

**PARRAMATTA  
ARTISTS'  
STUDIOS**

# **STUDIO CONVERSATIONS**

**STUDIO CONVERSATIONS IS A  
PODCAST SERIES BY PAS PRESENTING  
CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN ARTISTS  
ABOUT STUDIO PRACTICE**

# Nadia Odlum and Rebecca Gallo

**STUDIO CONVERSATIONS IS BACK WITH EPISODE 11: A CONVERSATION BETWEEN PAS RYDALMERE ARTIST NADIA ODLUM AND PAS ALUMNI REBECCA GALLO. THIS CONVERSATION WANDERS THROUGH THE ARTISTS' NEIGHBOURHOODS, IN AND OUT OF THEIR WALKING PRACTICES, AND REFLECTS ON THEIR EXPERIENCES WORKING FROM HOME. A RECOMMENDED LISTEN WHILE ON YOUR NEXT NEIGHBOURHOOD WALK...**

This conversation between Nadia Odlum and Rebecca Gallo took place in August 2021.

Parramatta Artists' Studios acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we operate, the Darug Peoples, and pay respects to their Elders past and present.

# Full Transcript

**Nadia Odlum:** I guess if we're doing a podcast, a thing that people will be listening to, I thought it might be nice to say where we are. So, I'm sitting at home in my room, wearing a red, stripey shirt. I'm on Gadigal country. And where I am in Stanmore, there's a park that is across the road from me that I really like. There are some good, windy streets. It's very neighbourhoody. Yes, that's my situation at the moment. It's a two-minute walk to a train station, which I also like.

**Rebecca Gallo:** Nice. So, I am at home. I'm sitting in the main room of my house, at my desk, which is where I spend a lot of my time at the moment. It's quite nice because there's a window right in front of me, and I can see this overgrown jasmine on the other side of the fence, in my neighbour's garden.

I'm in Burrumatta, on Darug land, and I live not too far from Parramatta River, just in one of the quiet streets just up north of the river. And, yes, it's a short walk into where Parramatta Artists' Studios used to be and not too far from the Rydalmere Studios as well. I actually was just in the Parramatta CBD before we got on this call. Rode in to drop something at the post office.

**NO:** What's it like at the moment?

**RG:** It's pretty quiet. It's still just very ripped up, hard to navigate.

**NO:** I always feel like it's the Mines of Moria. A few months ago, or last year, particularly in lockdown, I felt like they just went turbo on all the construction that they were wanting to get done. I felt like I was away from the city for a month and then came back in and everything was ripped up. It was crazy.

**RG:** Yes. I definitely feel like I spend... When I go into town



Top: Rebecca Gallo, 2020. Photo by Jacquie Manning.

Above: Nadia Odlum, 2020. Photo by Jacquie Manning.

now, I have to really plan where I'm going to go to avoid the latest closures and roadblocks. I have to skirt around... I try and stay as far from Church Street as I can, because you just can't really get through there. But I still go into Bourke Street Bakery at the Square. And a lot of the smaller lunch, takeaway food places have closed for now during lockdown. But still Manaeesh and...quite a few food places from the arcades and stuff have moved to George Street. And I think the momo place and Western Sydney Kebabs, they're now just over, across the road on George Street. So that's good. They're not all disappearing completely. But, yes, they're not really open at the moment just because, I guess, with... I think there is some construction that's started again now, but, yeah, there's just not that many people around. It is a bit ghostly.

**NO:** Must be hard for little businesses like that. When I started at the Rydalmere Studios at the beginning of this year, one of the first things I did was, there's a little Lebanese bakery that's in the tiny, little complex of shops and got a zaatar pizza. That was one of my main things I loved to get when I was at PAS. And, yes, I only really eat that when I'm out in those sorts of areas, and so it feels it's a sort of flavour that is very geographically located for me. And just makes me think of the studios.

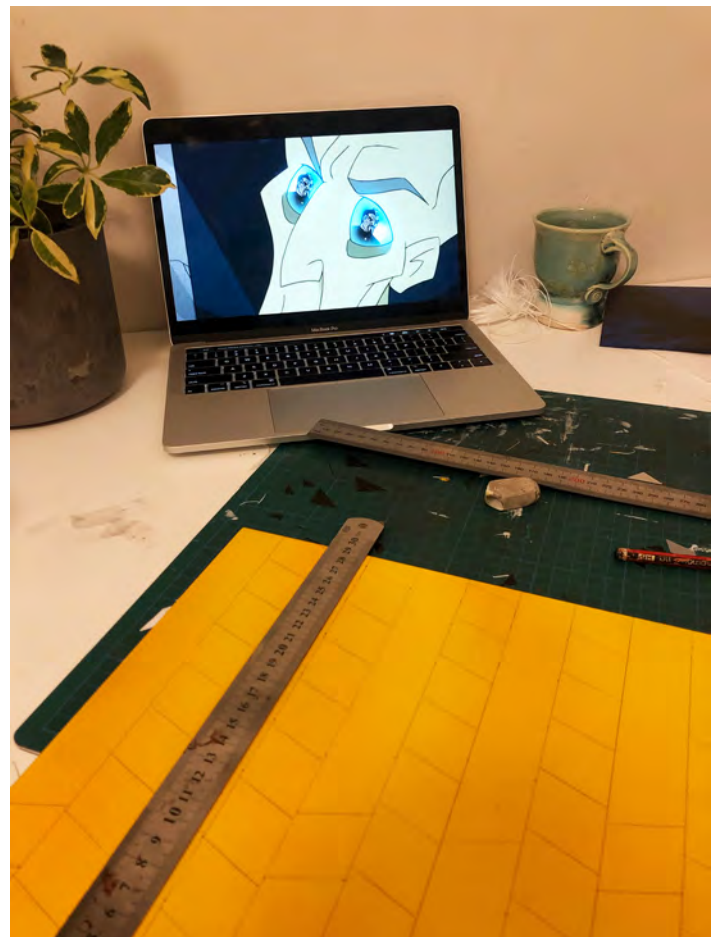
**RG:** So, I was thinking about you when I was in the city today because I do tend to see the bollards and the fences and the, I guess, impediments to getting around and I get quite frustrated. And I know from previous conversations we've had that you have a bit of a different experience of them. And I wanted to ask you a bit about that.

