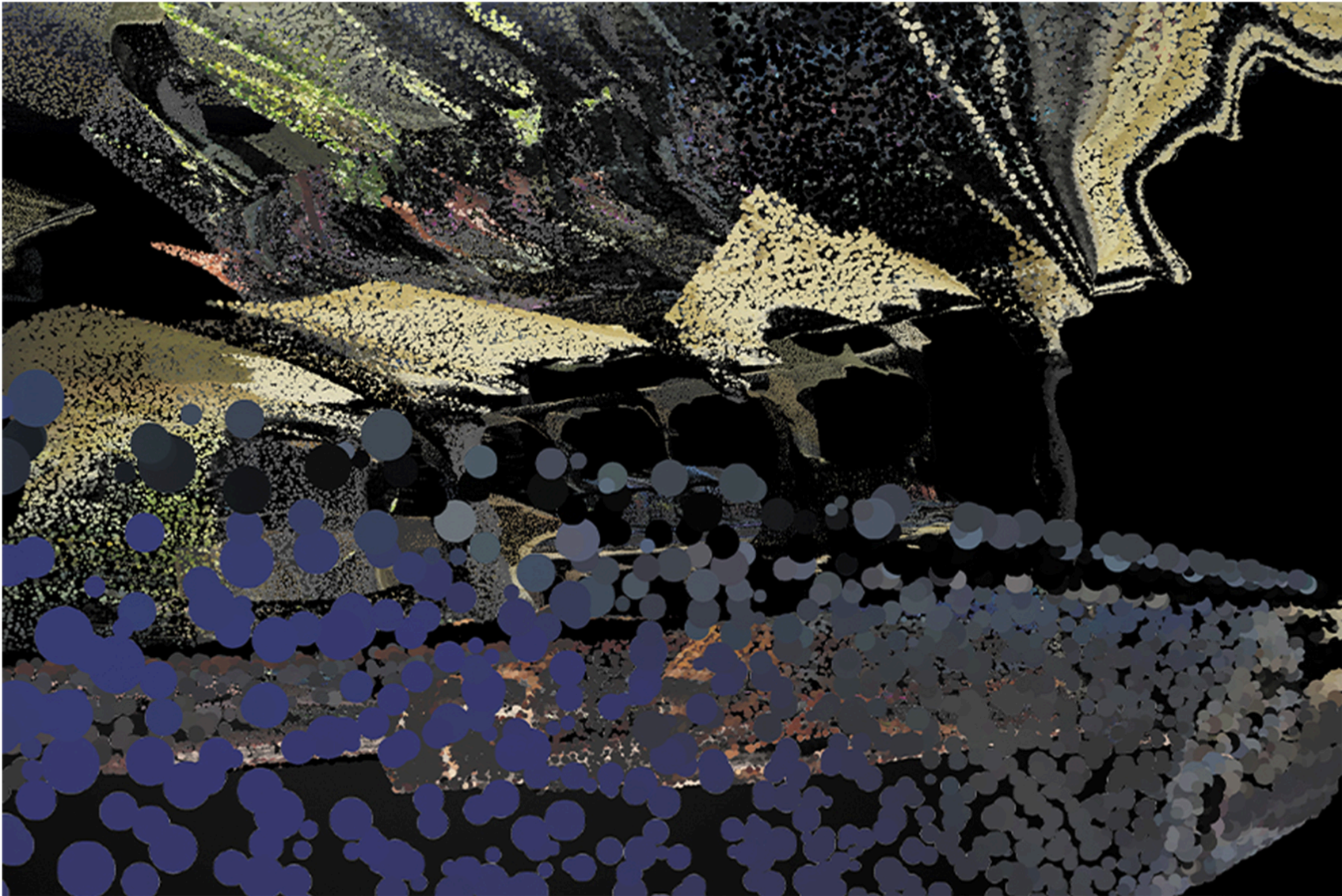


Watch This Space

Strategic Plan 2025 - 2029



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Cover: Animation by Dom Tang

WTS Strategic Plan 2023-2029

Acknowledgement

This strategic plan is written on the unceded lands of the Arrernte people. Watch This Space pays deepest respect to Elders past, present, and emerging. We recognise the unceded land of Tyuretye, Mparntwe, Antulye and Irlpme (Alice Springs) within which we live and make. Always was, always will be Arrernte land.



