

Strategic Plan
2021 – 2025





Chair's Message

Welcome to Umbrella Studio Contemporary Arts' new strategic document (2021-2025).

Umbrella's staff and board completed a rigorous review of the gallery's operations and we are proud to offer this ambitious document as our "road map" to the future.

Umbrella has long held a position of cultural significance within the Townsville and North Queensland arts scene. Established more than 30 years ago, we began as a small gathering of like-minded artists who understood the value of the arts in community. Successive boards and management have stayed true to their vision, enabling Umbrella to maintain its grass roots appeal to a wide variety of people – artists, members, funding bodies, and visitors alike.

The social and cultural capital built up by Umbrella over those years has enabled us to lead the way through often challenging situations, none more so than the recent devastating flood event in our city. We have turned this challenge into an opportunity to strategically position ourselves closer to the Townsville CBD, which has long been a goal for us to support continued financial growth. As we work towards establishing ourselves in a new location, our team remains committed to Umbrella's core values.

I am delighted to invite you to investigate the work we have done on this document, and commend our small but mighty team on their dedication, professionalism, and sheer hard work in putting it together.

We are grateful for the extensive consultation and feedback from our strategy partner, Wendy Brooks and Partners, board members and our staff. We regularly receive valued feedback from our members and will continue to consult with them as we deliver on this plan. Umbrella's continued willingness to engage with key stakeholders drives innovation and opportunities at the highest level and I am sure we can all agree that our arts organisation has a very bright future.

Ann Roebuck

Chair



Shalom Christian College students
creating works in the studio for the Young
Indigenous Printmakers program, 2016

Mission

our reason for existing

To express and amplify
our distinctive and authentic
North Queensland voice.

Vision

our aspiration

To be an inclusive platform for
independent, experimental
contemporary arts practice
in North Queensland.



The Future

Umbrella Studio Contemporary Arts (Umbrella) has a rich history. Now in its 35th year, we are Australia's longest-running regional contemporary art centre. Our direction for the next four years is based on acknowledging and building on our community roots, our history as an experimental art space and a considered plan to ensure our current growth trajectory is sustainable.

Umbrella has a track record of proving to external stakeholders the relevance of artistic voices in our region. If there is any perception remaining in Australia that the diversity and quality of visual art coming out of the regions is sub-par to the cities, I challenge people to re-think this in view of the quality of work being produced in regions such as North Queensland.

After deep discussion and analysis, our board and staff have articulated what makes our organisation and our region relevant, and in my opinion special. Those words being that our reason for existence is to express and amplify our distinctive and authentic North Queensland voice.

We will always embrace collaboration, partnerships and artists from elsewhere in Australia and beyond. We do this because it strengthens us at the individual, organisational and community level. However this is underpinned by a strong foundational understanding that we already have a distinctive and authentic artistic voice coming out of North Queensland that is worth celebrating.

I am genuinely inspired to work every day with members, staff, board and community who consistently demonstrate progressive thinking in their own practices, and about the world in which we live today. We will continue to distinguish ourselves with innovative approaches to all that we do. Umbrella is an integral part of our region's thriving culture and creative economy. We are the only art gallery with a dedicated studio/makerspace in North Queensland. We attract around 17,000 visitors to our space every year, with an additional 400 people attending hands-on workshops. We support nearly 300 professional artist members, providing one of the only opportunities in the region for employment and artist income through art and merchandise sales. This is particularly crucial for our Indigenous artist members, and coupled with our commitment to the Australian Indigenous Art Code, we aspire to continue closing the gap in North Queensland. We also

provide essential services to the broader community such as school holiday programs, and workshops for all knowing that 'art is for everyone'.

I believe that part of North Queensland's future growth and prosperity lies in building a thriving creative industry that can buffer the economy through commodity or other-driven downturns. There is much research that supports this in a broadly Australian context. Umbrella has a key role to play in building our local economy and in assisting other employers with retaining employees who move here from elsewhere, through an enhanced lifestyle with exciting night time and weekend event offerings.