**NO:** Well, my experience of them, I think, I find, particularly, bollards and temporary barriers that are movable and can be moved by a person, like a witch's hat, or something like that, I find them really interesting because they are this stand-in for communication that is happening between me and another human. So rather than there being a human standing there and directing me, being like, don't go here, wherever they've put this object there, and it's this stand-in communication for... And, also, it's an extended choreographic instruction or like an extended touch between our bodies, because a person, someone who I don't know, even if I came across them in the street, I wouldn't know that it was that person. But they have come and they've put a barrier in the street, and then I move my human body in accordance with that instruction or that barrier. And so, it's this, because of the semiotics of these objects, I can understand them. It's, yes, this communication and...

**RG:** It's like a visual, like a three-dimensional score.

**NO:** Well, yeah. And then that idea of reading the whole city as a choreographic score is really interesting to me, and it starts to... Yes, although they're very inanimate objects, I start to imbue them with humanness and a certain playfulness.

**RG:** And I love that twist. To me, it's a twist. Because I experience those objects and those structures as quite hostile and quite forbidding. They're telling me what not to do. Whereas I feel like you're experiencing it as like, no,



Above: Nadia Odlum, My desk in my bedroom, which has become my 'studio' during lockdown. I usually work late at night, watching cartoons or docos.



you're giving me an instruction that I can play with and respond to rather than, "don't go there".

**NO:** And I think that that's interesting because it's elements of authority there, right? So, there's people who have the authority to move these objects around, or not. And then there's people who are expected to obey it. So, when you're the average pedestrian on the street, by this barrier being put there, you're put in this position where you're expected to obey that, and you're not meant to be the one who moves it.

And so, there's this power dynamic there, which is why I think it also can feel very authoritarian. And it is. it's a stand-in for authority, even in the sorts of colour-coding that is used on these things, the really high-contrast, hazard, line things that has this immediate warning, danger thing to our visual systems.

But, for me, I think then because I am interested also in histories of people playing with public space and playing with authority in public space, and playing with strange actions, like artists who would do weird things in public space to disrupt those unspoken norms.

**RG:** Do you have any example that comes to mind?

**NO:** Things like happened in the 60s in Paris and that sort of thing, around the Situationist International and psychogeography as ways of reading the city, looking at what those forces were within the city that are moving you around and making you perceive the city in a certain way, and then trying to disrupt them or play with them.

...

Mostly, my interests, actually, it's not so much about

Above: Nadia Odlum, This is an example of a work of mine that references street barriers, shown at Station Gallery Sydney in 2020. Temporary frictions, 2020, two-way mirrored glass, steel, dimensions variable.



the, yeah, the power structures. It's about the individual people. So, my interest actually comes more back to the fact that a person who is like a worker, some person in high-vis came and put that there, and then I respond to it. And that thing of the extended relationship between me and that other individual who is also participating in this society, system, or whatever, that's very funny to me and kind of cute.

**RG:** And what that makes me think of is then you as an artist making objects and existing in this in-between space between, I guess, philosopher and tradesperson. And the sort of work that you do does lend itself to being in a workshop and then wearing high-vis to install and work on public artworks. And so, essentially, yes, there is this kind of parallel, responding to these things.

**NO:** And I love it, when I put on high-vis to install something, sometimes I seriously do need to do, but it feels like a costume to me. And then I like to think that all the people out there wearing it doing their jobs that are all in some sort of costume. Making art is often a really absurd thing to do, anyway. But then it makes you realise that everything's a bit absurd when you look at what it is.

**RG:** And these things are costumes. I'm pretty sure that in French a suit is called a costume, like a suit that you would wear to an office. And I think that that's also definitely a costume maybe, these things that signify your place in society.

**NO:** Yeah, and the way that people read you, the whole thing of you can put on high-vis and then walk into a place, and people will assume that you have some sort of authority or that you're meant to be there. Walk in

Above: Nadia Odlum, 'Quiet streets': The location of the chalk drawings is usually near the home of someone I miss or care about. I place them as a playful little surprise for their daily walk.

with a lanyard.

**RG:** I remember that point at which all, essentially, anyone working in logistics had to start wearing high-vis. And it was this point maybe ten or 12 years ago, I think, where that became industry standard across a lot of industries, where previously you might wear black, or you might just wear workwear or whatever. Suddenly you had to wear high-vis. And it became this new signifier of working-class. We don't have blue-collar anymore, we have high-vis.

**NO:** Even this thing of high-vis, for me, even that wording high-vis, high-visibility, it's interesting for me, in terms of our perception and how we perceive the world when we're moving around. And this comes back again to the hazard barriers and things which have these really high-contrast patterning on it. And it's because it will stand out to our visual system. Because humans, although we rely a lot on our visual sense, we actually don't see that well.

And we only take in a very small amount of the visual data that is possibly available to us when we're moving through an environment. And so, these sorts of objects are patterned the way that they are so that they'll stand out to us. And that's interesting to me as well, because it's reflective of the type of being that we are. If we were dogs or something, then maybe they'd be scent-based, these warning things that were placed around. And so, they're very specific to human phenomenological experience as well.

**RG:** I guess they're very sight-centric. I guess we've also got things like tactile tiles for low-vision or vision-impaired folk or low-vision folks. And, yes, it's something that you picked up on there is another thing that I wanted to talk to you about, which is abstraction, broadly, abstraction and how, I guess... I was just thinking this morning about how your works, particularly your two-dimensional work, if you can even call it that, but your wall work, it's abstract. It's colour, it's line. But it's very directly referencing things in the real world, which, to me, confounds my understanding of abstract, which is basically not having a direct visual reference in reality.

**NO:** See, when I think of the word Abstract, it also... When I think of it in terms of perception and perceptual experience of the world, all perception is abstract. Because you can't take in all the perceptual data that is available to you in one moment, your only... Perception is attention focus, so you're only perceiving what you choose to put your attention towards or what your senses are capable of gaining. And so, it's already an abstraction of the world.

And so that, for me, when I'm then just keying in on certain details within the world and then pulling them out and creating the visual language in an artwork from them, that's, I guess, how I approach abstraction in that way.

**RG:** Yeah. And I guess it is that sort of zoning in and really selecting these small parts and then reworking them. Yeah, I guess that is definitely a kind of abstraction.



Above: Nadia Odlum, 'Quiet streets': I mostly do these works late at night. It has been interesting observing the type of activity on the streets at different times of day.

**NO:** Well, what this conversation makes me think of is, so two people could walk down a street on the same day, at the same time, and depending on what they've turned their attention towards, they could have a really different experience of that street. And sometimes that's going to be influenced by every perceptual experience that that being has had leading up until that moment.

So, when I, this makes me think of your work in... Because of the collecting that you do of the ephemera and detritus along the way. Sometimes when I'm walking along, I'll see a little piece of metal or something. I'll be like, that's a really Bec little piece of something, like something that would end up in one of your mobiles.

