CREATIVE RESPONDERS

In Conversation with Vic McEwan, May 2023
Podcast Transcript

Scotia: Hi, I'm Scotia Monkivitch,

Welcome to Creative Responders, a monthly interview series from the Creative Recovery Network where we hear from creative leaders, disaster management experts, artists and community members who are strengthening disaster planning through creativity.

Today, I'm speaking with Vic McEwan - the Artistic Director and co-founder of the Cad Factory, an artist-led organisation whose work and practice aims to enrich broader conversations about the role that the arts can play within our communities.

Vic is a leading practitioner in the field of socially engaged practice and I was delighted to have the opportunity to speak to him about the principles that guide the projects of the Cad Factory, hear the details about some of their impactful work in community preparedness, and also discuss the leadership opportunities for arts organisations to navigate and facilitate complex and nuanced discussions around community issues.

Please enjoy my conversation with Vic McEwan.

Scotia: Welcome to Creative Responders. Vic, so lovely to have you here. It's been a long time following your work. Where are you joining us from today?

Vic: Today I'm in Sydney, the land of the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation. It's a big month of travel for me. So this is where you find me today, Yeah.

Scotia: I don't know if you've got the chills sitting here. I'm on the Meanjin, Brisbane on Jagerra Turrbal Country I'm home today, which is very nice, but we've got those Arctic winds coming through.

Vic: Here as well, it's cold everywhere I think.

Scotia: You've been creating work for many years through your organisation, The Cad Factory, and your projects are founded on practice of what is called or you call socially engaged practice or socially engaged art work. How do you define socially engaged arts Vic? Because there's lots of different thinkings around what that is. What does the term mean to you and how does it inform your work as an idea or as a practice?

Vic: Yeah, I think one of the important things about socially engaged art practice to me is the fact that it is hard to define that people do have different ways that they go about this type of working. But for me, at the moment, the way I'm really deeply thinking about it is that socially engaged arts practice is a meeting of aesthetics with ethics. And so in doing that, I'm trying to not forget the fact that we're artists just at the service of the community, but trying to understand the real strength that comes from remembering that we're artists and remembering that we're working with humans and the ethics and the artmaking that

comes from that. So yeah, really, I think for me at the moment, socially engaged arts practice is a meeting of aesthetics and ethics.

Scotia: It's an interesting term ethics. So it's not necessarily something that we generally hear about in community conversations, and it's often a term that's used in a very kind of structural way like a ethics for research or something. Can you explain what you mean by that?

Vic: Well, I think what I mean is when I am working with the community and as I'm sure we'll navigate through in this conversation, that could be in really diverse ways depending on how and what the project might be. And then, you know, how I understand it is that every step of those projects is kind of a meeting with ethics as we're trying to navigate when to instigate projects, how to instigate projects, who are the authors of the projects, what are the right processes to do, you know, when do we delve into really tough, potentially traumatic topics, for example? And all of these are kind of present, you know, kind of in every sort of step of the way. And so a lot of these projects and so the idea of ethics is really something that we have to be agile about because we can't redefine it because we're working with people and these things emerge. And so therefore, you know, I kind of say that ethics is something that is always present and always to be considered in these sort of socially engaged processes.

Scotia: It's interesting. We did some work - Creating Well research. And one of the things that we came up with this is a research looking at the care for artists really, I suppose, that work in the frontline of communities.

And it was very clear to us that there was a dearth of understanding of what you've just explained. How do we have a kind of context of ethics and how do we understand it from an artistic perspective, but also as a duty of care for the communities that we're working with?

And also how do we care for artists who are working on that front line of community engagement, particularly within a trauma context. And I know you're currently running an incubator program around professional development and mentorship for artists who are all wanting to work in this socially engaged space and some of these things, I assume, are being addressed in that program. Can you talk a bit about the program and how it's going so far?

Vic: Yeah, sure. And maybe it's related to that. I'll say that you identifying this idea around care for artists you know, I think about it as, you know, how do we care for artists who are caring for our communities? And I think that it's a conversation that needs so much work at the moment. You know, given that we're called this idea of creative responding, for example, or arts and health or the many different forms that we need to have some more rigorous conversations about how we care for these artists that we're calling upon in these sort of trauma field times.