Over the last 10 years Umbrella has grown into a mature organisation with sophisticated systems, and a strong track record of administering grants. Our small team produces an impressive program of local and touring exhibitions, workshops and community engagement projects. There is national demand for more of our exhibitions and programs, wealthy private collectors and large institutions increasingly want to acquire works through us, and there is great potential for further local community engagement/arts tourism projects. If we want to respond to this demand we need to increase our organisational capacity.

With this Strategic Plan, the board is charting a path to make this possible, with a deliberate intention to capitalise on our current growth trajectory by building the financial resilience and strong governance required to make this happen. We will focus energy on diversifying our income streams, attracting philanthropic/private sector support, and continuing to build healthy reserves. We will also prioritise moving our beloved Umbrella to a new home that provides us with more organic foot traffic to support artists' sales, and a larger makerspace/studio area.

Umbrella is well positioned to deliver on the Strategic Plan. In some areas, we are entering "uncharted waters" as we envisage new directions and strategic intent, but in most areas we are planning to continue the great work that has gone before us. In every way, this is a plan for an optimistic organisation and we aim to achieve our goals to ensure that we build a profound legacy for our future.

Kate O'Hara

Director



Performance by Kellie O'Dempsy featuring
Dancenorth's Samantha Hines and Felix
Sampson for her exhibiton Becomin Becoming, 2018

Umbrella Studio Contemporary Arts is a place-based North Queensland arts organisation with an active and vibrant membership community. Our vision is to express and amplify our distinctive and authentic North Queensland voice.

Here in North Queensland, we have a rich and diverse arts culture that reflects our way of life. Being a long way from the centres of power gives us a licence to do things our own way. Our region is home to many artists, but very few artistic institutions. Umbrella Studio Contemporary Arts is here to acknowledge, uncover, showcase and grow our rich arts culture in North Queensland.

We have an exhibition and makerspace in Townsville that is open to the public and our growing membership community of more than 280 practitioners. We showcase the work of emerging and established regional artists in our gallery and through touring exhibitions, and we bring quality national and international art to North Queensland. We offer professional development, training and capacity building for regional artists, and create experiences for the local community to learn, be connected and experience contemporary art.

Through all these activities, we provide an inclusive platform that encourages independent, experimental contemporary arts practice. We support people from all walks of life to find and express their own artistic voice, that contributes to the rich and diverse North Queensland voice.

Our work makes contemporary arts accessible for the North Queensland community, and in doing so, contributes to the quality of life and social cohesion in our region. Umbrella Studio Contemporary Arts is an integral part of our region's thriving culture and creative economy. We proudly promote and share our distinctive and authentic regional voice with other communities around Australia and the world.

Intermediate outcomes

Expressing and amplifying our distinctive and authentic North Queensland voice

A thriving culture and creative economy in North Queensland

Accessible contemporary arts in North Queensland contribute to quality of life and social cohesion in our region

An inclusive platform for independent, experimental contemporary arts practice

Activities
Membership community of more than 280 practitioners; gallery and makerspace; professional development, training and capacity building for members; education and artistic experience for the local community.



Louisa Ennis-Thomas,
2017, Figure 1 (detail),
Mixed media,
1100 x 250 x 70mm

Values

Our commitment in all that we do

Environmental sustainability

We adapt our business practices to ensure that we have minimal impact on the natural environment.

Community

We nurture our members by listening to their needs and developing sincere and meaningful relationships.

Inclusivity

We tailor our services and approach to ensure accessibility for all parts of our community, with a focus on closing the gap for our Indigenous members and community.

People and Relationships

We build strong and enduring relationships with external organisations, prioritising collaboration to help us work smarter and achieve more together.

Integrity

We are honest and ethical facilitators of arts and cultural experiences for our community.



Lynnette Griffiths, Sue Ryan and
Marion Gaemers with their
exhibition Mesh, 2013

1

GIVING VOICE

Our artistic direction will focus on providing a platform for expressing and amplifying our distinctive and authentic contemporary North Queensland voice.

2

CREATIVE ECONOMY IN NORTH QUEENSLAND

We will contribute to a sustainable and vibrant arts industry in North Queensland.

