

20 July 2020

## BREAKING GROUND RECIPIENT NAMED

Country Arts SA's highly successful Visual Arts Professional Development award *Breaking Ground* has been awarded to Port Augusta artist, Adnyamathanha (Flinders Ranges) and Luritja (Central Desert) woman, Juanella McKenzie.

As artist all her life, Juanella sold her first painting to a Dutch tourist at the Old Ghan Restaurant Hawker when she was 12. Juanella knew then that she would be a professional artist.

The Breaking Ground panel, (made up of industry experts from across the state: Kate Moskwa CEO SALA Festival, Fiona Sherwin Gallery Coordinator Light Square Gallery, Di Gordon Country Arts SA Cultural Programming Manager, Brad Darkson Independent artist, and Ursula Halpin Director Port Pirie Regional Art Gallery) commended Juanella's application for its authenticity and were impressed by the high artistic merit of her work to date.

Country Arts SA's Visual Arts Program Manager Lauren Mustillo said, *"Juanella was selected from a highly competitive field of applicants. The panel acknowledged Juanella's dedication to her practice over many years and saw this as a timely opportunity to take her practice to the next level."*

Juanella creates artworks in a range of media and is constantly exploring materials and ways to express and explore her culture, identity and sense of belonging. With the Breaking Ground award Juanella proposes to undertake research into her homelands in the Flinders Ranges, and to access historic cultural recordings of her Grandfather and senior law man, Malcolm McKenzie Senior.

*"My Elders teach me the stories of the Adnyamathanha, my Grandfather's people, as we paint," she said. "I am always learning from them. Now a mother of small children my artistic practice has grown to include teaching and mentoring them and other family members alongside my mother Regina McKenzie."*

*"This award will allow me to explore new media, new techniques in my art and my quest to explore my identity as an Aboriginal woman, living in a modern world, raising three strong and proud Aboriginal daughters. At the core of it is how I can practice culture continuation and delve deep into the culture of my homelands. I want to tell the dreaming stories of my people, my mob."*

Juanella will be mentored by independent curator Jessica Clark, a proud Palawa woman with English, Irish, Turkish, and French ancestry.

Since its launch in 2012, the *Breaking Ground* award has provided South Australian visual artists with the unique opportunity to develop their skills and broaden their professional experience. Juanella will receive **\$10,000** to develop a body of work for a solo exhibition to be held at Light Square Gallery during the 2021 SALA Festival. An additional **\$5,000** goes towards the mentorship opportunity.

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Country Arts SA Chief Executive Anthony Peluso said, *“Juanella McKenzie is an incredibly worthy recipient. Her commitment to becoming a professional artist, her dedication to her family and to country is commendable. I can’t wait to see her exhibition next year.”*

SALA Festival CEO Kate Moskwa said: *“Juanella has shown an incredible capacity for making artwork using different media and materials and her curiosity and drive to keep extending her practice is evident in her approach to art-making. She celebrates and strengthens her culture through her arts practice and it is wonderful to support Juanella in the next stage of her arts career.”*

Country Arts SA and SALA festival have had a strong collaboration since the launch of Breaking Ground in 2021. By presenting *Breaking Ground* during SALA Festival, South Australian regional artists have the opportunity to be part of a state-wide conversation and exhibit alongside some of South Australia’s best and most loved contemporary visual artists.