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MEDIA RELEASE

Sheila Foundation announces the 2023
Michela and Adrian Fini Artist Fellowship



Site of the largest non-nuclear explosion in Australian history, Miriwoong Country. From the work in progress *Surveilling a Crime Scene* by Alana Hunt

Artist Alana Hunt has been awarded the Foundation's third Fini Fellowship, an opportunity that will allow her to create a body of new work for her forthcoming solo exhibition *Surveilling a Crime Scene* at the Northern Centre for Contemporary Art (NCCA), Darwin from 6 October - 11 November 2023.

The Michela and Adrian Fini Artist Fellowship is unique in Australia. The Fellowship supports the development of new work by contemporary women practitioners at a critical juncture of their career, whether they be emerging, mid-career or senior artists, and assists in the presentation and documentation of their work at contemporary art spaces within the national Contemporary Art Organisations Australia (CAOA) network.



Sheila is a national philanthropic foundation with a mission to overturn decades of gender bias by writing Australian women artists back into our art history and ensuring equality for today's women artists.

Sheila has three strategic focus areas:

- **Contemporary Women:** providing opportunities and support for contemporary Australian women artists
- **Into the Light:** painting women artists back into our art history
- **Going Global:** supporting the Cruthers Collection of Women's Art, the largest stand-alone collection of Australian women's art

The foundation is named after Lady Sheila Cruthers, a trailblazer in supporting and collecting Australian women artists. Sheila Foundation honours Lady Sheila in name and in mission.

The Fellowship was established through the generosity of Sheila Foundation board member Michela Fini and her husband Adrian, and is awarded annually to provide vital support to women artists and contemporary arts institutions around Australia.

Now in its third year, Michela and Adrian felt compelled to devise the Fellowship at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic had made the situation for the visual arts especially challenging, and the support for female artists, and spaces for them to show in, even more crucial. While life has since returned to "normal", the position of many women artists within Australia remains challenging, if not precarious. Annual earnings for many artists remain below the poverty line and women often have the added burden of childrearing and caring responsibilities, which can greatly impact their creative capacity.

"It was important to Adrian and I that we created something significant", says Michela Fini, "something that provides a much-needed opportunity in the Australian arts sector. The Fellowship is designed to make a real and practical difference to artists and contemporary art spaces", she said.



Alana Hunt. Photo: Ben Lindberg

Fini Fellowship recipient Alana Hunt is one of Australia's most accomplished early career artists with a singular practice across visual art - largely relationally-oriented approaches to photography, publishing and filmmaking - and writing. Hunt has lived near Kununurra on Miriwoong and Gija Countries in the north of Western Australia for the last twelve years. This, and her longstanding relationship with South Asia - and with Kashmir in particular - shapes her engagement with the violence that results from the fragility of nations and the aspirations and failures of colonial dreams. Her work is underpinned by a commitment to sensitively challenge ideas and histories in the public sphere, as well as in the social space between people.

Hunt's new project, *Surveilling a Crime Scene*, will be an ambitious collection of still and moving film works that have been forged by her nuanced and fierce examination of contemporary colonial culture. Threads of daily settler life will build a tapestry of evidence that reveals colonisation not as history but as a continuum, taking shape in the discreet creases of life, here and now.

"This work will speak through agendas of development and colonisation and leisure, coursing through our lives and the places we hold dear", says Hunt. "It will speak of airports and tourism and boats, of altered ecosystems and large dams and police. It will speak of agriculture and gravel pits and home - the violence inherent in a seemingly simple quest for a home at the expense of another's. It will try to work with forensic accountability while holding imagination close. And in the midst of all these threads, and signalled with most urgency, is a persistent consideration of ourselves on this Country."

"The Fini Fellowship is an affirmation that ruptures the pervasive spirit of doubt", observes Hunt. "It contributes one more piece to the ongoing puzzle of an artist's income. It allows a little bit more time and a little bit more rigour and a little bit more abandon. And it allows me to work with the Northern Centre for Contemporary Art. In short, the Fini Fellowship is an honour."

The Fellowship also greatly enhances the Northern Centre for Contemporary Art's 2023 programming, with NCCA Director Petrit Abazi commenting:

"We are fortunate, honoured and excited to have the opportunity to work with Alana Hunt to premiere her exhibition *Surveilling a Crime Scene*. Alana is a brilliant artist working in a style and manner totally her own. Her visual, oral and literary research into contemporary issues relevant to Australia and Asia are considered, nuanced and worthy of wide international recognition.

The NCCA is grateful to the Sheila Foundation and Michela and Adrian Fini for funding this project through their Fellowship. We acknowledge the terrific work the Foundation does to develop the careers of women artists in Australia. Without their generous support, our organisation would not have had the financial capacity to develop and deliver Alana's ambitious artistic vision."

The second Michela and Adrian Fini Fellowship was awarded to Brisbane-based artist Natalya Hughes, whose exhibition *The Interior* premiered at the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane in 2022 to great success. *The Interior* is touring to Logan Art Gallery and Warwick Art Gallery, Queensland in 2023.

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ABOUT ALANA HUNT

Alana Hunt's complex and intertwined practice spans photography, moving image, writing and publishing. She is currently undertaking a residency with PhotoKTM5 in Nepal and has been working with the Kimberley Land Council via SPACED's Rural Utopias program since 2020 where, under the guidance of the Land Council's legal team, she is learning about the legal processes structured by non-Indigenous Australia that enable colonisation.

Hunt has had her work curated into important exhibitions within Australia and internationally including the fifth edition of Photo Kathmandu (2023), *Growing Like A Tree: Sent a Letter* at Sunaparanta, Goa (2022-23), *The National 2021: New Australian Art* at Carriageworks, Sydney; *A stitch in time* at Today Art Museum, Beijing (2019-20); *Uncertain Territory* at Artbank, Sydney (2019); *Cups of nun chai* at Tufts University Art Gallery, Boston (2018), *Strangeness, Betweenness and the Cosmopolitan Imagination* at the University of London (2017) and *Artrakers: Unseen, Unknown, Unsung* at Goldsmiths College, London (2013). Her work with SPACED will be the subject of an exhibition at the Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth in December 2023.

She was the Carriageworks inaugural Writer-in-Residence in 2021 and has been the recipient of numerous residencies, including at Fremantle Arts Centre, Perth (2020) and Perth Institute of Contemporary Art (2019), as well as in New Delhi, Makassar and Neijmegen.