5

INNOVATION

We will continue to lead by example in the arts sector, by experimenting and testing new ideas.

OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

4

ENHANCING ORGANISATIONAL STRENGTH

Our organisational strength enables us to be the leader for contemporary arts in North Queensland.

3

THRIVING CULTURE

We will be part of creating and sustaining a thriving culture, using art to create connection, inspiration, inclusion and expansion in our community.



Sandra Wright, 2014, Dragon of Consumerism, Found bags, thread, board, glue, approx. 65cm diameter



Tommy Pau with the artwork, Meb (Moon)
from his exhibiton, Ad Wer Story of the
Stars from the Eastern Torres Strait, 2015



1 GIVING VOICE

Our artistic direction will focus on providing a platform for expressing and amplifying our distinctive and authentic contemporary North Queensland voice.

North Queensland has a rich and distinctive cultural and artistic voice, which has a unique value in lives of people from the North. It offers a diverse and enriching perspective for people from other parts of Australia and the world.

Remaining true to our community roots, our artistic direction is deliberately geared towards showcasing the unique voices, stories and talent of North Queensland visual artists and our broader community. As a strategic priority, we will continue to provide opportunities to acknowledge, uncover, showcase and grow the rich Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island arts culture in North Queensland, as an important part of the distinctive North Queensland voice. Umbrella started its life as an Artist Run Initiative (ARI) 33 years ago, and it is our intention that it remain a space that invites experimentation and gives artists permission to explore new ideas. It has an important place in the arts ecology as the only contemporary art space in North Queensland.

An essential element of visual arts practice is continually being exposed to the practice of other artists, to inspire new ways of thinking and making. We aim to give our artists and community access to diverse artistic practice from outside of North Queensland, alongside our local artist exhibitions and workshops. This will also help grow the vibrancy of experiences available to our community and tourists. Our public programming is the link that connects the full circle – from our community to our artistic practice and back out to the community – ensuring all North Queenslanders have the opportunity to engage in a meaningful dialogue and deepen their understanding of contemporary art.

GOAL 1.1:

FIRST NATIONS

Prioritise opportunities to acknowledge, uncover, showcase and grow the rich Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island arts culture in North Queensland.

GOAL 1.2:

EXHIBITIONS AT UMBRELLA BY NORTH QUEENSLAND ARTISTS

Prioritise exhibiting local artists, by setting a minimum percentage of exhibition applications from North Queensland artists to display at Umbrella.

GOAL 1.3:

STIMULATE CREATIVITY AND EXPERIMENTATION

Display contemporary art by artists from outside North Queensland at Umbrella, to provide opportunities for North Queensland artists and community to engage with new ways of making art.

GOAL 1.4:

SHARING OUR VOICE

Showcase contemporary art from North Queensland through exhibitions and tours in other parts of Queensland, Australia and internationally.

GOAL 1.5:

PUBLIC PROGRAMMING

Provide member artists and the community with the opportunity to deepen their understanding of contemporary art, and the exhibitions on display, through high quality public activities and workshops.



Hannah Murray's pop-up shop at
Pop Up North Queensland 2017

2 CREATIVE ECONOMY IN NORTH QUEENSLAND

We will contribute to a sustainable and vibrant arts industry in North Queensland.

Umbrella Studio Contemporary Arts has a critical role to play in creating economic opportunity for artists and arts workers in our region, and inspiring others to do the same.

Creating a thriving arts industry in North Queensland requires commitment to supporting artists at all stages of their career – transitioning from school to further education, onwards to an emerging creative practice, refining further over time through exhibiting/work experiences and higher education (where relevant) into an established artist or arts worker.

Umbrella Studio Contemporary Arts is passionate about staying in touch with the needs of our local community and nurturing artists as they change over time. We do this by advocating for the needs of our arts community – the core gaps currently being the need for greater investment in arts education and entry-level career opportunities in the North; providing access to space and resources; and opportunities for work experience both at the exhibiting artist and arts worker levels. We also deliver a program of workshops aimed at keeping our established artists energised and making art.

