



Local Creative – Heidi Lee Warta

Heidi Lee Warta grew up in Sydney's Northern Beaches and started her career in the arts in the early 2000s. Heidi had her first solo art exhibition in Akuna Bay in 2008, and today she's a full-time professional artist and art teacher, with a rich history of works, exhibitions, sales, and inspirations.

Today Heidi's work includes the use of a broad variety of mediums - paints, pencils, dyes, resins, textiles, wood, tree leaves, flowers, fabric, found objects and more.

Most recently, Heidi's practice has revolved around her love of Aboriginal culture. Heidi was a recipient of a 2020 Northern Beaches Council Arts & Creativity Grant to develop the exhibition Ochre Woman at Curl Curl Creative Space, 1 – 10 July 2022.

What were some important moments that allowed you to make the transition into a full-time practicing artist?

Becoming a full-time practicing artist has evolved over time. Art is something that I have always done which has led to me making a living from it. As most artists would know it's not always easy to sell your artworks.

I was a single parent for around 15 years of the children's lives and having to make money was something that I really had to do! So, I suppose the survival instincts kick in and I have made all sorts of art and held all kinds of arty workshops over the years. On my website you can see how my style has changed through extremes, as I have practiced using different mediums. Thankfully I have sold most of my pieces.

Being on my own all the time in my studio was very quiet and so I welcomed the opportunity to teach students. I now spend time with lovely people teaching and guiding and mentoring them on their creative journeys.

You also spend time teaching art skills to others. How has being an art teacher influenced your own creative practice?

I can think of a few students whose works have inspired me and influenced my creative pursuits and from that I build up my own ideas.

I have been teaching art two days a week in the mental health and disability sector for over ten years now and I have also seen how my clients struggle in their daily lives. This has also taught me humility and gratitude for my own art practice and the time I have here. So, I suppose what I am trying to say is that now I create what comes from my heart and what I am inspired to do.

What were some of the catalysts that influenced your practice and your focus on exploring Aboriginal culture in your artwork?

I wouldn't say a 'catalyst', it is more of a calling or wanting to connect with Aboriginal culture and people who have also helped me find my way.

I always feel grounded and connected in nature, like walks on the beach or being in the bush and taking in the natural surroundings.

I chose to draw ten portraits of first nations women on the northern beaches (Gaimariagal country). I've had the pleasure of spending some time with these lovely women and learning along the way. There are often things to be learnt by interacting with others and listening to their stories and connection to culture.

Tell us about your upcoming exhibit at Curl Curl Creative Space, Ochre Woman.

This exhibition will feature ten portraits of First Nations women living on or culturally associated with the Northern Beaches. I have enjoyed the company of these women and have been inspired to draw them for different reasons.

During the Ochre Woman exhibition, there will be talks and a women's panel held for the community to come and listen to some of the women speak about 'Healing Country'. I am hoping that the audience will gain a greater understanding of Aboriginal Cultural perspectives.

The exhibition is hoped to serve as a connection in creating better community cohesion and visibility of First Nations women living locally.

This exhibition is the first of its kind, especially in our area. Hopefully, this will lead to a continued body of work, that highlights the contribution that First Nations people make to the fabric of the Northern Beaches community.