

**Creating more audience-focused programs was a key strategy in Wagga Wagga Art Gallery's Business Plan for 2005 to 2007.**

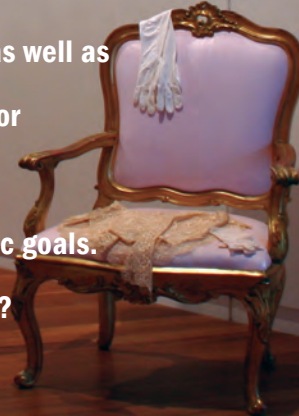
The aim was to generate a stronger sense of ownership of the gallery for residents of — and visitors to — the Riverina, as well as an increase in visitor numbers.

**They were optimistic goals.**

**How would we do it?**

*Come Hither : Interpretations of the Boudoir*

**comehither**  
by SUSI MUDDIMAN



**THE PLAN CALLED FOR FRESH OUTLOOK FOR THE GALLERY STAFF and a much more team-based approach to achieving the best results possible. The principal areas of the new strategy focussed on branding the Gallery's excellent collections, making more use of its exceptional built environment, and developing a series of educative and engaging audience development strategies.**

We decided that the Gallery should concentrate more on producing its own product, relying less on touring product developed elsewhere, and utilising the skills and resources of the staff members. This approach also encouraged and invited professional development opportunities for members of the staff team.

As an example, the Gallery committed to producing three major exhibitions per year which were its own initiatives. In addition, it was decided that two of these exhibitions would be collection-based shows which would encourage curatorial staff to devote time to completing much-needed collection management practices in updating database information and researching the specialist collections — Wagga Wagga Art Gallery is home to the prestigious National Art Glass Collection, and also houses an impressive collection of over 1,000 artists' prints. The plan was to serve as a kind of 'enforced' collection management strategy.

An additional goal was that one of these collection-based exhibitions would tour on a biennial basis.

This new direction and series of goals did seem somewhat daunting when written on the page, but the effect of the commitment was to pull the team together and the results have

been outstanding. A new sense of community engagement is evident, the visitation figures have increased, and the sense of ownership and 'inclusion' in the Gallery's programs has been much applauded by both existing and new visitors. A most pleasing result of this new approach has been a significant and dramatic rise in the number of volunteers who now contribute to most areas of the gallery's operations. The dynamic Friends of the Wagga Wagga Art Gallery has emerged as a wonderfully dedicated, enthusiastic and colourful group of volunteers who provide regular support for the gallery management.

*Come Hither: Interpretations of the Boudoir* is the latest Wagga Wagga Art Gallery initiative exhibition. With audience development high on our strategic agenda, the show was curated on a theme which might appeal to a large audience base. While the exhibition is focussed on the boudoir as a woman's space, its scope has appealed to a broad audience and a series of complimentary public programs, ranging from family-based outdoor movie nights to more formal floor talks, has extended its reach. The exhibition has been successful both in drawing attention to the Gallery through an engaging theme as well as in attracting a number of substantial private loans for the show, thus enhancing the professional standing of the gallery.

*Come Hither* opened to the public on 25 January, and was officially opened with a grand — and highly successful — Masquerade Ball on 9 February which drew a new audience to the Gallery and introduced a new crowd to the its facilities. ■

**Susi Muddiman is the Manager of the Wagga Wagga Art Gallery**

## May


22 May

 *Flying Tzars* Gravity defying dance, acrobatics and circus like tricks. \$45+ IPAC, **WOLLONGONG** Tel 02 4226 3366  
Website [www.ipac.org.au](http://www.ipac.org.au)

24 – 27 May

 *Lotte's Gift* A theatrical portrait of the relationship between two extraordinary women, written and directed by David Williamson. \$45/\$36 IPAC, **WOLLONGONG** Tel 02 4226 3366  
Website [www.ipac.org.au](http://www.ipac.org.au)

26 May – 17 June

 *India - Three Visions* Jackie Garring works on paper, Mark Eccleston photography and Petra Murphy ceramics, Raglan Gallery and Cultural Centre, **COOMA** Tel 6452 3377

27 May

 *Mikangelo and the Black Sea Gentlemen: An exotic and unforgettable evening of cabaret bristling with humour, pathos and beauty.* \$18 - \$35 Star Court Theatre **LISMORE** Tel 02 6622 0300  
Website [www.norpa.org.au](http://www.norpa.org.au)