Umbrella Studio Contemporary Arts is a powerful advocate for the value of artistic careers and their essential role in a creative and vibrant economy in North Queensland. We encourage government and other institutions to join us in creating meaningful and sustainable pathways for careers in the arts, and work collaboratively and creatively to meet the needs of our region.

GOAL 2.1:

STUDENTS AND SCHOOL LEAVERS

Provide high quality art programs which complement the school curriculum, along with programs that encourage school leavers to continue their arts practice and pursue careers within the North Queensland arts industry.

GOAL 2.2:

TRANSITIONS FOR TAFE AND TERTIARY EDUCATION LEAVERS

Provide access to resources, mentoring and support to encourage TAFE and tertiary education leavers to continue pursuing a career in the arts after graduation.

GOAL 2.3:

BOLD ADVOCATE, ACTIVIST AND COLLABORATOR

Advocate for greater investment in arts education in the North, and collaborate with other organisations to find new and creative ways to address this critical gap in the North Queensland arts ecology.

GOAL 2.4:

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR EMERGING AND ESTABLISHED ARTISTS

Deliver a range of inspiring activities that expand the practice and skills of emerging and established artists, and keep them energised and making art.

GOAL 2.5:

CAREER PATHWAYS FOR ARTS WORKERS

Provide entry-level career opportunities for arts workers in North Queensland to open doorways into a career in the arts, including but not limited to curating, exhibition display and installation, marketing and design and business management.



Alison McDonald, Working in studio, 2015
Photography by Aaron Ashley

3 THRIVING CULTURE

We will be part of creating and sustaining a thriving culture, using art to create connection, inspiration, inclusion and expansion in our community.

Art is a great connector, capable of uniting people across social, economic and cultural divides. We strive to make contemporary art accessible for all people in North Queensland, and to program exhibitions, activities and workshops that resonate with and connect people to their own experience and the life experience of others in our region.

We believe art is for everyone, and seek to bring in new audiences to enjoy and appreciate the contemporary arts experiences our region has to offer. We partner with others in developing innovative arts experiences, including cultural tourism and engaging storytelling, to break down the barriers to accessing and experiencing contemporary arts. This in turn creates new economic opportunities for artists in our region, especially for Indigenous artists.

Connection and inclusion are inextricably linked with relationships. We will prioritise connections with other arts organisations in our region, most notably through our partnership with the Regional Arts Services Network, and ensure Umbrella Studio Contemporary Arts has a web of national and international relationships that keep North Queensland artistically connected with the rest of the world.

GOAL 3.1

ACCESSIBILITY

Based on the principle that 'art is for everyone', develop exhibitions and public programs that strive to make contemporary art accessible for everyone in our community.

GOAL 3.2

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Program activities, exhibitions and workshops that strengthen the sense of inclusion and connection in our community, by including themes that resonate with the experience of diverse groups.

GOAL 3.3

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Promote a thriving culture by increasing economic opportunities for artists, especially for Indigenous artists.

GOAL 3.4

EXPANDING REACH

Attract and retain new and existing audiences through engaging storytelling and innovative visitor experiences, including public events and cultural tourism.

GOAL 3.5

CONNECTIONS ACROSS OUR REGION

Deepen our engagement and collaboration with other arts organisations in the region through our partnership with the Regional Arts Services Network (RASN) and participation in events such as the Northern Australian Festival of Arts.

GOAL 3.6

RELATIONSHIPS THAT KEEP NORTH QUEENSLAND CONNECTED TO THE WORLD

Through collaborative initiatives and projects centred on exchange, strengthen relationships and engage in dialogue with communities and organisations from elsewhere in Australia and around the world.



Jo Lankester, 2018, Cortex-Cambiums
Townsville II, Multi-colour plate intaglio &
relief, 50 X 75cm, Unique State 1/1

4 ENHANCING ORGANISATIONAL STRENGTH

Our organisational strength enables us to be the leader for contemporary arts in North Queensland.