So one way that we're doing that as an organisation, that being the Cad Factory, which is a small artist organisation I run with my partner, Sarah McEwan, and our project officer Kimberly Beattie and other people that come in and out various projects. So we sort of identified over a number of years of running programs that we were coming across, artists that were working in some way that you might think of as being socially engaged. And what all of those artists were speaking about was that they sort of they're often not tied to institutions for example, they're often out there on their own defining their own path, which

I think is another way to define some aspect of social engagement itself, an artist defining a kind of new way of working. But these artists were all talking about the fact that they didn't have, for example, of a community of practice, like the visual arts might have, dance might as have. And so we thought, you know, given that this idea of socially engaged arts practices where we're so deeply embedded in our thinking as people and as artists in our professional and personal lives, that, you know, there's an opportunity for us to say, well, let's develop this community of practice. And so we went out and we sought funding from New South Wales, which we received, and now we're in our second year of funding this program, and that's via application. And really it's for at this point, it's for what we might call mid-career artists, people who have some experience as socially engaged artists. And that's purposeful at this point because what we're doing is trying to bring everybody together to receive mentorships, but also to come together to define some things and explore some things and to create some resources for other artists. So we really wanted to start with, you know, groups of artists that had questions in their practice, things that they were really needing to explore or answer or could take. So we could come together to sort of do that as a group. And so, yeah, we're in our second group of artists at the moment, as you know, fabulous, fascinating project and I think really valuable this time.

Scotia: Yeah, it's interesting actually. We talk about the arts as being a small family, but the possibility to sit and really delve into how we think and how we operate is pretty rare, actually. And you know, that community of practice is something that, you know, we we do rely so much on our peers, but there isn't necessarily a there's a care there, but not necessarily an interrogation and I think there's quite a difference.

Vic: Yeah. And I think that's what we saw in the residencies we have. So this usually takes the form of, you know, multi-day, maybe four day residencies that we have throughout the year. And then those that time is full of talking. It's full of conversation and structured conversation around particular issues. We find that even though everybody's from different art forms and everyone's working in a really different way of socially engaged practice, that a lot of these issues are really common. You know, how do we manage relationships, How do we manage time, how do we manage expectations of our partners? How do we deal with those ethics? How do we deal with trauma and how do we not hurt ourselves while doing all of that? And so I think it's really because in our organisation the Cad Factory, we spend a lot of time having these discussions amongst ourselves, discussing the reasons why we do this sort of work, how we do it. But what we discover is that not many people have those opportunities to do that. And really what we're trying to do is to nurture practice through bringing people together, to have these really valuable conversations through which all of us learn.

Scotia: Well, it creates a deep, deeper and richer sensibility of opportunity too, doesn't it, to share.

Vic: And it speaks to that diversity. But the common threads amongst all of these types of ways of working.

Scotia: Well, you've got quite a lot of prolific work through your Cad Factory Vic and there's so many projects I'd like to discuss, but I'm particularly interested in some of the work you're doing around community preparedness and using arts-based methods to work closely with communities with very complex topics or topics that are most vital for us as a human species really. I know that you're doing some preparedness work with the communities in Falls Creek, and can you tell me a little about that work?

