

– Media Release –

Writer, activist and arts worker Carmen Ansaldo is the SPARK NT Curator for 2019–2020.

Carmen Ansaldo's research analyses the intersection between visual arts and political engagement with a focus on First Nations art practices and remote and regional arts development. As a collaborator, Ansaldo works with artists, activists and community members to critique and expand current relationships between the arts, politics and culture.

"I am excited to be presented with this unique opportunity to be the next SPARK NT curator and develop my curatorial practice as a regional arts worker. Exploring the dual role of the curator as activist appeals to me. As a SPARK NT curator, Artback NT has provided me with a new platform to materialise these interests through the development of a touring exhibition. As an emerging curator holding strong concerns for my community, I am thinking about what I can contribute and how I can implement tangible change as an arts worker. I see communalism as our only way out if the Territory is to have a liveable environment and sustainable future" said Carmen Ansaldo, SPARK NT curator.

Ansaldo's debut curatorial project as part of the SPARK NT Curator program will be *Groundswell: Recent movements within art and territory*. The exhibition is being developed for tour through the Northern Territory in 2020 and 2021. *Groundswell* will showcase a selection of powerful reactions with particular focus on the creeping changes to the Territory's water supply. The exhibition will chart these changes by grouping artistic responses thematically into the prevailing resource issues of Access, Contamination, Scarcity and Culture.

Louise Partos, Executive Officer, Artback NT said "*Groundswell* is a timely and pertinent exhibition for the Territory. Social and political awareness of our rapidly changing climate has now reached a tipping point nationally. The narration of art within Carmen's exhibition will pose poignant questions and engender insight into the prevailing issues of our fragile environment. Curatorial activism brings with it a responsibility. One where the curator uses the gallery as a counterpoint to bring to the forefront the concerns of the artist and the viewer. Carmen has risen to this challenge. She also argues that selected works are the compelling first steps of an artistic movement in its own right."

To support her argument Ansaldo acknowledges the work of community arts consultant and activist Arlene Goldbard, who refers to the frontline positioning of artists as evidence of their status as an 'indicator species', sensitive to the shifts and changes impacting our social and environmental realities. Ansaldo





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believes that we are witnessing a clear increase in the amounts of artists using this positioning to document environmental shifts within their practice, refocusing their artistic concepts to explicitly address the intensifying crisis of Australia's diminishing water supply.

“Alongside scientists and environmentalists, artists have historically presented as some of the first responders to this crisis, bearing witness to its effects through their output” said Ansaldo. “My research examines some of these powerful responses within the Northern Territory. These responses are located as part of a wider aesthetic history of creative interventions occurring across Australia including activist exhibitions, performance protests, culture jamming, grassroots community outreach, and the development of new sustainable artistic practices.”

Groundswell will feature more than twenty works by Northern Territory artists including Jacky Green, Kelly Lee Hickey, June Mills, Aly de Groot, Patricia Phillipus Napurrula, Winsome Jobling, Lee Harrop, Maicie Lalara, Mel Robson, Jennifer Taylor and Tarzan Jungle Queen. Exhibited works will extend through vast geographies, perspectives and artistic mediums to stake their claim, spanning visualised data to ceramics, oil painting to recycled sculpture and printmaking to stand-up comedy. The commonality however, is their shared determination to bridge the message of each individual artist to the collective shared concerns of the Territory's citizens.

Partos said “I am really proud that we have been able to support the career development for a new generation of curators in the Northern Territory. The inaugural SPARK NT curator Clare Armitage is now the Assistant Curator at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory and Sarah Pirrie, the second SPARK NT curator, exhibition *We Eat We Are* is currently touring and represents a selection of female Top End artists. The Territory does not have a dedicated curatorship program that supports the pathways for emerging curators. What is special about the SPARK NT curator program is that we have been able to provide tangible outcomes for three women to learn about the curatorial process from inception through to exhibition delivery.”

About the SPARK NT curator

Carmen Ansaldo currently works at Katherine Regional Arts and organises the Darwin Free University. She has worked in remote and regional art centres within the Northern Territory and Western Australia, as well as major arts institutions such as the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory and the Queensland Art Gallery & Gallery of Modern Art. Her arts journalism has featured extensively in national and international print and online publications over the past 15 years. Most recently, she represented the Northern Territory



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within the profession of arts journalism at the 58th Venice Biennale as part of the Australia Council's Emerging Artworkers Program. For more information about Carmen Ansaldo visit: <http://bit.ly/35rGNh8>

About the SPARK NT Curator Program

This is the third exhibition to be produced as part of the SPARK NT Curator Program, an Artback NT initiative which supports an independent or emerging curator, residing in the Northern Territory, to develop an exhibition project for tour. SPARK NT is designed to foster critical thinking in art and curatorial practice and provide artists from the Territory with opportunities to showcase their work within a curated touring exhibition. For more information about the SPARK NT Curator Program visit: <http://bit.ly/2TdZ9QK>

Exhibition Information

Groundswell: Recent movements within art and territory will tour the Northern Territory from September 2020 to May 2021. Venues include Northern Centre for Contemporary Art, Darwin; Godinymayin Yijard Rivers Arts & Culture Centre, Katherine; Nyinkka Nyunyu, Tennant Creek and Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs. For information about the exhibition and available images visit: <http://bit.ly/34wqL4j>

Carmen Ansaldo, SPARK NT curator and Jo Foster, Visual Arts Manager, Artback NT are available for interview upon request.

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