Pictured: 'My history, your history'. Image courtesy of Martina Capurso

Vision

Watch This Space is a vital and valued collective resource for experimentation, artistic expression, critical thought and conversations. Our vision is actively ever-changing.

Purpose

Providing access for making and experimentation, skill-sharing, education and showing WTS operates as a host for people and practices, conversations, resistance and ideas.

Values

We offer a commitment to practice:

- Responsiveness: continually re-imagine and re-form in response to the needs and desires of our community.
- Radical Openness: curious and sensitive to what is yet to be known, what may need to be un-known, and what is not for all to know.
- Nurturing: experimentation within artistic practice, both locally and afar.
- Collaboration: together with integrity and joy.
- Responsibility: transparency, empathy and care to build trust.



Pictured: 'Animating Principles' Image courtesy of Sara Maiorino



Pictured: Coober Pedy Art Camp 2022. Image courtesy of Bridget Chappell

Priorities

The priorities are used as an active map which guides WTS' decision making. They are used as a conduit, through which we travel and process our collective choices and considerations.

1. Space is the place

- a. A host for artistic and cultural intersections and relationships
- b. A point of connection and exchange between here and elsewhere
- c. Acknowledgment, recognition and respect for what's come before



Pictured: Zine Fair 2023.
Image courtesy of Sara Maiorino

2. A safe space

- a. There for everyone
 - i. Many knowledge systems are valued and intersect
 - ii. Accessible for different bodies, minds, practices and positions
- b. Collective and responsible caretaking
 - i. Value different knowledge systems, practices and collaborations
 - ii. Looking after each other

3. A sustainable space

- a. Representative, informed, robust and agile governance
- b. Financial independence and autonomy, labour distribution and collective accountability
- c. Reliably contribute to the ongoing creative and financial health of our communities, contributors and workers



Pictured: Opening Squash 2023. Image courtesy of Bec Capp

4. A space to create

- a. Space/s and platforms are widely offered
 - i. To experience, encounter and celebrate, together
 - ii. To experiment, develop, practice
 - iii. To exhibit, present and converse within
- b. Resources are shared openly, equitably, transparently
 - i. Means of budgeting- waived, spent, paid and saved
 - ii. Means of relating - processes, ideas and ways
 - iii. Means of making - materials and skills
 - iv. Means of learning - teachers and students



Pictured: Opening night 'Where you from' Image courtesy of Sara Maiorino

5. A space for showing

- a. Solidarity: A space of showing and showing up



Pictured: 'Plating exhibition'. Image courtesy of Bec Capp

About

Watch This Space (WTS) is an artist-led organisation established in 1993, manifesting publicly as a vital collective resource in Mparntwe. It is a site for experimentation, artistic expression, critical conversation and making, showing & participating in art that is in constant conversation.

WTS posits that art's definition has broad and soft boundaries, and that everyone is invited. It is an artist-run initiative, where artists like their galleries to also be karaoke halls, dance floors, cinemas, zine fairs, basketball courts, libraries and language classes; the artists are often interested in connecting art to politics, play, or experimentation.

It is lucky to exist in the middle of a small town on Central Arrernte country, rich in artists. This small town lies in the middle of the Central Desert region, richer still. This area is in the middle of the continent, affording WTS a unique proximity to here and elsewhere. WTS aims to present alternatives to institutionalisation, tokenization, and over-professionalisation of artists and the arts. It has been alive for 30 years, since then moving through many seasons and sites. It is currently based at 8 Gap Road, where it hosts a program of projects, workshops, film screenings, exhibitions and residencies. It has 7 studio artists plus one Travelling Artist in Residence at any given time. Many people make up its moving parts: currently two co-directors, eight studio artists, a First Nations advisory board, curatorial committee, board of directors, the gardener, the volunteer crew – would you like to join?