Vic: Yeah, sure. So this is a fascinating project that started pre-COVID. And so it's had a lot of impacts because of COVID, it being across the border in Victoria from where we're situated in New South Wales. So this project really came about from an independent report that the Falls Creek Management or the entire Alpine's management committees commissioned into the potential effects of climate change on the ski seasons in the Victorian Alpine region. And so what came back from that independent report was the potential that within ten years. So this report came in five years ago. Now that the ski season could be reduced to only two weeks per year. And so that's really astonishing information. And so one of I think the amazing things that the Falls Creek Management Committee did was to say was to ask the question of themselves how we can assist our permanent community in navigating this sort of information. And so they decided that one of the ways to do that was potentially through the arts. And so they contacted us and we started having conversations. So, you know, initially was led by their their understanding that they could be some value through the arts initiative, which was fabulous, because what eventuated was a project that was really about saying, how do we take this information, this very practical, science based information. You know, it's a prediction based on science, but also it's such abstract information for people. What does it mean to have no snow? So what I've discovered in going back and forth, you know, I don't come from a history of a snow loving history of that ski or any of that sort of stuff. But even now, I've been to Falls Creek a lot of times now I've still never skiied. I just enjoy being in the snow, working with people. But, you know, so many of the permanent communities have relationships to that place through multiple generations. And so they've been they, you know, many of the ancestors of the founding people, of the of the ski infrastructure there, for example. And then to the side of that, there's all of these animals that only exist there. You know, they're already on the verge of extinction, and these are one of the last habitats remaining. So what happens to all of them if if we lose this, the current climate that sustains them. And a great example of that or an extension of that really is also the Bogong moth, which is sort of the place where the government travels to around that region. And it's a meeting place of three different Aboriginal groups that traditionally go there to hunt together over months. It's really a complex series of questions and what we discovered in this process is that, you know, the biggest issue I think that has arisen through this navigation has been the kind of the emotional barriers to understanding this information. And so when we began, you know, I started interviewing lots of older generation people in Falls Creek, for example, and meeting with them and talking with them and found, you know, a lot of resistance around climate change predictions. But then when we got down to those predictions, so often I would hear things like, well, it couldn't be true because there's always been snow here. And so, you know,.

Scotia: Making sense of the unsensible

Vic: Yeah, it's a hard thing to comprehend because this is the way it's always been. And what do you mean? And so but then on the surface, that comes across as some sort of climate denial. But when you dig deeper in it’s just about and then so this becomes the purpose of this project it's a slow navigation of how do we deal with that? And of course, people have emotional sort of barriers to to this potential change, particularly when their economic livelihood, of Falls Creek, is also relies on the climate there. And so, you know, the other thing is that all of those people in Falls Creek, are whole families, it's families that own the resorts. It's not large companies coming in from elsewhere for that for the majority of it. And so we're dealing with all these family and personal connections. So that's really the heart of what we're trying to navigate in that project. How do we try to prepare communities, how do we work system through all of those conversations to try to prepare them for understanding, for action and for response when and if required?

Scotia: Well, it's such the challenge of everyone, isn't it? How do we face, you know, unknown outcomes? We know they're coming. We just don't know really what it is that they will be or how they will be contextualised in the environment or in our lives. And I suppose that's the principle of preparedness being ready and flexible so that we are able to be. managing whatever comes to pass.

Vic: Yeah. And you know, if this preparedness, if we can be having some of those conversations about why this is happening and, you know, the differences in opinions now rather than happening then when we're actually what our focus needs to be on is response is caring for each other through that response. You know, it also just makes for a more efficient response. Also talking about efficiency here for people,.

Scotia: You know, there's something about the language I think that's interesting. You say, what is the why? Because, you know, in the disaster context, there is still kind of escalation of language around impacts of climate. And, you know, understandably, because they are big and they're getting bigger. But there is a sense that we need to de-escalate that so that we can see it as a curious challenge rather than something that shifts us into that flight fright and kind of immovable space. So to have those questions that soften the realities, but give us a context that they're manageable in some form.

Vic: Yeah, and I think that's a big part of the conversation we've been having in the Cad Factory in terms of this and other topics, you know, is around how do we take some of the edge of some of these lines of communication, some of the language we use so that we can do what we should be doing, which is sitting together and talking through sometimes differences of opinions or perspectives, but without that sort of tension or or violence. So, you know, without that sort of intensity

Scotia: Well and some sense that we are in in a collective conversation rather than on different ends of an opinion.

Vic: Yeah. And that these different perspectives can actually inform each other that can be of value to each other rather than conflict with each other. And I think that's you know, that's an underlying thread, I think of a lot of our projects that are even not necessarily about disaster as such, but are around different community traumas or things that we become engaged in is how do we navigate these differences of opinions, differences of responses without that sort of violence or aggression or that mean some…

Scotia: Some sense of humanity. It's interesting because it is and every time I explore projects like yours, because you understand that that space of culture and the space of aesthetic engagement is a place to where, you know, there's an opportunity to kind of neutralise those huge emotions that we have to unpack, not neutralise them, but give a sort of a a holding space that we can come together around. And you know, that the challenge, the key challenge of the future is how, how do we collaborate together in a way that still retains dignity and care when you know things are on the front line and we have to be dealing with pretty harsh realities.