But also, I would be curious to hear, do you notice those things all the time? I know that when you're specifically making one of those mobiles, they'll often be from certain specific walks, or in areas, so you must gain a kind of hyper-focus then on looking for those things. Are there other, then, focuses of that environment that fall away when you're hyper-focusing on looking for that stuff, or what's that process like?

**RG:** It has been an interesting thing. Since I've started collecting objects on walks, which I've been doing for, I don't know, five or six years now pretty consistently, I think because a lot of focus is required to pick up on those small things, I think my focus is heightened, in general. So, I think I probably do miss things because I'm looking down a lot.

But then I think it's also quite easy to walk around and not really be seeing anything. So, I think the fact that I am focusing means that I'm taking in a lot more than I might ordinarily if I was just walking without purpose. Do you know what I mean? So, yes, my focus is quite specific, but it means that I am really looking at things, and so when I do look around, I'm really taking it in quite intently and quite intensely.

**NO:** It's a thing of what you're focusing on is also walking rather than often we're quite goal-focused when we're walking or travelling, that it's about where you're trying to get to, rather than the exercise being the walk itself.

**RG:** Yeah, totally. And this practice started when I got a dog, because it was the first time...

**NO:** Shout out to Polly.

**RG:** Yeah, Polly. Because it was the first time that I just walked for the sake of walking, for the sake of exercising my very energetic dog, yes, but also, walking without trying to get anywhere or without trying to achieve anything other than the walk itself. And that was quite revelatory for me that, yeah, it's become a really valuable practice for me just in my life, in general.

Well, to be honest, this is very unglamorous. I should probably come up with a better origin story, but you'll love this. Essentially, I started collecting stuff off... I always collected things that I found on the street, but usually much bigger things, old furniture and tools and whatever



Above: Nadia Odlum, The fireplace in my house where I place works to get a fresh view of them. This yellow work is untitled at the moment, but is around 60 x 30 cm and is acrylic and vinyl on aluminium.





people were throwing out. But I started really picking up these smaller fragments when... Because I would walk with Polly, and she had this sixth sense for picking up chicken bones or other dogs' poo, or stuff that she wanted to put in her mouth, and so I had to become really adept at scanning the pavement and seeing things before she did and either getting them out of the way or getting her out of the way. And so it was...

**NO:** And then you just started noticing things.

**RG:** Yes, exactly, because I was so focused on the ground, be like, "oh, that's cool, oh"... And this whole world of ground crap, these fragments that you really... It's very easy to overlook them, and I always really had. They suddenly became really obvious to me. I don't know, I think just instinctively I would start picking them up and putting them in my pocket, and I'd get home and be like, "ah, what have I...?"

**NO:** "What have I got here?"

**RG:** Yeah, and it was just always so deeply satisfying to reach into my pocket and then pull out this little collection of objects, like little bits of metal, maybe a marble, maybe...

**NO:** And how much change, do you polish them up or process them before, when you've got them, before putting them into the mobiles?

**RG:** I don't, really. Yeah, if something is really dirty, I might give it a clean, if it's just gross. But usually, I do like the roughness of things. Increasingly, though, I am trying to just focus on serving the work as much as anything. So,

Above: Nadia Odlum, *Around about and in between*, 2020, powder coated steel, two-way mirrored glass, gem coat floor paint, approx 200 x 3000 x 6700 cm. Commission for Macquarie Square development by John Holland, through Urban Art Projects. Image courtesy Document Photography



yes, the objects themselves are important, but I don't want to... To me, it's making a work that is balanced and does something visually and creates a feeling. That's more important than being absolutely true to... Well, then, I guess I'm increasingly willing to make changes and adjustments to objects to serve the overall work.

**NO:** Yeah, they don't have to be so strictly true. What I really like about those works is the bringing of objects into relationship with each other. So, it's like having this large, jagged piece of metal next to this swirly little piece of plastic. You notice them, their qualities in contrast with each other.

But then because the work is not static, it's constantly shifting around, and so then other objects come into the locus of influence of other things, and you see visual relationships between other ones. And then it's fleeting, and it passes, and it moves away, and then a new relationship springs up. And so that's one of my favourite things about watching those works and experiencing them in the flesh, is, yes, seeing that changing relationship all the time.

**RG:** Yeah, I really enjoy that about them, and that's really a lovely description. I think that these really simple little objects, they are the sort of thing that I feel like the more you look at, the more you might start to think about them more in a more abstract way, to think about...

On the one hand, I might look at this little squiggle of wire and try and think what it was, but then it also becomes this really beautiful abstract form. But then I sort of move between thinking about the visual properties and what it was. And I suppose they become these little meditations.

Above: Spending time with works at home: a new sculpture by Rebecca on the plan drawers; also pictured behind (L-R) is artwork by Rebecca Gallo, Monica Rudhar and Chris Horder. Image by Rebecca Gallo.

It's weird. I've never really lived with my own work much. But I've started actually, just during this lockdown, really, to bring works that are more or less finished, to bring them into the house.

**NO:** I'm having the same thing. And because I can't go to the studio at the moment, so I'm working at home, and I've got this fireplace out in the living room where it's the best spot for when I've made something in my room, then I'll go put it out on the fireplace just to get it out in a different context and see. And because I live with housemates, and they'll be like, "oh, the new work."

**RG:** Yeah.

**NO:** Sometimes I'll bring it back in, and I think that it needs a little changing, and I'll change it. They're like, "oh, it's changed." And it's quite funny to have this, yeah, one, be living with the work, but also having this public, yeah, studio process in some ways. And my housemates aren't artists, they're lawyers, and so it's like they're, I think, they're very intrigued.

**RG:** Yeah, I found it really interesting. Living with the work is quite cool because I am noticing... Or, I notice quite quickly if a particular thing needs to change, like, okay, these objects aren't working together, or this thread is too long, or whatever. But, also, just really enjoying spending a lot of time looking at certain objects and being like, yes, that's... They sort of move in and out of meaning different things.

