

Breaking Ground

2027

The Country Arts SA Breaking Ground award sets out to elevate and accelerate the careers of South Australian regional visual artists by providing the support to push the boundaries of their practice into new and uncharted territory.



Susie Althorp, *planktos (detail)*, 2025, porcelain, dimensions variable. Photo: Sam Roberts.

The winner will receive **\$10,000** to develop a body of work for solo exhibition at Murray Bridge Regional Gallery during the 2027 SALA Festival.

In addition, Country Arts SA will provide a **\$5,000** mentorship opportunity for the successful applicant to work with a professional advisor of their choosing.

The aim of the award is to provide the winning artist a significant opportunity to further their career by encouraging artistic growth which is scaffolded by the financial and curatorial support necessary for them to be ambitious and 'break new ground'.

Proposals must be viable for a presentation outcome within the project budget and timeline.

Applicants must be able to demonstrate a rigorous commitment to their professional practice and articulate how the award will support them to try something new, extend themselves or reach the next stage of their career.

Applications close
Midnight, 13 May 2026

Country Arts SA will provide:

- \$10,000 to make a body of work for exhibition
- \$5,000 mentorship opportunity
- Curatorial support
- Exhibition production costs
- Artwork freight to and from your studio
- Venue hire with our presenting partner Murray Bridge Regional Gallery
- Production of an exhibition catalogue, inclusive of design, printing and a writer's fee
- High-quality photographs of your artwork
- Marketing and promotion of you and your exhibition

Eligibility

Eligible applicants:

- MUST be a resident of regional South Australia as currently defined under the South Australian Country Arts Trust Act (1992) (see our FAQs to find out how to check your regional status)
- Can be at any stage of their career
- Can be working in any medium

Please note the below people are ineligible:

- Students currently undertaking full time or part time tertiary studies in a related field
- Country Arts SA staff and Board members and their families/spouse

Application requirements

You must provide:

- Responses to the application questions
 - Provide a brief artist statement which outlines your current artistic practice (250 words or approximately 1 minute and 15 seconds)
 - Describe how you intend to use this award to push the boundaries of your practice and 'break new ground' (500 words or approximately 2 minutes and 30 seconds)
 - Why did you select your mentor and how do you propose to work with them? (250 words or approximately 1 minute and 15 seconds)
 - Please provide a timeline for your project which reflects a clear vision on how you will work towards the 2027 exhibition outcome (250 words or approximately 1 minute and 15 seconds)
- Proof of residency
- A 1-page curriculum vitae
- Up to 10 images of recent works of art (images should be clearly labelled, be no more than five years old and provided in jpeg or tiff format with a resolution of at least 300 dpi)
- Images must be accompanied by a 'works list' which clearly specifies the artist's name, artwork title, year of creation, medium, dimensions
- A support letter from your mentor confirming their participation
- A curriculum vitae from your mentor

Please note, additional images and support materials will not be accepted or considered as part of your application.

Applicants are required to discuss their application with the Country Arts SA Visual Arts Manager Lauren Mustillo before finalising their application.

Selection criteria

- Demonstrated capacity of the artist to create a body of work of high artistic merit suitable for exhibition in a major metropolitan gallery space
- Demonstrated commitment by the artist to further develop their professional practice
- An ambitious and clear artistic vision of the how the applicant will use this opportunity to extend themselves to 'break new ground'
- Suitability of mentor and clarity about how the applicant will structure their mentorship and how the exchange will benefit their professional development and help them achieve their goals

Assessment of applications

Applications for Breaking Ground are assessed against the selection criteria by a panel consisting of 3-5 visual arts professionals appointed by Country Arts SA (including industry colleagues, artists and representatives from regional SA).

Applications are assessed in a competitive environment and applicants must provide the required materials in order for the application to be eligible.

Applicants are required to discuss their application with the Country Arts SA Visual Arts Manager Lauren Mustillo before finalising their application.

The decision of the selection panel is final. Feedback can be provided to unsuccessful applicants upon request.

The award winner will be notified by Country Arts SA and announced as part of the 2026 SALA Festival awards. The winner will enter a contract with Country Arts SA. Written notification will be sent out to all unsuccessful applicants.

Applications close **midnight 13 May 2026**.

Country Arts SA welcomes and supports diversity and accessibility. We welcome applications in both written and video format. Please read our FAQs about video submissions and/or contact our Visual Arts Manager Lauren Mustillo for further details.



2025 Breaking Ground award winner Susie Althorp. Photo:Naomi Jellicoe.

Exhibition details

The exhibition will be held at Murray Bridge Regional Gallery during SALA Festival from August 7 to September 5, 2027.