Vic: Yeah, And I think, you know, one of the things that I think is important, the important aspects of the work that you do and the work that the head factory does and other organisations is there can still be a hostility around the presence of the arts in these in these places. You know, we're doing the work of providing the evidence and the processes and the things that can be shared, the case studies to talk about well, you know, here are

the examples, you know, so we don't have to, so we can work through the sort of hostility that can even exist about the arts being a method that we're using with communities. And so I think that's that's sort of where I feel we still sit in many ways. We're still navigating that stuff.

Scotia: Well, on another project you've been deeply involved in, which is around the Fish kill incidents in the Darling River and around Menindee in western New South Wales which is a catastrophic environment event, that this is another project that brings together these very complex environmental, cultural and community issues. And I'm really interested in how the Cad Factory has taken a real leadership role in this process. And so it's, as you were saying, that the arts can actually step into a place of bringing together various organisations and stakeholders around really vital issues. Can you talk about the origin of that project and some of the main aspects of the work that you're doing there because it's I believe it's ongoing isn't it the relationships that you have there...

Vic: It is yeah and I think It's, you know, it does speak to, as you're sort of alluding to there, the sort of agility that can come from that organisation. I think that if it wasn't for the agility, our ability to be agile, that none of this kind of would have eventuated.

So, you know, as listeners will remember in 2019, I think it was the first fish kill event that happened in Menindee which saw an estimated 1 million dead fish appear on the banks of the Barka river there or the Darling River around the Menindee Lakes. And so Menindee is about eight and a half hours away from Narrandera, where our organisation is based. But the link between these two places came in the Department of Primary Industries, which has a fisheries in Narrandera, and they were charged with the task of going to Menindee and jumping in the water and doing a type of fish rescue they've never done before, which was to collect large old Murray Cod, sick but still alive, and to get them out of the water and bring them back to Narrandera to heal and then to breed more than 60,000, 80,000 fish to then release back into the river. The day after that happened, we met with Matt McLellan, who was one of the scientists leading that that fish rescue event. And he was, you know, deeply traumatised by the experience. And as he related it to us that when he was there, that the banks were, you know, filled with Barkindji elders and community members who were supportive of Matt's presence and what he was doing, but they were weeping and they were weeping for the state of the river, they were weeping for, you know, what it means for culture to have the river in that condition. And so he was there with his team, and they were trying to manage these fish in the water, physically lifting them with their hands. And that was a big trauma for him. So at the same time, we had been having conversations with the Clontarf Academy in Narrandera which is a program run around the country for Indigenous boys, it's Aboriginal led, and we'd been talking to them about potentially working together. And so quite quickly this idea around acknowledging that these fish were being taken from Barkindji Country to Wiradgeri Country is a different country, it's a different cultural place. And so we started thinking about the making of space for that within the Department of Primary Industries. So that was acknowledged within the way this sort of industrialised response was happening through removal and breeding and then placing back. And so through Matt the Nerrandera Fisheries was really open to sort of opening up this process. And so we would go with the Clontarf boys every week to help breed these fish to do health checks on them. The Barkindji elders were in contact with us throughout that whole time and then when they were ready we we all travelled together up to Menindee to release, for the Clontarf boys to hand over these fish from the Wiradgeri community back to the Barkindji People and for them to then do a fish release together.

Vic: And it was a really kind of astonishing experience in that the elders, after we released the fish, would say that, you know, the fish now have to start their journey up the river so all the Clontarf boys jumped into the water to help swim with the fish, to help sort of provoke them to move.

And so then what we did was to create a show on the banks back in the in the lands on the Murrumbidgee that told this whole story. We invited the Barkindji elders down and hundreds of community came to sort of share in this story of what was really about the arts, science and ancient knowledge is all coming together around this unfolding event that was happening to understand how we explore different knowledge systems about how to manage something like this, how we deal with the emotional aspects, and how we deal with the cultural aspect of of what the fish kill meant for the community up in Barkindji country.