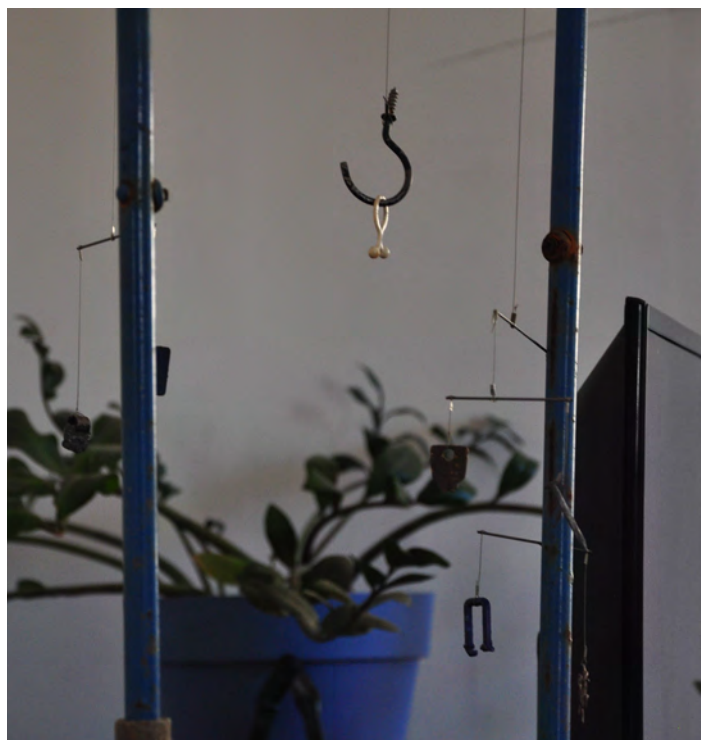
I've got this mobile at the moment which is just next to my TV, and it's all objects that I found around Palms in Rockdale. It's where Connie has her studio. It's like a...

**NO:** Yeah, I know. I sublet Kate Scardifield's studio. I was there for the Great Flood of 2020, when the studios flooded. It was awful.

**RG:** Such a nightmare. Yeah, so I've got this mobile which there are these little objects that I'm enjoying, but I'm also really enjoying the association with a specific place where I've spent time working with Connie and hanging out. And I guess I wonder, obviously that's very specific to me, that's a very personal interpretation or experience that's feeding that. And, yeah, I wonder, I guess, just thinking about making things that then end up with other people, whether it's important that other people understand that context or whether...

**NO:** But they can never understand the full context. I don't know. Because it's like you could describe that it's at Palms and Rockdale and that sort of thing to someone, but they're not going to have... You, when you see those objects, it's like you have those walks in your body and that place in your body, and you will remember it in a way that... They might look at it, if you told them it's from Rockdale, and if they have some sort of relationship with Rockdale, or association with it, then they might bring that association to it. But it's still not, yeah, going to be the same.

**RG:** And I think there's nothing really to be gained from overexplaining it. Nobody wants to shut... I hate it when



Above: Spending time with works at home: detail of new sculpture by Rebecca Gallo. Image by Rebecca Gallo.

artists are too prescriptive about what their work means, and it completely shuts it down, where it's like, okay, so it's this, and that's it. And I can't bring any other experiences, or I can't make meaning out of it myself. So, I don't want to do that.

**NO:** And, yes, gosh, that's a funny thing, because it's like I work in art education quite a bit, have done tours of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, and things like that. And it's a difficult thing of trying to teach people how to interpret art or bring their, I guess, give them some sort of avenue into even making a statement of what they think about the work and that permission to. And you never want to say to people, be like, "oh, it means whatever you want it to mean," because that's actually a really... It's a bit gaslighty, because it's... Well, that's not true actually, but it's like there probably is something that the artist meant by it or...

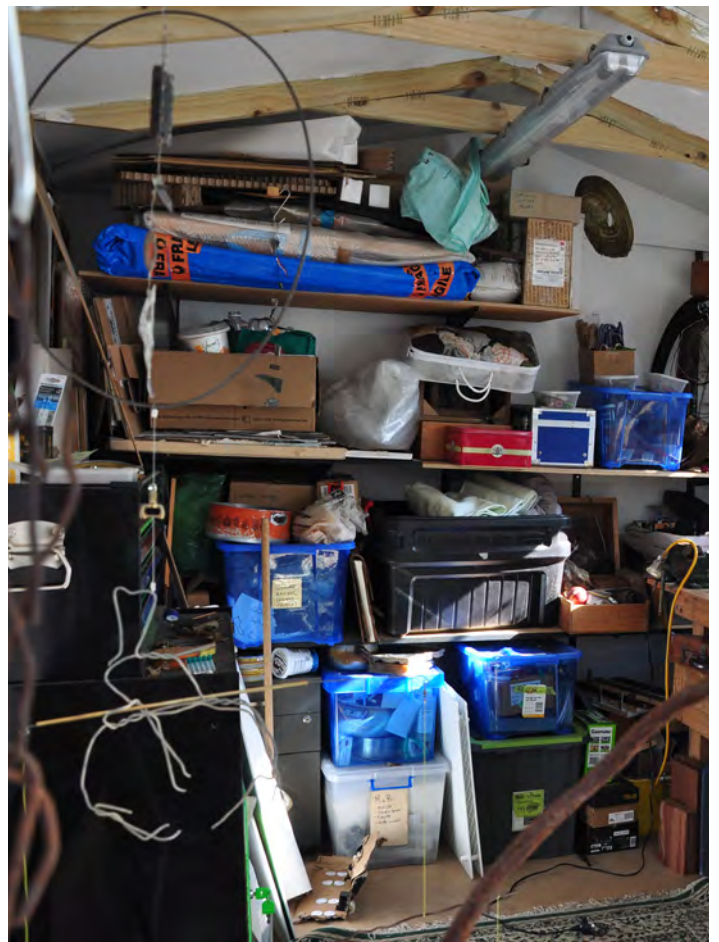
**RG:** Or, if not, it's not very interesting art.

**NO:** Yeah, exactly. Or even at least there's a period or a time period within this work sits and therefore it has this cultural resonance, blah, blah, blah. But at the same time, it's like people can still have their own individual experience of a work, and that is really valid. And so, sitting on that, especially if I'm working with teenagers and trying to... Basically, as an educator, it's really important to me that the person I'm giving the tour of the gallery with, they would be able to come back to the gallery and not have me there and have a good experience. If they leave feeling like, "oh, next time I come back, I hope I have that person again to tell me," then I've failed. Because one is, yes, I want to make them feel that, yes, that they have some sort of access to knowing how to interpret or receive or experience the works, and also to validate that their own experiences are their own experiences.

**RG:** Yes, and it's interesting. It's something that we take a bit for granted when looking at art. Yeah, I think it's something that I enjoy so much about spending time with art and having worked with and in and making art and around for it so long is that, kind of like showing up to an artwork and being like, right, and having a conversation with it in my head and really bouncing back and forth with it. And, yes, that's a really lovely thing to be, I guess, equipping particularly young people with the skills to do.