We will leverage our 33 years of consistent and proven organisational strength to build a financially resilient and entrepreneurial organisation that is fit for the future. Since our establishment in 1986, we have been supported by our members, the government, private donors and corporations. We will strengthen and grow those relationships and invite new supporters to join us. We will diversify and grow our revenue through a mix of funding from Arts Queensland, the Commonwealth Government plus philanthropic and private partners.

We will continue to invest in our people to sustain our positive and engaged workplace and strengthen our governance and oversight of the organisation. A new home will enable Umbrella to grow and connect more broadly with our immediate neighbourhood and potential partnerships, contributing to the vibrant creative economy in Townsville and North Queensland.

GOAL 4.1:

A NEW LOCATION FOR UMBRELLA

Obtaining new premises that enable Umbrella to thrive by maximising financial efficiencies, increasing space and collaborative opportunities, and being more centrally located to increase visits to the gallery and shop.

GOAL 4.2:

FINANCIAL RESILIENCE

Achieving four year core organisational funding from Arts Queensland and Australia Council for the Arts, diversifying income streams by increasing philanthropic and private sector support, and continuing to build healthy reserves.

GOAL 4.3:

BE ENTREPRENEURIAL

Develop new commercial opportunities, including events and cultural tourism.

GOAL 4.4:

INVESTING IN OUR PEOPLE

Invest in our people to grow our culture of positivity, engagement, passion, expertise, and accountability, providing a great place to work and volunteer.

GOAL 4.5:

GOVERNANCE

Continue to strengthen our governance by ensuring a diverse mix of skills on the board and engaging in ongoing learning and review.



Rurik Henry, 2011, Fenris,
Steel, 170 x 90 x 240cm

5 INNOVATION

We will continue to lead by example in the arts sector, by experimenting and testing new ideas.

Umbrella Studio Contemporary Arts thrives by embedding innovative practices in the day-to-day of how we run our organisation. From our systems and business processes, to engaging visitor experiences and our use of digital technology, we are committed to trying new approaches and continuing to distinguish ourselves as an innovative contemporary arts organisation. We are committed to progressive work practices that support our staff and volunteers to do their best work efficiently and enjoyably. As we try and learn, we will share our learnings and new ideas with the industry.

We believe it is an integral function of contemporary art to break new artistic ground and challenge and evolve industry conventions and standards. Through collaboration and new projects, we will develop exhibitions and activities that continue to bring new life and inspiration to our members and community.

GOAL 5.1

INTERNAL BUSINESS SYSTEMS

Continue to be a sector leader by using effective, adaptive and efficient internal business systems that enable Umbrella to work smarter rather than harder and thereby increase our impact.

GOAL 5.2

VISITOR EXPERIENCES

Engage audiences in new and exciting ways, keeping the experience of the gallery, makerspace and public programs fresh and interesting.

GOAL 5.3

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Use digital technology to extend experiences within the gallery and online presence, and to enhance marketing and internal business practices.

GOAL 5.4

PROGRESSIVE WORK PRACTICES

Continue to investigate new and innovative ways of working and explore progressive work practices designed to support efficiency and morale.

GOAL 5.5

ARTISTIC DIRECTION

Develop and program projects that break new ground and are not overly constrained by history or industry conventions and standards, in order to respond to and excite our members and community.



Our Commitment

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognise the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities.

We pay respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures;
and to Elders past, present and future.

We support the Uluru Statement of the Heart, resolved by the majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders who attended the First Nations National Constitutional Convention convened by the bipartisan-appointed Referendum Council at the foot of Uluru in 2017.

We are a member of the Indigenous Art Code.

CONTACT US

Umbrella Studio Contemporary Arts
408 Flinders St, Townsville QLD 4810
ABN 93 273 044 606

(07) 4772 7109
office@umbrella.org.au
umbrella.org.au

Umbrella Studio acknowledges the financial support of: The Queensland Government, through Arts Queensland, and the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian, State and Territory Governments.

Front cover : Toby Cedar, Beizam Le Op Dhari, 2014, Mixed Media,
90cm x 100cm x 20cm. Photography by Michael Marzik. Photo courtesy of UMI Arts.

