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## ABOUT SafARI

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### *The SafARI story - in brief:*

SafARI was created in 2004 to provide international visitors in Sydney for the Biennale of Sydney an opportunity to experience alternative venues. Today SafARI has a cult following built from the sheer love of potential it represents for future generations; artists, curators, writers, designers, art workers and audiences alike. Since its beginnings, SafARI has gone from strength to strength, yet remains true to where it came from and why. SafARI's aim was to highlight the little known and often inaccessible venues that are the breeding ground for future creative generations - the Artist Run Initiatives (ARIs), hence the name. At a time when Sydney hosts its most important international visual arts event, SafARI augments the dynamism of the visual arts landscape by reminding us of where it all begins and pays homage to grassroots initiatives.

### *The SafARI backstory - in detail:*

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SafARI was founded by Lisa Corsi and Margaret Farmer in 2004 but the genesis behind it was Swiss artist, Frederic Post, who asked a simple question while in Sydney for the 2004 Biennale of Sydney: "... but what else is happening in Sydney?" This called for a focus on the alternative. It was a natural progression to make SafARI an event for unrepresented and emerging artist, curators, designers and art workers.

When SafARI first started the founders had no idea where it was going nor how long it would last. Despite the uncertainty, the first SafARI took place from 3-25 June, 2006 and was co-curated by the co-founders. A national call to all emerging and unrepresented artists was made. The first SafARI included 25 artists and a truck, six ARIs (one of which was a satellite 'Project Contemporary Art Space' in Wollongong), and a walking tour, which included artist talks.

The first public program event paid homage to the history of ARIs in Sydney and invited Mike Parr, one of the founders of Sydney's first ARI, Inhibodress, to give a public talk. Scheduled to only run for an hour, Mike's talk went on for closer to two. The audience slowly migrated to the front as the talk continued. People left feeling elated and inspired by Mike's generosity of spirit as he spoke about the importance of alternative spaces to any artists' practice.

SafARI 2006 was realised with a total of \$25,000 in funding as part of the "Skills and Arts Development Individuals" grant offered through The Australia Council for the Arts. At that time, SafARI was not yet an incorporated association. Both co-curators committed to three SafARIs and reasoned that if it was a worthwhile initiative, it would be able to continue into the future with the input of emerging curators.



SafARI 2008 took place from 13-29 June 2008. 2008 was a watershed moment for SafARI. The inclusion of artworks by Lucas Grogan, prompted the resignation of Margaret Farmer as co-curator. Canadian curator, David Garneau later wrote an open letter to Art Monthly about the turn of events, which did two things: created an (ongoing) storm of controversy around Lucas Grogan's practice and positioned SafARI as an exciting platform for new talent. 2008 included 11 artists, 3 ARIs, an artist talk and walking tour and public forum by Barbara Flynn. Elizabeth Stanton stepped in at a critical moment to become the Exhibition Manager to help deliver the exhibition that almost wasn't. Despite the controversy, SafARI's reputation continued as a result of 2008 and plans were made to find an incoming co-curator to work with Lisa Corsi for 2010. This person was Alex Maciver who later was replaced by Danielle Hairs (later Robson).

This was the beginning of the rotating co-curatorial model whereby an incoming co-curator would take over the reigns from the previous curator for the following SafARI. SafARI 2010 took place from 5-30 May, included 14 artists and 5 venues, one of which was the façade of FBI radio station in Alexandria (by Nils Crompton). The public program consisted of an artist talk and walking tour and a public forum including Techa Noble from the KingPins, Soda Jerk, Peter Fay and moderated by Edwina Marks.

2010 was another watershed moment for SafARI, demonstrating its rapid growth and appreciation. In 2010, SafARI was officially recognised as an Artist Run Initiative, with no fixed address. 2010 was the last SafARI co-curated by Lisa Corsi. In late 2010 Nina Stromqvist was appointed as co-curator for SafARI 2012. Danielle Robson (née Hairs) and Nina delivered the first SafARI with two emerging curators, independent of the founders. Their ambition was made clear and they went on to deliver a very specific vision that marked their interests and abilities as co-curators. For the first time SafARI's 'off-year' was activated by holding an artists workshop at Fraser Street studios. SafARI 2012 included 16 artists and took place in various locations, including two spaces in the Rocks as part of the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority's Pop-Up initiative, Alaska Projects in Kings Cross, and BUS Melbourne ARI Projects, a roving gallery on wheels. Danielle and Nina also finalised previous plans for SafARI to receive tax-deductible gift recipient status through the Australian Business Arts Fund (ABAF).

In late 2012, Christiane Keys Statham was appointed as the incoming curator to work with Nina towards SafARI 2014. However, in early 2013 Nina stepped aside from SafARI as a co-curator following a jet setting promotion. As difficult as that decision was for many, it has resulted in the appointment of Liz Nowell as co-curator for 2014.

SafARI 2016 is curated by Sophie Kitson and Louise Dibben, two emerging curators based in Sydney. Together they will present an exciting and engaging series of events between March 11-26, 2016.

## Past SafARI artists:

**2014:** Paul Williams and Christopher Dolman, Sam Songailo, Dale Harding, Kate Blackmore, Laura Moore, Alex Clapham and Penelope Benton, James Carey, ACAB Collective, Kelly Doley, Patrick Francis, Beth Dillon, Nikki Lam, Emma Hamilton, Linda Brescia, OK YEAH COOL GREAT, Leyla Stevens, Madison Bycroft, Benjamin Forster, Liam O'Brien, Gemma Messih and Ally Bisshop, Frances Barrett.  
Curated by Liz Nowell and Christiane Keys Statham.

**2012:** Chris Bennie, Tega Brain, Julian Day, Dara Gill, Julie Henderson, Julia Holden, Huw Lewis, Daniel McKewen, Rachel Park, Drew Pettifer, Kurt Sorenson, Adele Varcoe, Jodie Whalen, Elizabeth Willing,  
Curated by Nina Stromqvist and Danielle Robson.

**2010:** Linda Wilken, Chris Town, Rolande Souliere, Jason Sims, Tom Polo Caroline Phillips, Vincent and Vaughn O'Connor, Sue-Ching Lascelles, Leahlani Johnson, Marius Jastkowiak, Biljana Jancic, Karla Dickens, Nils Crompton, Will French.  
Curated by Lisa Corsi and Danielle Hairs, with Alex McGiver.

**2008:** Ron Adams, Liam Benson, Mark Brown, David Capra, Justin Cooper, Timothy Kendall Edser, Jessica Geron, Lucas Grogan, Chris Jones, Saskia Pndji Sakti, Luke Thurgate.  
Curated by Lisa Corsi and Margaret Farmer.

**2006:** Jessie Angwin, Penelope Cain, Daniel Chant, Tracey Clement, Simon Cooper, Shirley Diamond, Damian Dillon, Alex Gereg, Paul Grant, Chayni Henry, Shelley Krycer, Rik Lee, Natalie Masters, Xavier Modoux, Adam Norton, Sean O'Connell, Tiffany Parbs, Mark Rodda, Jasper Streit, Janet's Truck, Jake Walker, Rully Zakaria.  
Curated by Lisa Corsi and Margaret Farmer.