**NO:** So part of what, I learnt a really good technique when I was working at the Transit Museum in New York, there was a technique that they taught us, which was actually when we were doing training for working with kids who are on the spectrum within our classes, but I think it's just a really good technique, in general, which was called Declarative Language. And so instead of asking questions of the learners, you make statements that lead them to then come up with their own statements or interpretations.

So, an example would be when I'm looking... Well, we were teaching about trains and things like that, so when I'd be on the old New York subway train, I'd be like, oh, I'm... So words like, "I wonder," or "I'm noticing," are things that you're making statements about things. So



Above: Rebecca Gallo's current at-home work space.

it's like, "I'm noticing that the material of the seats here is different to the ones on the subway today." And then you just leave silence. And then people start to chime in with, you know.... And or like, "I wonder what it's made of," rather than being like, "what is it made of?" It's something that helps, rather than...

Only some learners are really keyed into that thing of if you ask a question, they'll answer it. It really only suits some people. And so leaving these more open frameworks helps a wider variety of learners. And what it also does, and this is where I'm coming back to you, and so when you're talking about when you're in front of an artwork, it speaks out loud, that thinking process that's going on in your brain, so I try to do that when teaching artworks.

I will basically talk out loud what my brain is doing when I'm seeing that. I'll be like, you know what, "I'm noticing this thing in that" blah, blah, blah, and "I'm curious about this area over here. I'm reading the label now, and I notice that it says such-and-such."

And just say it out loud because then it shows that you don't just know those things. You have some sort of process that is helping you to interpret it. It's really useful for learners to hear that just spoken out loud, because then they know that you don't just have the answers in your head. You have a process for which you find things out.

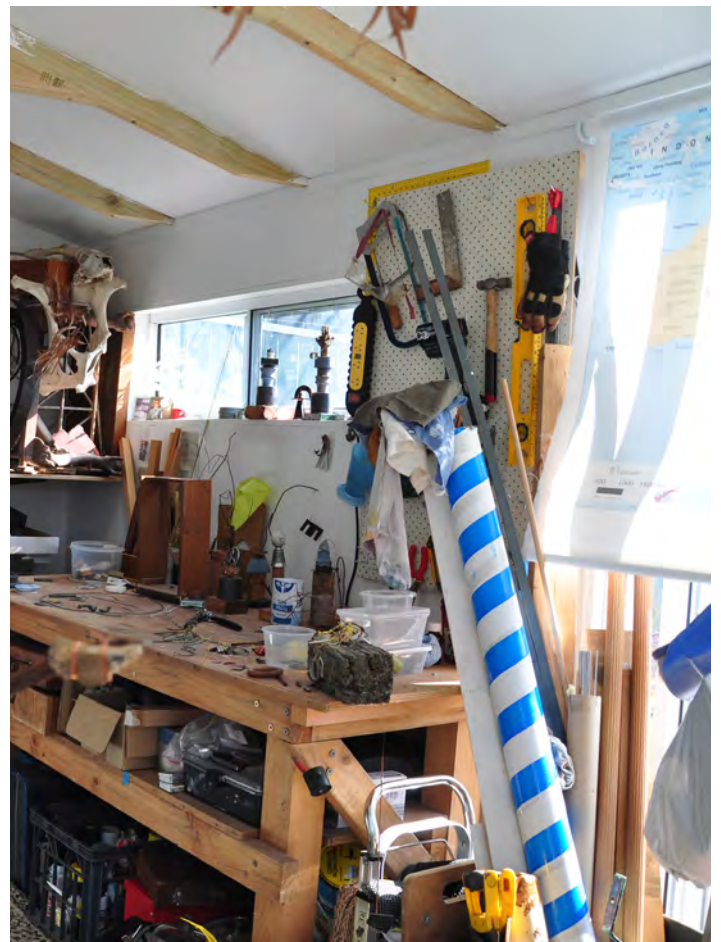
**RG:** I love that. I'm going to try and remember that and use it. Yes, every now and then, I'm at an art gallery with a friend who isn't an artist or isn't in the art world, and they're like, "so explain this to me, tell me about this work." And I get it, but I get a bit frustrated with it. So next time, I'll try that approach. That's really nice.

**NO:** Yeah... I love coming sometimes with learners, and I'll be like, "okay, so I actually don't know anything about this work." Because, obviously, when I prep for the tour, I will pick a few different ones, but sometimes they will say, "oh, what about that one?" And I'll own it, that I'll be like, "you know what, I actually don't know anything about this one, but let's go up to it together and let's see what we can figure out."

And so sometimes I'll just make a bunch of observations about it, and then I'll encourage them to make observations, and then we'll just leave it. And that's all we... We don't have a meaning of the work, or anything, but we will just have made a series of observations about what we see. And that can just, yeah, give them, I guess, the next time that they come back to an artwork, the power to do that again.

**RG:** That's awesome.

**NO:** So the thing about, coming back to being at the studios, which is obviously where we've known each other from, there's something that's interesting about going into other artists' studios and having them talk about their process or their work. I don't know, are there any...?



Above: Rebecca Gallo's current at-home work space.



**RG:** My experience is not so much with artists, going into an artist's studio and having them talk about their work. I guess we do that more for formal tours. But I think what we do amongst ourselves, which I really love, is we would casually end up in someone's studio, and then the person whose studio it is might be like, "oh, I'm working on this thing, what do you think?" Or maybe just spontaneously people will be like, "oh, this is interesting, I really like what's happening here."

And I think we, particularly the year that we were at the PAS CBD studios together, there was a really lovely crew who were generally really good at having those quite upfront, critical conversations and...

**NO:** And very informal too, though, because...

**RG:** Oh, yes.

**NO:** I've never found it very easy when people try to set up formal crit sessions or things like that. It's, for me, it happens most naturally when, yeah, like you said, someone's wandered in with a cup of tea, and then you're like, "hey, what do you think of this?"

**RG:** And I think we're so lucky to have that, but I do think that we've been talking about Pari about maybe setting up a slightly formal online version of that for people who don't have access to that immediate peer network.

**NO:** Because after art school, it's like it really drops away for a lot of people, and it's really hard.

**RG:** Yeah, totally.

...

Above: Rebecca Gallo's current at-home work space.

**NO:** Where did you grow up, then?

**RG:** I grew up in the northern suburbs.

**NO:** Oh, that's right. I couldn't remember. But you've lived in Parramatta for... How long have you lived in the place you're in now?

**RG:** I've been in Parramatta for about five years. I was in the Inner West for ten years before that. Yes, Andy and I were just talking last night. This house we've been in for like four years is the longest, as adults, that either of us have been anywhere.