And so that was, you know, such a meaningful and moving experience for everybody involved. Lots of tears, lots of, you know, just sort of sharing the fact that even though the the subject matter of this show that we made on the river was traumatic, that actually what people were experiencing was care was the idea of care and people coming together to sort of care through them.

Scotia: It's interesting because, you know, often in these spaces. The idea of having to be emotional is squashed. You know, we don't have a capacity in science or in disaster management ever to address the fact that emotions are involved, that there is grief and grieving and that trauma is about grieving and that the systems don't necessarily have a place for us to be able to acknowledge that, let alone hold it, and to see that the value of the sharing of it creates a stronger bond and creates a different capacity for us to be able to think about the future in any kind of positive light. So again, the powerful value of kind of art's aesthetic container.

Vic: Yeah, I think, you know, that was some of the conversations we would have directly with Department of Primary Industries of how do we allow room for emotion within science? How do we allow room for the grieving, as you mentioned, Because we can't remove one aspect of it. We can't just remove the breeding process and say, well, this is how we're going to fix it, because we have a lot of things to heal and let's try and do them all at the same time and bring these things together.

Scotia: It's interesting that, you know, I try to follow these kind of science processes and often it's surprising, but actually not that you there's a lot of scientists that I know in this field that turn to poetry because they just can't find the ways to language their their process as a scientist, let alone to be able to explain it within a bigger world context. And so poetry is a way to be able to give some meaning, some way of articulating that emotional weight.

Vic: And I think that's what we've experienced with Matt McClellan. You know, the person from the fisheries who's led this response and you know, he won't mind me talking about this. You know, he was deeply traumatised by his experience and I would say my perception is there isn't much space for him in the workplace to work through that, to talk through that, to share that with colleagues. But through this project he was able to do that.

The first day that the first Clontarf boys and the Cad Factory went to the fisheries for the breeding, we, they've got a little theatre there and so we we had little presentations where we talked about and showed pictures of projects we've done. But Matt got up and talked

about the fish kill event, and during that process he we had to stop for about 5 minutes because he burst into tears he started crying. And so we allowed space for that to happen. And then we continued the presentation. But at the end of the day, one of the leaders of the Clontarf Academy came up and sort of gave Matt a hug and said to him, You know, I just want to thank you for showing allowing yourself to show that much emotion in front of these boys because you're teaching these boys that this is what we have to navigate in the world. And this sort of emotion is part of our journey. And that by holding it up front, by not hiding it, we're learning to deal with it. And so this became a real thing because then these boys started saying, we have to care for Matt because he's come back with some sort of something bad from his experience. So they did things like in secret, painted him this beautiful painting of the Murray Cod and gifted to him at the end of the project as a way to heal him, you know. So this care then started being enacted by these boys on on Matt because of what and fabulous sort of outcomes that emerge when you set up the right conditions, I think.

Scotia: So many rich relationships there Vic in that work and such care taken, what's the next step in this process for you and for that community.

Vic: What's happened since then is that a month ago there was another fish kill event. And so this one, of course, had slightly less media attention, but was actually worse than the first one. And so what we're in the process of doing at the moment is having a really quick response to to this, because as an organisation we immediately thought what we need to do something to care for this community back in Menindee. And so we spoke to the elders there, we spoke to community and to the fisheries and to the National Museum of Australia, who we've worked with a number of times. And really in the in the timeframe of just a couple of weeks, have raised money for it, developed a schedule and now we're working towards an outcome on the banks of the the Darling River, the Barka River, on June the second this year. And so again, I think it's that way that through an agile arts organisation we were able to gather everybody together really quickly, were able to maybe for the first time in this kind of way, say you need to pay for this to happen. Last time we went and raised arts money, but we don't have time this time. We need the financial investment to come through and everybody just agreed to that straight away. It was astonishing how quickly that it came, and I think that's because of the benefits that these partners have seen in the work we've done in the past. So they don't need to question it. They understand from their perspective the benefits are worth a financial investment.

Scotia: Yeah. So again, the deep investment in relationships that make such a process more efficient. So what is the work that what is what will be happening in June?