The official opening is expected to take place within the first week of the exhibition.

Enquiries and contact

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Advice for making the most of your application

- Assume that the panel know nothing about your practice. State clearly your medium, subject matter, process etc.
- Be specific and concise when filling in the application
- Ask a family member or friend to read your application to ensure that you have addressed each of the selection criteria throughout the form
- You can answer questions in dot points if it is more appropriate
- Images must be of high quality. These are the only images of your work that the panel will consider so they need to show details, scale, and texture and be large enough to be clear to the panel. Please don't forget to provide a corresponding works list with the artwork title, medium, year, dimensions.
- Aim high! We encourage you to be ambitious. When selecting a mentor or professional advisor think about the skills and guidance that you currently need to further your practice. By financially supporting your mentor, you have an opportunity to access individuals outside of your immediate region and pursue a professional relationship that may otherwise not be possible without the support of the Breaking Ground award.
- This award is aimed at assisting an artist to do something new, and to build a sustainable, professional practice. Make it clear in the application how you aim to do this but keep in mind it is not expected that the applicant fundamentally change or reinvent the core of their practice. Your proposal should feel like a logical next step for you.

Frequently asked questions

What do I use the \$10,000 for?

The \$10,000 is intended to cover the artists' costs of making a significant body of work, including an artist fee to recognise the time invested in making the work, plus materials and any specialised equipment you may require. The funds must also cover costs of framing and finishing. The assessment panel must feel that the applicant's proposal is viable within with \$10,000 award money.

Country Arts SA covers the cost of photography, catalogue design and printing, venue hire, marketing and promotion, installation personnel and freight.

We do not require a budget in the application nor an acquittal of funds at the close of the exhibition. However, the funds are administered in stages over the duration of the 12-month development based on key milestones.

How do I know if I'm regional?

Country Arts SA assesses regionality as instructed on a federal level.

You can check whether you are considered regional by using the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) tool found here: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/health-workforce-locator/health-workforce-locator#hwc-map>

Select the 'Modified Monash Model 2019' tick box and search your address in the dropdown bar. Any residential address outside of 'MM1: Metropolitan area' is considered regional and is therefore eligible for the Breaking Ground award.

What if I don't know what I want to make?

The Breaking Ground award encourages artists to be ambitious, dream big, and extend themselves to 'break new ground' in their practice. We understand that experimentation is a huge part of the creative process, and that your ideas will evolve over the 12-month period. Therefore, it is not necessary (or recommended) that your application include a proposal for a finalised exhibition.

However, you should have a clear vision for how you want to break new ground in your creative practice and the direction you want to take it (with some indication of general concept and medium). For example, you may propose to; undertake significant research into a particular area of interest; begin working in a new material; introduce a new technique into your repertoire; or experiment with the way you present and display work in a gallery as a conceptual component.

The proposal should feel like a natural and ambitious progression for your work to-date. The panel should have a strong sense of where your practice is at now and where you want to take it.

Through the support of Country Arts SA and the guidance of your mentor, the Breaking Ground award offers a safe and supportive environment to push your artistic practice in a new direction.

How do I select a mentor?

When choosing a mentor we encourage you to be ambitious and purposeful.

Your mentor should have a strong arts practice with the right experience, expertise, and approach to help you achieve the goals laid out in your application. Your mentor will likely be further along in their career than you and should be able to provide constructive feedback, encouragement, and insightful guidance.

Your mentor is there to help you and their contribution should be tailored specifically to you and your needs. Think about what you want your mentorship to look like – the structure, contact hours, in-person contact and frequency of catch ups (virtual or otherwise). Be prepared to discuss this with potential mentors to ensure that they understand your needs and what you're trying to achieve through the Breaking Ground award. Be ready to discuss different options with them to find one that works for both of you.

Please remember the Country Arts SA provides \$5,000 towards your mentorship to support the mentors' artist fee and travel costs. You can discuss the ideal structure and time commitment with your mentor in the context of the budget based on their hourly rate and availability. E.g. factoring in accommodation, travel costs and meal expenses if travel is required for in-person meetings plus amount and frequency of contact hours available based on their hourly rate.

By financially supporting a mentorship we hope that you will have an opportunity to access individuals outside of your immediate region and that the funds can facilitate an exchange otherwise not possible without the support of the Breaking Ground award.

Please note that the mentorship should be a one-on-one bespoke opportunity. Breaking Ground doesn't cover group workshops or courses.

Our Visual Arts Manager is available to discuss possible mentors with you and can help find the right fit based on your goals.

Can I read about past winners?