Pictured: WTS opening night. Image courtesy of Bec Capp

Past

In the centre of the continent, within the cultural, geographical, political, historical and creative context of Mparntwe, a negative 'space' was recognised in the organisation of and representation of multi-disciplinary, experimental and artist-led practices. In an act of grassroots responsiveness that still underpins our values, the collective labour of five women - Pam Lofts, Anne Mosey, Jan Mackay, Angela Gee and Pip McManus - seeded Watch This Space in 1991 and established it more formally as an Artist Run Initiative in 1993. That sense of the collective and the collaborative are threads which continue to weave through and provide strength to the fabric of Watch This Space, 30 years on.

The first charter of Watch This Space articulated some essential intentions - that it be artist-run to ensure and maintain independence in creative and organisational processes; that it be a forum for critical dialogue; non-commercial; a space for exchange; and, within the perceived remoteness, an intersection of creative and material collaborations, by artists here and from elsewhere.

The first 'Space' matched the original vision in an immediate way. It offered a gallery space, and made manifest the intentions through exhibitions, residencies, performances, discussions, events and offsite projects. It included the onsite studio community for which Watch This Space was formed and for which it continues to be recognised and held dear. Over its 30 year history, Watch This Space has practised openness and resourcefulness, shifting in form and content and physical structure. It has been both ephemeral and also a constant in dynamic response to its context, a sum of all who have constituted its collective energy, support and possibilities.

Our position demands intimacy with and acceptance of different modes of distance and isolation, practically and emotionally. In 2020, WTS delivered an entirely local creative program after cancelling or postponing interstate and international

exhibitions, residencies, and projects. This solidified our community and celebrated what is unique about our proximity and isolation here in the desert.

In 2021, the role of Director was rebirthed as a two-person Co-Directorship model. The Co-Directors share all operational responsibilities, requiring close collaboration. The shared responsibility allows for an environment that is emotionally and logistically sustainable for both staff and artists. The model strives to provide longevity, with specialist knowledge and skills collectivised, enriched, and held accountable across two positions. They administer the decisions of the Board, Curatorial Committee and First nations advisory group and take care of all day-to-day operational affairs of the organisation and the space, strengthened, supported and guided by artists, members and veteran and spontaneous volunteers.

Present

The Central Desert region, particularly Mparntwe, reflects the explicitly tangible and visible impacts of colonisation. Like all land across this continent, the colonial oppression of Aboriginal people is ongoing, compounded by the continued failures of colonial Governments, institutions and settler-colonists to embrace Aboriginal self-determination and to recognise the sovereign rights of First Nations people. We recognise and celebrate the continued resistance of the Arrernte people and all First Nations people, who stand strong in culture, language and lore.

Watch This Space holds closely to the values and priorities that have informed the organisation since its inception. It reflects the ongoing desire and commitment to remain agile and responsive to artists and our environments within local and national discourse and the dynamic contexts within which Watch This Space operates. By queering institutions and keeping a grassroots focus, WTS recognises growth through individualised support, and a close connection with our artists and our community members near and far. Integrity and trust between artists, members, staff, volunteers and partners is critical to delivering programs and distributing resources with the time, space and financial support each requires.

WTS supports without predispositioned outcomes or commercial imperatives and wishes to facilitate a 'radically open' environment. By facilitating the autonomy and

integrity of the artists and their practices, our program is inherently in response to that, by ensuring there is an ongoing broad and enthusiastic invitation to what others bring and how that may re-shape and re-form us in exchange.



Pictured: Opening night 'Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe Mparntwe'. Image courtesy of Sara Mariorino

Future

Watch This Space's vision for the future builds on our thirty year legacy of nurturing and presenting a diverse breadth of artistic practices in Mpartnwe. We want to create a sustainable, well-resourced organisation that values, advocates for and supports experimentation, artists and artistic practices in our local community and further afield.

