



*there is going to be a wedding
and you are all invited*

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foreword

Michael McLaughlin
Creative Producer
The Works Festival

The first thing you'll notice about Elizabeth Woods is she is a real people person. Warm, engaging and with a trade mark zaniness that infects all who meet her. But I actually came to first work with Elizabeth not face-to-face but at some distance – she was busy completing a residency in France and I was in Tasmania doing lots of pre-production on the 2010 Works Festival. Recommended by colleague Seán Kelly, our email conversation focussed first and foremost on ideas and in particular Elizabeth's ideas about art, art making and the social role she believed artists can and should play.

For someone committed to developing a local arts festival program that was artist-led, commissioned new work, and was passionate in finding creative processes that engaged community as participants and audience, Elizabeth's clear rationale for her own visual arts practice and her substantial body of creative work for nearly two decades was a revelation.

Here was an experienced mid-career visual artist who not only created work with very strong aesthetic outcomes but deeply understood on a practical and theoretical level why she wished

to create art that actually invited the active participation of the community.

Elizabeth Woods is a public artist in the fullest sense of those words. Not only is the art she presents created for public spaces and events, but the actual process for creating that art is carried out in the most public of ways. To enter her studio, mid-project, is to enter an open studio, a beautifully prepared space, a social space with a range of people engaging with each other, the artists, the materials, the ideas, or just the space itself.

And from that space spread ripples – a web of social relations based on the beauty and profundity of the everyday. For me that is the real legacy of an Elizabeth Woods project – a gift for any community and a noble and necessary re-statement of the purpose of art in the 21st Century.

catalogue essay

Seán Kelly
Arts Officer
Moonah Arts Centre

"It's a fairly common concern that if we forget how to connect with each other, then 'community' will be merely a collection of isolated individuals who happen to have a common space."
Elizabeth Woods.

The event 'There is going to be a Wedding and you are all invited' created a space where the communality of the gathering changed the focus of each person from their normal concerns and opened up an egalitarian space. "During the wedding, you could not tell who the official guests were and who had happened to see us from the park and joined in."
Scott Christensen, Participant

There is going to be a Wedding and you are all invited was a major temporary public artwork developed by artist Elizabeth Woods which manifested on the publicly owned parkland overlooking Elwick Bay to Moorilla Estate and the Museum of Old and New Art (MONA), on the shores of the Derwent River on May 16th 2010 as part of the biennial 'Works' Festival. Woods was a 'natural' choice for this key Festival event given her record of work which closely engages with communities and

the inherent artistic quality maintained by her 'directorial' hand throughout the process.

Woods' practice has for many years revolved around the relationship between place, artist and community and what arises from their connection to each other. Her work exemplifies a new modelling of the relationship between artist and community, as expressed by Claire Doherty in *The New Situationists* in that the role of the artist in contemporary site-specific practice has shifted from viewing, to participation, "giving rise to a marked shift, in some instances of the role of the artist from object maker to service provider".¹

Central to Woods' position is the contention that, "the connection of people and their everyday activities, although often tenuous, is directly related to what binds communities together". Woods' primary concern is that communities are losing the ability to authenticate and appreciate their everyday lives. A critical issue is the imperative Woods places on building and sustaining social relations as part of the creative process, underscored by her stress on the significance of the

'vernacular' - "sites and social structures that directly relate to the personal experiences of the public. Instead of producing discrete objects, the focus has shifted to the infiltration of or interventions into, the flow of the daily lives within the community. These interactions promise more profound revelations of sites and the creation (or recreation) of a sense of community".

Engagement with communities requires a balance between offering certain challenges while maintaining an accessible 'vehicle' through which to engage. Woods chose the Wedding as such a vehicle because weddings are rich in personal and communal meaning and the concept of a wedding as a window to view the site itself, suggests many possibilities: the intergenerational family nature of passive social activity in the Park; the more direct references to the use of the park for actual wedding activity; and the close proximity of the site to a working winery, which hosts wedding functions. These were all useful starting points for creative activity. This last reference to the site itself, as a place to produce fruit used in social

celebrations, is particularly rich, picking up on strong themes in Woods' art practice around fruit, organic growing, gardens and shared public spaces, and referencing many Tasmanians' love and cultivation of fruit bearing plants. The wedding is also a catalyst for exploring a major theme in Woods' own work - "how temporary public artwork can make the domestic, public. The wedding carries both private and communal symbols of union, of plenty, of reproduction, of life cycle and much more".

These various 'relations' expressed by Woods are quite evident within the work. The concept of marrying a tree in a civil ceremony, (conducted by the Mayor of Glenorchy, Adriana Taylor), is so gently subversive that it can hardly offend, but it is off centre enough to claim attention long enough to allow the significant underlying values to become articulated and evident. Woods' projects, such as her 'Public Notice' Project, (2009), often require certain binding public commitments to be made, commitments which may outlast the life of the actual event. In 2011 the participants in this project will be photographed one year on with their trees and the photographs

will be displayed at the Moonah Arts Centre in Glenorchy. The event may be temporary but the outcomes survive across generations.

The notion that art can be a catalyst for social change and possess transformative capacities seems now more than ever to have relevance, if only because more artists are adopting this position and perhaps more significantly, they are working in non-art scenarios and avoiding the rhetoric and tropes of art in the way they are articulating these positions. Another factor for this rise in socially engaged practices may well be the 'end game' consciousness which is more pervasive in an era of climate change, rampant ecological ruin and socio-political divisiveness. As recently as the eighties it was still common within art institutions to see formalism and the art history/theory discourse as the key drivers validated as the only real significant basis for making art. The 'political' significance of art remained largely within the frame of the politics of cultural exchange and eschewed to a large extent the wider social import of the practice of art.