You can see the list of past winners on our website and read about their exhibitions by viewing each respective exhibition catalogue.

How do I select my support images?

You can supply up to 10 high quality images of your work. These are the only images that the judging panel will look at when assessing your application, so make them count!

Your images are the visual evidence and context for the written component of your application. They should give a good overview of your practice, as well as connect to the goals outlined in your written application. For example, if your proposal centres on your painting practice, then it is useful for the panel to see majority images relating to your painting practice, rather than many images of past sculptural work.

Your image files should be properly labelled and correlate to a works list, which can be provided as a separate word document or PDF. A works list provides a list of the details that describe the material properties and contextual information for the images you have provided (artwork title, year of creation, medium, size). A works list should not contain paragraph-style descriptions of your artwork that discuss the themes or artistic intention.

e.g. You may attach an image file labelled:
1.M.Olley.Shells_and_Eve_postcard

Artwork details in works list document: 1. Margaret Olley, Shells and Eve postcard, 1975, oil on board, 52 x 82 cm.

In the above example the file name and numbering system make it obvious that this image file and image caption belong together.

When viewing artworks on a screen, it can be difficult to determine the physical elements of an artwork such as the scale, medium and materials. For example, it may be very difficult to differentiate a hyper realistic

graphite drawing from a black and white photograph. The information in the works list helps the selection panel understand what they're looking at.

The images provided should be of your artworks only (or an exhibition installation view if relevant). You may wish to include a close-up detail of an artwork if it is relevant and helps highlight an aspect of your artwork/s that you'd like to draw attention to. Please avoid using software that transposes images of your artwork into a domestic setting, as this information is not relevant. The scale of an artwork can be comprehended by providing full artwork details in the works list.

What is a proof of residency?

A proof of residency is a piece of documentation that provides evidence that you live in the location that you have indicated on your application. This is important as the Breaking Ground award is only available to those living in regional South Australia.

Your proof of residency must include your name and your residential address. A driver's license, council rate document, or utility bill are all examples of acceptable proof of residency documents.

How do I submit a video application responding to the questions?

A video application is a recording of you speaking to the camera directly answering the application questions. Video files should not exceed the length noted in the application materials. Responses will be assessed based on the content of the answer, and not the quality of the video. A video shot on a phone or similar is suitable and you do not need a professional filming set-up, as long as the recording is audible.

Terms and conditions

- Country Arts SA will confirm the award with a written agreement and conditions with the successful artist.
- All negotiations relating to exhibition installation and logistics will be through Country Arts SA in the first instance.
- Country Arts SA Visual Arts Manager will contact the artist to confirm mentorship/professional advisor arrangements. The mentor or professional advisor activity must occur prior to the exhibition in 2027.
- Country Arts SA will provide freight and insurance for the works of art for delivery to the gallery and return to the artist's studio.
- The artist will need to provide a Tax Invoice and ABN or Statement by Supplier in order for payment of the award to be made. Payment will be made in instalments based on key project milestones.
- Country Arts SA will coordinate and produce a catalogue to accompany the exhibition including design, editing, printing, and a writers fee for a writer of the artists' choosing.
- Country Arts SA will pay for the costs of high-resolution images to be taken of the majority of the works by a photographer of Country Arts SA's choosing.
- The selected artist shall allow their work to be reproduced for the purposes of the exhibition catalogue, publicity and promotional materials (electronic and hardcopy) by Country Arts SA, SALA Festival and Murray Bridge Regional Gallery.
- The artist appoints Country Arts SA as the sole agent for works of art included in the exhibition for the duration of the exhibition in 2027.
- The recipient will consult with Country Arts SA prior to committing to exhibiting their art works at any other metropolitan Adelaide gallery prior to or for the duration of their exhibition.
- The artist is to provide a list of works with prices one month prior to the exhibition. There will be a 33% commission + 10% GST on commission deducted from the sale price.
- Works of art available for sale must not be sold prior to the official opening of the exhibition and sold works must remain on display for the duration of the exhibition.
- All works of art must be created during the 12 months leading up to the exhibition.
- The artist will report quarterly to the Country Arts SA Visual Arts Manager. This reporting can take the form of a written or verbal report concerning the progress of the exhibition and mentorship/professional advisor relationship.
- Country Arts SA will work with the artist to deliver an exhibition of a high professional standard.
- Country Arts SA and the exhibiting gallery reserve the right to cancel/postpone the exhibition.
- Country Arts SA reserves the right to have first option of developing a regional tour from the exhibition outcome.
- All outcomes are subject to Covid-19 limitations and restrictions per SA Health, Country Arts SA and our partners.