Vic: So on June the second way time, the reason for that date is because the fisheries have agreed to give us 10,000 silver perch to release back into the river. And that's the last date it can happen due to, it will be too cold after that. And so we're going to develop what we're just calling a show at the moment on the cold banks in June of the river.

Scotia: It will be freezing won't it?

Vic: But you know, we're hoping that Parks are coming on board and there'll be lots of fire pits and fire gathered. So we're going to make a warm environment in the cold and there'll be welcomes, there'll be work made with fire projections across the water. Performance, that's really again, the fisheries will be there, so Matt will be there taking us in a space with elders, with the community, with the fish and with the arts to say this is what we're doing now. We've come back together again and this is about providing care for the people here

who are the really the this place is the focus of this big national. This has national implications for us, the continuing fish kill events. And so, again, through the arts saying let's bring all of these aspects together to help heal, to help explore. And to share knowledge systems as well, I think.

Scotia: Well, such a beautiful example of leadership. And again, I think there's something about maybe coming from that context, an arts context, you kind of de-politicise a process which enables people or different partners to jump in and be part of something that otherwise could be quite challenging.

Vic: Yeah, I think so. And I think from our perspective, you know, I really enjoy when we're bringing very different viewpoints together because I think that's one of the things that I'm really interested in, is that is at the heart of so many of these difficult discussions is how do we make less volatile these different opinions and actually sit in conversation and explore and value our difference to actually get to something. And that's not just a lovely idea we're trying to enact that. We're trying to sit with these different positions to try to work through things, through the arts for the benefit of everybody that sits around that table.

Scotia: Mm hmm. So again, it's the key challenge of if we take it back to the kind of disaster context, it's a key challenge for us into the future that there are so many different players in this space. And one of the challenges currently is to be able to come around that table, as you say, with a sense that everyone has a voice. And again, how do we as artists in our own communities and artists in the world with a kind of context of wanting to see positive change, step up, to be able to open those safe places for those really complex conversations to be had? Like what, what do you see that would be useful to support more of this integration of the arts in these processes? Or how would it what do you see as key things that will help us as artists and creatives in our communities to be able to take on that leadership that so vital right now or always has been, was already more so…

Vic: It's certainly more present. You know, it's more present in our discussions, this idea of artists playing this role. I think it's like all things it has to be a multifaceted series of things that come together to assist us. So one of them is ideas such as the case incubator. This is what we're finding is happening through the case incubator is the artists go through this program together with us, leave, or they reflect at the end that they have a much greater sense of being able to articulate their purpose and the way they work and why they work. And I think that's a really important step. What I found many years ago, I think I made the observation that the resistance you sometimes encounter from non arts partners, whether that's health, primary industries, wherever it is. So we see that as just as resistance to the arts, but it's actually, you know, a resistance to just the fact they haven't had exposure to this as a concept. And the stronger we get in articulating ourselves, showing evidence, but also coming across as though we know what we're doing, even if we still have such an open ended process, it's emergent and relational that we're finding what we're doing really goes a long way to bringing those partners around. And so I think we develop that through things like the case incubator, things like the work that you're doing in terms of training and case studies and trying to develop this field because it's also legitimising it as an area of, it's a way that people work together, as a form of making that deserves a community of practice because there is one, rather than just this really spread out divergent thing that that happens because we're, you know, Sarah from the Cad Factory often likes to talk about how she thinks we're de-institutionalised in terms of our working methods even though we go in and work with institutions so much, but because we can enjoy that sort of agility that the Cad Factory has and we can respond fast, you know, that's much more difficult when you start working with institutions or government departments or that sort of

thing. So I think it's, you know, learning ways to value, to articulate the strengths that comes from that agility is a really important thing to be doing. So at the moment, I think they're the immediate things that we need to be doing is nurturing our community, learning how to have better and more confident language around what we're doing as we're stepping into these sort of.

Scotia: So kind of deepen the strategy of our own narrative, Isn't it? Like where, you know, we that's our skills are we need to come up the ante a bit like, what's the what's the better narrative that we're telling so that we can have some sense of place and authority in these bigger conversations?

Vic: Yeah, because I think if we don't believe it, how can we convince others to believe? And so I think that getting that greater sense of, you know, just understanding and believing in what we're doing is a really important step at the moment.