This exhibition presents Kevin Leong's photographs from the Wedding event along with a major series depicting the people who married a tree with the tree itself, one year after the wedding. As such it reminds us that the commitments we make to the future are ongoing and that we have a duty to honour our desire to create a better world through (agreed) action.

In the case of this project and Woods' practice more generally it also provides a rich and harmonious avenue for the making and storing of social capital.

¹ Doherty, *The New Situationists*, 2004, p. 9

All non-identified quotations are taken from Elizabeth Woods' writings



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wedding vows

By Cullan Woods Joyce
spontaneously composed for the event 2010

On this land, we are gathered here, to join these men and women together with their trees.

Although so different, in this marriage, their closeness and unity will be preserved, and through honest care, each will rejoice, and care for the other, body and soul.

The vows to care for each other in sickness and in health reflect, not only the times in which our bodies or branches become tired due to life, but how, in their due season, cares and happiness come and go without our consent.

Sometimes bare, sometimes fruitful, each participant now, through this union will recognise how each reflects the other in the times of joy and sadness.

No person, no tree goes through life unchanged, no person, no tree, expects an endless summer, no person, and no tree, therefore, can hate the winter rain or the melancholy colour of autumn shades.

This union brings us to our condition as living beings, and

shows us in a shared life, the wisdom of the earth and the rains from heaven. Let all of us be happy to learn each other's changing moods and rejoice, that this mystery never ends.

We, as a community recognise their joy, and in so doing, make it our own so that, with one voice the joy of such a partnership affects and brings us all together. For without this recognition, the marriage is a secret kept but not shared, the love and partnership a private act, but here, with us, the whole community can celebrate the union. You, trees and persons, are now part of each other and now, in this place, your partnership has brought us all together.

I ask you then, those who have gathered here to witness this, to join with me in recognising this union, and rejoice in the happiness of each participant, who will go home and bring this shared life to every street on which they live.

As the representative of this community I thank you for this gift you gave to each other. To all of us here, we wish you a long and fruitful life together. I now pronounce you husband, wife and tree!

You may now water your tree.

the ceremony



































































one year later

















Brides

Alison Johnson
 Amy MacArthur
 Bethany Sullivan
 Bronwyn Lysaght
 Christine Watson
 Deb Webb
 Elouise Murphy
 Kirsty Whitbread
 Laura Purcell
 Laura Lovell
 Louise Sullivan
 Marie Smith
 Marjorie Luck
 Matananda Mayi Mai
 Meg Collins
 Renate Hughes
 Rochel Pribout
 Roslyn Geeves
 Sue bis Winckel

Grooms

Adam Smolenski
 Bradley Duffy
 Jack Robbins
 John Radcliffe
 Matthew Nicol
 Seán Kelly
 Shaun McGowan
 Shaun Summers
 Tino Carnevale

Bridesmaids

Adelaide Toubert
 Amber Hawkins
 Amy Evans
 Bec Tudor
 Astrid Woods-Joyce
 Bonnie Aitchison
 Caitlin Fogarty
 Caitlin Ketley

Catherine Airey

Emily Thompson-Young
 Erin Martin
 Esmay Sullivan
 Esther Stanton
 Eva Lleonart
 Jenna Huisman
 Jordan Saville
 Kaitlyn Ulberg
 Katie-Jane Sharpe
 Michaela Jenkins
 Mikaylah James
 Rachel Silversmith
 Rebecca Essex
 Ruth Doblo
 Sophie Silversmith

Groomsmen

Norma Easton
 Pam Cleaver

Flower Girls

Katie Silversmith
 Matilda Downes-Smolenski
 Molly Davies
 Scarlett McGuire

Page Boy

Vincent Downes-Smolenski

Special Thanks

I would like to thank all the people who have contributed to *There is going to be a wedding and you are all invited* and *One year later*; the two projects would have been impossible without their hard work, dedication and generosity.

Kevin Leong deserves particular mention for the documentation that allows the project to be communicated to a larger audience.

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Acknowledgements

A big thank you to following sponsors and people who contributed to make this event possible:

Arts Tasmania (Funding)

Moorilla Estate (Wine)

Alderman the Honourable Adriana Taylor, Mayor of Glenorchy

Michael McLaughlin (Moonah Arts Centre)

Eleanor Downes (Moonah Arts Centre)

Dianne McGuinness (Community Participation Program)

Michael Bullock (Production Assistance)

Kevin Leong (Photographer)

Amanda Shone, Astrid Woods-Joyce (Assisting Artists)

Victoria Sullivan (Wardrobe Mistress)

Pam Harvey (Seamstress)

Ella Woods-Joyce, Cullan Woods-Joyce, Scotty Aumont, Tim

Paterman, Anna Cuthbertson, Vicki King, Joy Allison

(General Assistants)

Clockwork Beehive, Nancy Mauro-Flude, Nick Smithies,

Max McLaughlin, Domonic Ashby (Video Documentation)

EXHIBITION: This catalogue accompanies the exhibition
There is going to be a wedding and you are all invited
at Moonah Arts Centre, 14 May – 2 June 2011.

ISBN: 978 0 9871521 1 4

Poppy Taylor, Karen Purcell, Peta Graham Scott Christensen,

Mat Hinds, Peter Waller (Animal Costumes)

Hans Kooij and the Sing Australia Choir

Dee Boyd (Trumpeter)

Jed Gillian (Wicker Crown)

Montrose Bay High School

Ogilvie High School

Jennifer Wilson (Alpacas)

Despard Street Gallery

A-One Fruit Market (Fruit)

The Cake Decorators Association of Southern Tasmania

(Wedding Cake)

Patrick Taylor (Catalogue Design)