**NO:** Yeah, and you've got a nice art collection and things like that too. It's like, yes, I can see bits on the wall.

**RG:** Yeah, so behind me, on my wall, is this hanging of a bunch of different artworks which have been gathered over time. Yeah, it's nice to be able to be in a place for a while and do things like put up the art and make it look nice.

**NO:** I know. This is my first place where I've moved into for ages where I've been at the beginning of a lease, and so, yes, it was very much hung all the art collection. I started collecting a bit, last year was the first year, because I'd been travelling for a while, and then I was doing the housesitting thing for two years, and so really had very minimal possessions for a while. And then 2020 forced me to stop for a while and settle down. And so, then I started collecting art.

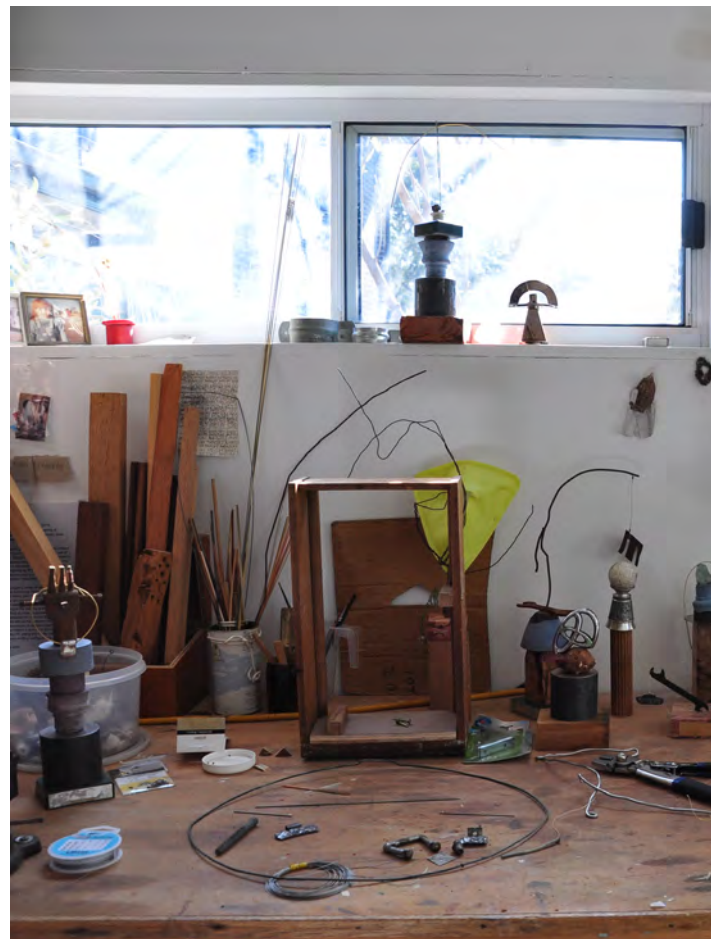
It was nice, though, because it meant the foundation of my collection is now a lot of things that people made in 2020, or things like, say, I had a friend in the States who lost her job and so bought a work of hers then, and things like that. So, it's got this real... Or I have a print from Jacquie Manning that I bought at the beginning of 2020. It was a bushfire fundraiser thing back when it was like, oh, the bushfire's the biggest event of 2020, we thought. So, yeah, it's nice. And I really am enjoying living with those things, in particular.

**RG:** Yeah, that's awesome. I guess when, A, you're going to be in one place for a while, and, B, have to spend a lot of time at home, it is really lovely to have beautiful things that remind you of people and stories and that you can keep making up your own stories about.

**NO:** I've also had the experience of finding really old work, things that were in storage up at my parents' place. And it's really funny seeing really, really old work of your own, where you have a really... I feel like I have a very removed relationship from it. Sometimes I can't even... It feels very strange to imagine that my hands made that.

**RG:** Yes, there's stuff that I don't even remember making. It's like, this is vaguely familiar. And I know that I probably made it, but like, what?

**NO:** And it's so funny, because at one point, your body was so intimately entwined with that thing, and then it can just feel so separate.



Above: Rebecca Gallo's current at-home work space.

**RG:** Yeah. And there's some stuff that I look at that I'm like, ah, imagine if I'd gone down that path, that's pretty cool, or like, slash, glad I didn't.

**NO:** Is there anything that you can think of specifically?

**RG:** At the beginning of art school, I was really into printmaking and did some really nice etchings. And, yes, every now and then, I think about that. And I also did quite a bit of drawing, and I really enjoy drawing. I'm not great at it. But every now and then I pull out a bit of paper and give it a go. How about you? Do you have any notable early phases?

**NO:** Oh, I used to paint portraits. And my nana's always still being like, "oh, you are so good at portraits," and still a little bit distressed that I just paint triangles now.

**RG:** She's like, "you've regressed."

**NO:** Yeah, exactly. Or it's so funny when, I like seeing different stages I've gone through in my work, I guess five years ago or so, it was all stripes, and I was just going through this full stripe thing. And everyone was like, oh, Nadia - the stripe girl. But it's so funny because now I don't do stripes as much anymore, and now my friends are always making fun of me about triangles. They're just like, "oh, you're in your room cutting triangles again." I don't know. And it's like chevron shapes at the moment.

**RG:** That's where it's at.

**NO:** I'm on that at the moment.

**RG:** I love how artists just get so hyper-focused on these super-niche things. And it feels really normal, but to people on the outside, it's so weird. And it's nice to be reminded of that, to be reminded of how absurd what we do is.

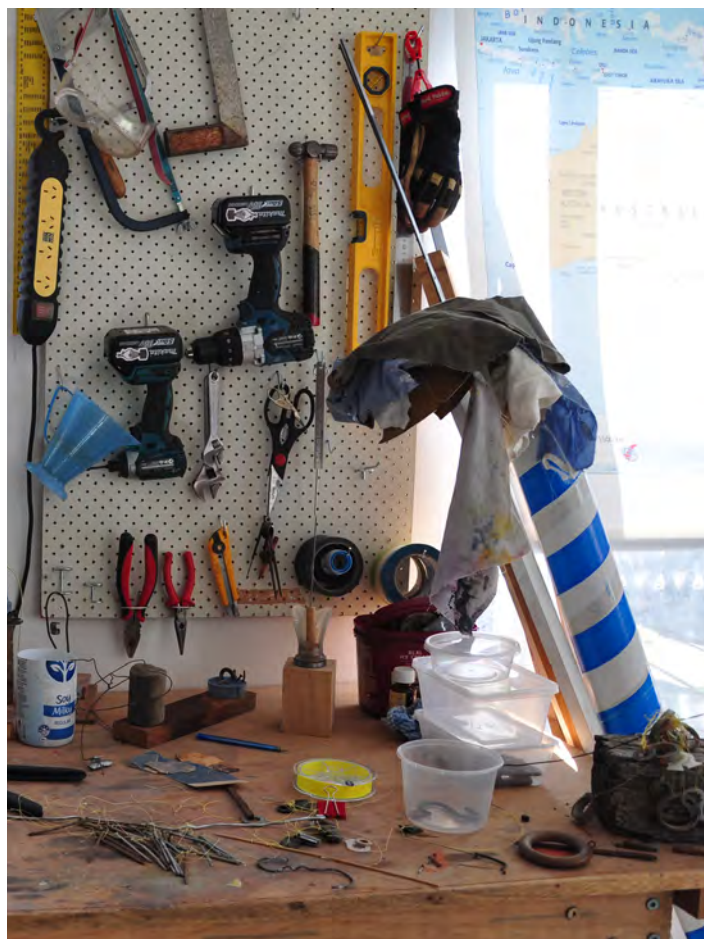
**NO:** It is. There's just like, "oh, still painting stripes, are you?" Okay, cool. You're still picking up bits of rubbish?

