compelled to see them manifest into something tangible and become sharable with the world. The greatest portion of my inspiration is currently being expressed in the form of film and cinema, and hence these projects that I am working on, with assistance from the Next Level Regional Grant, are both the production of a short film and the development of a feature-length film screenplay/treatment. This will only be the second short film I have created, so it will be a process full of experimentation and experience-based learning, which I absolutely love. The short film is based around a young woman who is part of a mysterious covert group, or cult, who meet every day to dance together. It is called The Dance Of Samsara. I will be working alongside my sister, Sita Bennett, who is the lead-actress and co-writer.

Together our love for the imagined is boundless, and as a team I believe we can accomplish anything we set our intent upon. We are kindred spirits, and relate deeply on many levels, including our creative visions and artistic endeavours. We are so excited to share with you our upcoming works, and are extremely grateful to have the opportunity to do so.”

”The Next Level Regional Grant has expanded our possibilities enormously and blessed us with the confidence and means to carry out our creative endeavours with far more ease and fluidity than previously available. It has meant that we can focus on the important things, and keep compromises to a minimum, which is absolute gold when it comes to allowing any creative process to flow. We have been able to increase the production quality of the short film, bring the freedom of time to reality, and as a whole improve our capacity to create, grow and experiment as artists which is priceless.”

3. Rose (penname Sita) Bennett | Yallingup | \$5,000

Writer Rose Bennett (24), penname Sita Bennett, will work with established editor Ine De Baerdemaker and designer Thea Nicolescu in the development and publishing of her second and third novels, sequels to *Maya of the In-between*. Rose will be supported by a mentor to refine skills in marketing and distribution as a self-published writer.

She also co-creates films with her brother Frank Bennett. They are currently In-Production on their second short film *The Dance of Samsara* that they co-wrote together, in which Rose also plays the leading actor. They are also working on developing a feature film script.

Rose (penname Sita) Bennett says:

*“I started writing *Maya of the In-between* at the age of 19 after growing up on the beach in Margaret River, and moving straight to the heart of Sydney City after high school in the pursuit of an acting career. Being very sensitive and introverted myself, the contrast of two worlds was confronting and overwhelming, and the story began as both a self-explorative journal-type healing outlet, while contemplating how our environment, and the level of open heartedness we carry in the world affects our wellbeing. Initially, it was my secret passion project, a creative outlet for when auditions were slow, but after re-reading it and sharing it with a few people, I realised I wanted to make it available to the world just in case there are introverted, sensitive young women out there like me who perceive and contemplate the world in similar ways, who might find comfort in knowing they are not alone.”*

*“*Maya of the In-between*, and the *Earth’s New Children* trilogy is a Dystopian fantasy Adventure series for young adults that explores an extreme version of Earth’s future if we continue to ignore the repercussions of materialism on nature and climate change, and disconnect from one another through over-consumption of technology, while equal parts exploring a Utopian version of a world in which humans live in presence, care and harmony with nature and each other. The main character is a sensitive, introverted and optimistic young woman Maya, who discovers she is an interdimensional seer, and has the ability to travel between worlds. It also explores death, grief, true love, freedom and oneness.”*

“The value of this grant could not be understated! I have been working as a cleaner and in other unrelated jobs to support my creative pursuits for years now. I spend the majority of my outside time working on my books, screenplays and refining the crafts of acting, writing, and all it takes to be an independent artist. Already, I have felt a great sense of relief and freedom in knowing that with the support of this grant I can spend a little more time focussing single-pointedly on these projects, and

have already made some good ground. Another shift I've felt since receiving this grant has been an even greater sense of confidence and commitment to what I'm doing. Receiving this support and encouragement to keep creating as an independent artist has been really empowering. It's also great accountability as I have had to create a clear creative plan to follow over the next year and set goals and dates to achieve certain landmarks of each project by."

4. Bronte Berenger | Broome | \$4,960

Visual artist Bronte Berenger (26) will explore, develop and promote a new series of prints and sculptures culminating in a solo exhibition. Bronte intends to facilitate printmaking and art workshops with young people and the broader community in Broome while developing her skills through Printmaking courses over the year.

Bronte Berenger says:

"The Next Level Grant has opened up many doors to bring creative activities to the community through my work with young people in Broome. It has also given me the backing to fully explore and work on a series I have been slowly progressive over the last year, work that connects to the Broome and Australian experience. It has allowed me to make fuller connections with the creative community in Broome and hopefully expand on how people engage with the creative arts."

"The Next Level Grant has allowed me to have a bigger scope and be able to deliver larger projects with the young people I work with. I am very excited to see if more opportunities for collaboration arise as the year unfolds."

5. Dane Yates | Geraldton | \$4,500

Emerging sound designer Dane Yates (26) will undertake a collaborative research, development and delivery project for a new dance film. This will be created within the empty exhibition space of the Geraldton Regional Art Gallery (GRAG) with fellow regional collaborators, dance artist Talitha Maslin and film-maker Brendan Polain. This project's development and the resulting film will then be streamed as an online exhibition through the galleries website, creating context for the absence of art in the wake of COVID19, and comment on the lack of support infrastructure we have all experienced throughout the crisis, while offering a hopeful glimpse at our post-COVID world.

Dane Yates says:

"I'm collaboratively working on a dance film with some great buddies of mine, choreographer and performer Talitha Maslin and video artist Brendan Polain, in the empty gallery space of Geraldton Regional Art Gallery. I have been building connections with the gallery and staff (especially with the gallery coordinator Marina Baker) since last year, being in conversation about an upcoming installation of mine happening this coming November. Through light hearted conversation with Marina as well as just being inside the empty gallery space, I just had this simple idea to create a dance film in a location which is the perfect embodiment of how COVID has affected the arts. I've been working with Talitha since 2016 and definitely had to bring her along; I am a huge fan of her movement and choreography and love working with her as she is also from the regions, growing up in Manjimup, which gives our working relationship a stronger connection with a communal understanding of regional arts practice. I've been working with Brendan since 2015 on several different projects and was great to bring him along as we have spent time making short experimental films to accompany my postgraduate research at WAAPA, shooting in locations such as Geraldton (and Greenough), Nannup, Shire of Lake Grace and Hyden."

Talitha and I spent two weeks in the gallery with Brendan joining us on the last three days to film. We spent a lot of time each morning discussing the history of the building, originally being Geraldton's Town Hall built in 1908, being used as a place for debutants and dances amongst other things. Talitha took inspiration for movement from poses and dances from archived images found by Marina in the city library. We also took inspiration from the lighting in the gallery, still installed from the previous exhibition, highlighting the emptiness of the walls and what should be on display.”

“The grant has been a great help, financially aiding travel for artists from different regions. The grant also allowed us to spend a bit more time in the gallery which led to creating more content than originally planned so now we are hoping to release multiple short films that will then make up an online exhibition as opposed to a standalone AV work.”

About Regional Arts WA

Established in 1994, Regional Arts WA is the State’s only multi-arts organisation with a purely regional focus. As an independent, membership-based, not-for-profit organisation our purpose is to celebrate and strengthen a powerful regional arts sector to contribute to connected and creative regional communities. More at: www.regionalartswa.org.au

About Regional Arts and Culture Investment Program

The Regional Arts and Culture Investment Program will deliver almost \$20 million over four years to regional WA. The purpose of the program is creating jobs, economic development, tourism and improving social cohesion by supporting the creative and cultural industries in regional Western Australia. Through strategic investments, it will build capacity in the regions and contribute to liveability and vibrancy of regional communities.