In the near and far future, many voices and knowledge systems continue to be in dialogue, intersect and meet at WTS. Within the context of our living environment, and the ongoing implications of colonisation at the forefront of our collective mind, WTS' First Nations advisory committee, artists, allies and supporters will continuously obstruct and challenge these oppressive structures.

Funding scarcity and precarity are inevitable in this decade as the social and economic impacts of the pandemic will continue to unravel. Cost of living expenses will rise and wealth disparities bulge, yet we have learned throughout this period that our community is our greatest asset, socially and economically. We continue investing in the sustainability of our organisation so we are more resilient, agile and robust for the future and can continue operating to the best of our capacity. By continuing to provide clear pathways for our community's support, we aim to foster an environment that can sustain independence and weather a changing climate and the eternally shifting tides of our political and economic systems.

We are committed to ensuring the success and sustainability of the co-directorship model and the benefits it brings to the organisation. WTS

will introduce a First Nations identified position, to support the direction of this small arts organisation, operating on Arrernte land.

WTS Strategic Plan 2023-2029

Collective

Biographies of our current board and staff are available on our website [here](#).



Pictured: Opening night 'Stellar Return'. Image courtesy of Sara Mariorino

Impact

Supporting Artists

Studios: Watch This Space ARI (WTS) studios are heavily subsidised which allows local artists to maintain a practice without the added financial burden of excessive studio rent. We do not charge any rental fee for First Nations studio artists. We commit to continuing to offer accessible and affordable studios into the future.

The kinds of practices that WTS houses are broad and ever-changing. Our current studio artists' practices span ceramics, painting, writing, photography, video work, language, music production and performance. Such a breadth of creative practices ensures that the wider Alice Springs community are constantly able to engage with dynamic, new and diverse forms of art making and criticism.

The Travelling Artist in Residence (TAiR) program also affords our permanent studio artists the opportunity to engage with practitioners from across the continent, and vice versa. This has led to countless collaborations, group exhibitions and projects between WTS and TAiR recipients over the years. In 2021 alone, three travelling artists in residence decided to move permanently to Mparntwe and continue to engage in WTS operations and programming and with the broader artistic communities.

By facilitating artists from across Australia to visit Mparntwe and interact with its arts community, the TAiR program has contributed significantly to growing WTS profile nationally, positioning WTS as a relevant, idiosyncratic and critical part of the contemporary arts discourse. This has also seen the development of collaborations between WTS and other arts organisations from across the

continent. Recent collaborations include the Coober Pedy Artist Camp with FELTspace (now in its third year) and Situate X West Space.



Pictured: Opening night 'where you from'. Image courtesy of Sara Maiorino



Pictured: Kumalie Riley at the Lofty Awards. Image courtesy of Sara Mariorino



Pictured: 'Pest Control'. Image courtesy of Saar Amptmeijer



Pictured: Lofty Awards 2022. Image courtesy of Sara Mariorino



Pictured: Opening night 'Famous Fish. Image courtesy of Sara Mariorino

Programming

Our programming is committed to supporting projects that may not have an obvious home elsewhere, with a particular focus on highlighting experimental and radical projects that display a depth of curiosity and/or poetics.

In 2020 we exhibited *Apmere Werne Arlpetye-arlpaye: Amengkwerne making softball*, a collection of sculptures, video and memorabilia, commemorating the women's softball league in Amoonguna by artists Margaret Palmer and Vicki Crowle. After being shown at WTS this particular exhibition went on to be programmed at Araluen Arts Centre, the major government-funded gallery and museum in Central Australia.

Our programming has also allowed important works to be developed and performed such as Sylvia Neale's *My History, Your History, Our History*. This powerful one woman play was performed to a maximum capacity audience every night of its run.

Being a major ARI, artist collective and non-commercial, independent art space in Central Australia, many significant artists seek us out to collaborate or visit with us while in town. This has afforded the wider community intimate encounters with artists, thinkers, writers, filmmakers et al that would otherwise not be easily facilitated given our remote location. Recent notable visitors include Elizabeth Povinelli, Karrabing Film Collective, Rachel O'Reilly, Michael Taussig and Lionel Fogarty.