**RG:** Oh, fully. And I spend a lot of time trying to explain to people that, look, it's really lovely that you want to give me the rusty stuff in your garage, but it's not the point. I need to walk and find it, and that's part of the process. And people are just a bit perplexed at that point sometimes. Just like, "alright, if you want to make it hard for yourself." And I'm like...

**NO:** I think, though, a lot of people would be gaining a new understanding of what walking means at the moment. Because I know we said we weren't going to talk too much about lockdown, but the fact is we are fully in lockdown at the moment... But, anyway, we'll always be like, oh, I'm going on my silly little walk now for my silly little mental health.

Anyway, but you see people out and about who are walking for the sake of walking now a lot more than you would've, a lot of people who wouldn't have done that at all. And now it's something that's in their daily practice.

**RG:** Yes, it is interesting. And it's also something that I



Above: Rebecca Gallo's current at-home work space.





think will diminish pretty much as soon as lockdown ends. I remember seeing that last time and then being like, wow, I wonder if this will really change things for people, but... And I guess it's nice to have a time when that was the thing.

Something I've noticed as well is people walking in groups, like in family groups, which no one has... Everyone's off doing their own thing, or no one has time for that, usually. And it's quite cute. And a lot of families on bikes. And, I guess, around this area as well there are a lot of heterotypical families, so you see a lot of them just getting around with their kids, and it's quite nice. Nice to see that. Oh, I feel so old. God, I'm like, "you know, and the kids, they're not on their computers, and they're not playing their computer games."

**NO:** Oh. Yeah, they're getting the fresh air, right.

**RG:** "That's how it should be."

**NO:** But I came across a really cute thing today when I was walking, and some kids with some chalk had made a full sidewalk game. And it had a 'Start here', and then they'd drawn circles and were like 'hop here', and then they would run. And they'd drawn... It was all the way up the footpath.

**RG:** Hey, have you been doing guerrilla public art on the roads?

**NO:** Yeah, I have. Yeah, I have. Well, because I can't go to my studio at the moment - I haven't posted many pictures of them that you'd probably start to see them. But I'll post more pictures of them coming up.

Above: Rebecca Gallo's current at-home work space.

But I can't go to the studio at the moment, so I'm going bonkers. And so, I've turned the street into the studio at the moment. But I've got this- this is from when I did the Snakes and Ladders artwork in Olympic Park with Digby Webster. And to draw the big snakes-and-ladders board, I made myself this just wooden contraption that I could attach two pieces of chalk to, sort of an A-frame thing, attached two pieces of chalk. And I just used my jigsaw to "vvvv" out some handles. It's just wood that I'd found in the skip.

Anyway, so I've got this thing that basically draws two parallel lines that are about a metre apart, and so I've been using it to draw all these twisty, curly lines on the street.

**RG:** Great.

**NO:** Yeah, it's fun. And my thing at the moment is I usually start at a point where the footpath, it's where the footpath goes down into the street...

**RG:** Yeah, the curb cut.

**NO:** That's the word, curb cut. So, I'll start at a curb cut and finish at a curb cut. But then it'll take some sort of meandering, weird, loopy path on the street. And one, it's just a fun, silly thing that I'm doing, mostly in the dead of the night. And I'm like, "ha, ha, ha," people come out and there's like chalk labyrinths everywhere. So, partly, it's just to keep myself sane. But, also, it's because I'm really interested in this thing of the middle of the street becoming this new public domain for the pedestrian because there's not as many cars at the moment and so, yes, people are walking in the streets much more. And then, also, the thing of this idea of purposeless walking, or walking is the purpose. And so, creating these silly meandering paths, for me, it's a playful way of referencing that more meandering slow pace that we're at, at the moment.

**RG:** Yeah, nice. That's really lovely.

**NO:** Hopefully, it just adds a bit of silliness to someone's day too, where they're like, "oh, I'm going to walk in this little spiral now."

**RG:** It's great. Let's hope they don't hit you with a curfew, Nightshift.

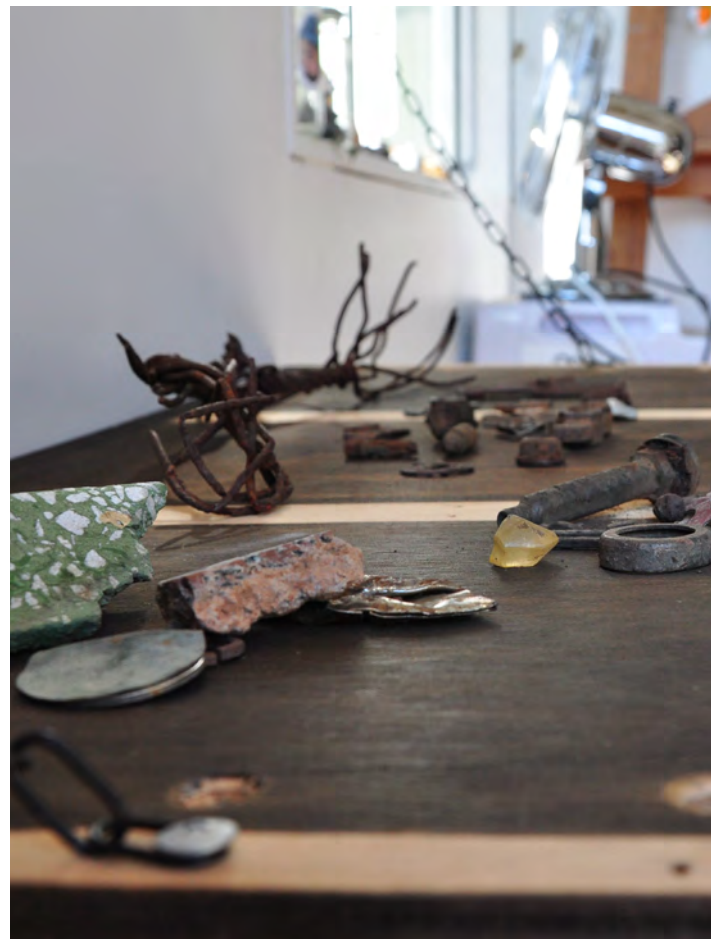
**NO:** Yes, this is full Nightshift behaviour. Yes, hopefully not. I'll be sad if that happens.