Scotia: Yes, indeed. So what about yourself in terms of your own sense as an artist, where do you see now? And are you doing your currently to kind of understand practice more specifically or create your own articulation in terms of the CAD factory where, you know, you've got a lot of projects on at the moment, but where do you think you're kind of heading? With it all?

Vic: Well, I think, you know, there's not much separation between me and the Ca Factory. Actually, I think we're all just sort of, you know, Yes. People and the organisation at the same time so you know my PHD which is due in 51 days, is, you know, on the first of around us to fix it.

Scotia: Oh the deadline my goodness.

Vic: It's yeah, but I made time for you Scotia today.

Scotia: Thank you Vic. I don't know anyone out there whose done their PHD I'm sure they all must be sweating on your behalf.

Vic: It's good. I'm actually. Well, even though I've had extreme existential crisis along the way, I'm really enjoying the way because I'm positioning it within health. So I'm enrolled in health as an artist. So I'm trying to maintain my position as an artist in this faculty of Medicine and Health. It's really it's is doing something really great for my practice and my process, which is, as I've been saying, learning to articulate and learning to articulate with confidence, because the research is there, the bodies of work are there, We see these. And also what's just as important, we feel the outcomes of these things out in our communities. And so I think I see that the Cad Factory is really interested in leadership around this area of socially engaged practice. As we hear this more and more. One of my fears and it's just a little fear, is that if institutions that as the idea of socially engaged practice takes a stronger hold within contemporary arts, that in as this sort of field is developed, it's really important that the voice of artists who've been making work in this way for a long time is that as we start trying to define or even build frameworks or whatever people might attempt to do. And so I think really what we're trying to do and it's the case incubator is a start of this and where our next step is developing the case incubator studio. So a place of research and community of practice building around socially engaged practice to help sort of lead and not just lead so we’re at the front of that, but to nurture that community of practice for socially engaged practice, and also contribute to how it's being defined, how it's being valued.

Scotia: And it's true like to remember the voice of our elders in a way, because, you know, there has been such a long heritage in Australia around this work and it's been called different things at different times. But there's a kind of been a thread of really deeply strengthened work that we, you know, I certainly have built my my practice on and I'm so deeply grateful for those elders.

Vic: Yeah. Yeah. Because it's, it's the knowledge that sort of got us to this point and know now it's being developed in new and emergent ways.

Scotia: Well well, thank you for your time Vic and sharing your work with us. As I said at the beginning, it's always been such a pleasure to kind of follow what you're doing and looking forward to engaging much more, particularly in that beautiful sense of nurturing our artists and the possibility of this work in the future, and particularly the strong need for leadership, which it's so great to hear you talking about. So where can people find you? If they'd like to know more about what you in the pantry and your projects on?

Vic: Well, there's a Cad Factory web page cad factory dot com dot au and we try to maintain quite a good archive of projects which we started because a lot of our work was in remote regional locations and we thought, well if we don't archive it, you know, the city based arts institutions won't know about this type of work otherwise, so this type of documentation became essential. But now it's it's great looking back at it because it's it's helping us to to understand our story and our journey and what we are as artists because we started as musicians and, you know, slowly these changes just happened. And so we're still on a really big journey in terms of our individual practice and how that informs the cab factory and how we work and how we want to work in the future. So the web page is sort of great for that. For that reason, I think, again, articulating the stories generally.

Scotia: So thanks so much. Well, good luck with that 52 days and look forward to reading.

Vic: 51 days

Scotia: 51 and counting!

Vic: I'll send you a copy

Scotia: Okay. All right. Cheers, Vic.

Vic: Thanks very much.

Scotia: Thanks for joining me for Creative Responders in Conversation.

We'll link to the Cad Factory in our show notes and you can also find their work alongside a range of others in our newly refreshed library of case studies on our website - you can find us at www dot creative recovery dot net dot au.

That's also where you can find our latest news, resources and all of our past podcasts and transcripts for each episode.

This podcast is produced by me and my Creative Recovery Network colleague, Jill Robson. Our sound engineer is Tiffany Dimmack and the Creative Responders theme is composed by Mikey Squire.

Thanks for listening.