Many visiting artists also encourage the local community to participate or contribute to artworks they are making. A recent notable example of this was Trent Walter's travelling exhibition *From Australia: 20 Graphic Positions*. This involved a series of printmaking workshops in which the resultant work was added to the

travelling exhibition which was staged at several significant Australian art institutions.



Pictured: Opening night 'Famous Fish'. Image courtesy of Sara Mariorino

Collective Resource

WTS exists as a collective resource. We ensure our infrastructure is adaptable to the needs of the various communities that comprise Mpartnwe. We are used to host one-off meetings; reading groups; Arrernte language classes; as a HQ to organise events or protests or mutual aid networks; for writing letters to incarcerated peoples; for gigs, performances, fundraisers, working bees, banner making, and workshops of all kinds. As a not-for-profit space with an emphasis on experimental practices, we are open to facilitating in whatever way possible whatever project or need is brought to us by the communities. This has helped sustain, nurture and incubate all kinds of ideas and projects which have gone on to be critical parts of our region's cultural, political and social landscape. Recent notable examples include [Apmere Angkentye-kehne](#), [Arrernte language classes](#), [prisoner letter writing](#), [the annual Zine Fair](#) and the monthly [Walk-In Cinema](#).



Pictured: WTS Zine Fair 2023. Image courtesy of Sara Maiorino

Watch This Space Strategic Plan Extension for 2029

Vision:

Watch This Space envisions evolving as a dynamic and responsive artistic hub, maintaining its position as a vital collective resource while actively shaping the artistic landscape. The vision remains ever-changing, adaptive, and inclusive.

Strategic Priorities for 2029:

Innovation and Adaptability:

- Objective: Foster a culture of innovation and adaptability to stay at the forefront of contemporary art practices.
- Initiatives:
 - Establish a workspace to encourage experimentation and cross-disciplinary collaborations.
 - Explore emerging technologies and their integration into art practices.
 - Deepen First Nations cultural directions throughout programming.

National Connectivity:

- Objective: Strengthen interstate, regional and international connections, fostering collaborations and exchanges with artists and art communities elsewhere.
- Initiatives:
 - Expand the Travelling Artist in Residence program to attract international artists (NZ or Indonesia)
 - Actively participate in global and national art events and initiatives to showcase the unique perspective of WTS.
 - Deepen artistic output with regional collaborations.

Sustainability:

- Objective: Ensure the sustainability of the organisation by addressing key operational aspects.
- Initiatives:
 - Adjust program to prevent stretching resources too thin.
 - Review compensation policies, adequately pay staff & continue mentorship framework (workplace strategy)
 - Review payment structures to remunerate artists appropriately, incrementally increasing based on NAVA standards.
 - Secure a suitable and sustainable operating location.
 - Develop further strategies for recouping funds and building reserves for long-term stability.

Community Engagement:

- Objective: Enhance community engagement strategies to reach wider audiences and create meaningful connections.
- Initiatives:
 - Launch an online platform to complement physical events, enabling global participation.
 - Develop outreach programs targeting diverse communities within Mparntwe and beyond.

Artistic Resilience:

- Objective: Support artists in navigating challenges, fostering resilience in the face of uncertainties.
- Initiatives:
 - Deepen Responsive programming to assist changing needs of artists and their practices.
 - Provide professional development resources to empower artists in adapting to changing artistic landscapes

Monitoring and Evaluation:

Regularly assess progress towards strategic goals through WTS' measurable goals table, stakeholder & community feedback, and annual staff & board reviews. Adapt the plan as needed to remain responsive to the evolving needs of the artistic community and the broader environment

Conclusion:

Watch This Space is committed to building on its rich history, embracing the future with an open and adaptive approach. The strategic priorities outlined for 2029 align with the organisation's core values, ensuring it remains a dynamic element in the local and global artistic landscape.



Pictured: Coober Pedy Art Camp 2022. Image courtesy of Bridget Chappell