**RG:** I think you'll be alright.

**NO:** Do you have a curfew?

**RG:** Yes, I've got a 9PM to 5AM curfew. It's like, "oh, okay, I literally haven't been out of my house between those hours for a real long time. So it's cool."

**NO:** I think I would just, I've been doing it at night-time, but I think I'm going to just start doing it in the day, though, actually. Because they actually had a really nice thing the other night where I was doing one of the



Above: Rebecca Gallo's current at-home work space.

drawings, and someone could hear my chalk scraping along, and came out of his house and was chatting to me. And it was just really nice meeting one of my neighbours. And so, I think I might start doing it in the day a bit more. Because at first, I guess, I was a bit cagey about if I was allowed to. And now I'm just like, whatever. But then it's a nice way to meet the neighbours.

**RG:** Just wear high-vis, and no one will question you.

**NO:** Yes, exactly. I have been wearing high-vis, which is, again, very Nightshift.

**RG:** Put up a couple of cones, a couple of fake cones, you'll be fine.

**NO:** Exactly. It's very official.

**RG:** Well, shall we wrap it up?

**NO:** Yeah, I reckon that's probably about it.

**RG:** I feel like we can talk for a very long time...

**NO:** Yes, we can talk forever.

**RG:** But I think this is solid.

**NO:** Yes. I know. I'm going to go for a walk now.

**RG:** Oh, cool. Go while it's still light.

**NO:** Yes, exactly.

**RG:** Yes, so we wanted to originally do this chat while walking, and obviously we can't be in the same place at the moment. And I think we would've gotten some nice ambient background noise, but probably the sound quality would've been heaps shitter. So, anyone who's listening, you're welcome.

**NO:** True. Well, I think this would be a nice talk to listen to while walking.

**RG:** That's true.

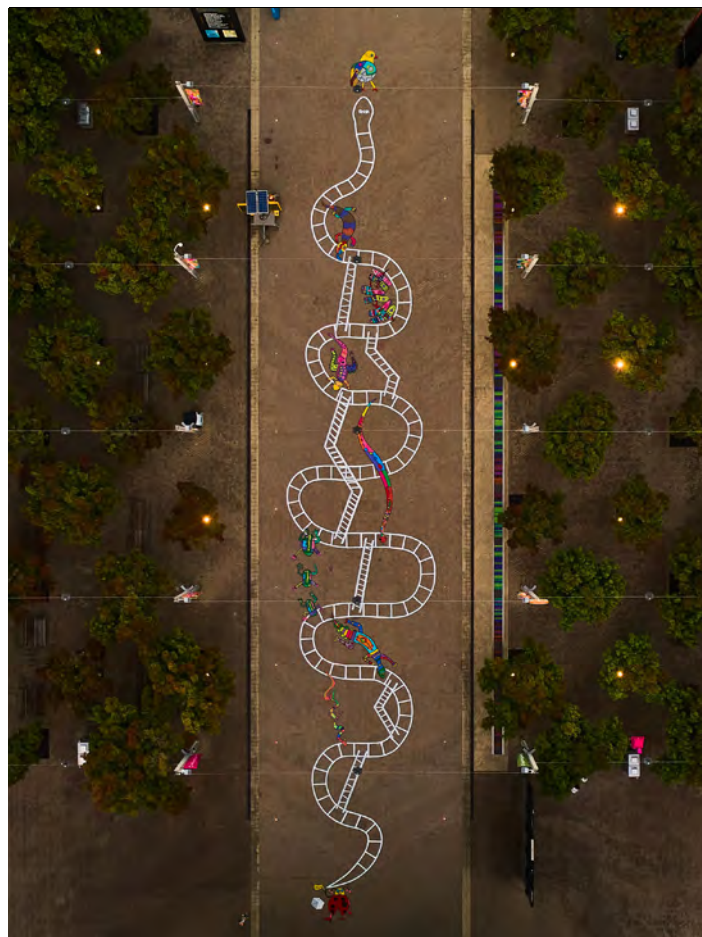
**NO:** Hopefully, some... I listen to podcasts all the time when walking around. The main reason I'd thought it would be nice if we were both walking and talking about it was I just like the idea of you describing what you're seeing when you're walking around. That was what I was excited about, because sometimes I wish that I could see through your eyes.

**RG:** Yeah. Well, I'm sorry we didn't end up doing it that way, but I guess for recording quality, for recording purposes, this is probably easier.

**NO:** Yeah, definitely. But when I go on my walk now, I'm definitely going to have one eye on the ground. I'll see if I can find something that's Bec-worthy.

**RG:** Take a picture if you do.

**NO:** I will, for sure.



Above: Nadia Odum, Snakes and Ladders with Digby Webster, Station Square, Sydney Olympic Park, photo by Alex Kess



**RG:** All right, talk to you soon.

**NO:** Talk to you soon. Bye.

**RG:** Bye.

Above: Nadia Odlum, 'Quiet streets': a series of chalk street drawings in the streets within the 5km radius of my house, made during the 2021 Sydney Covid-19 lockdown.

# About PAS

Parramatta Artists' Studios (PAS) is the energetic home for creative production in Western Sydney. Our focus is on what happens in and around the studio space to develop critical artistic practice. We nurture ideas and experimentation. We support artists to take risks and share studio conversations and processes. We work to establish or build on peer and professional communities. We believe in empowering and equipping artists to build thriving and sustainable creative lives.

We have supported hundreds of artists since opening in 2006 and have a growing community of alumni who are at the forefront of contemporary artistic practice in Australia. Through our supported studio facilities in Parramatta and Rydalmere we offer subsidised studio tenancy programs, career development programs, residency programs and community-connected programs.

## CONTACT


**E** [studios@cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au](mailto:studios@cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au)


**P** +61 (0)2 9806 5230

**W** [parramastudios.com.au](http://parramastudios.com.au)

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