

studio A

Media Release

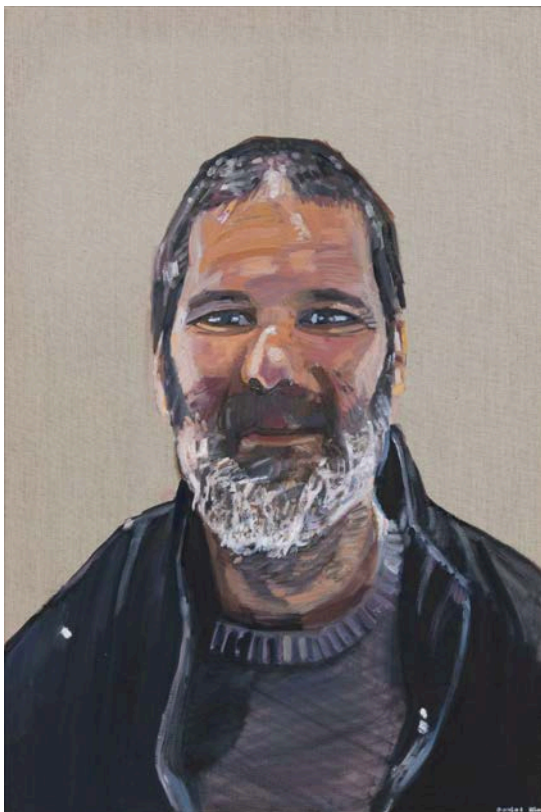
1 May, 2025

Five Studio A artists named as finalists in the 2025 Archibald & Sulman Prizes

[Studio A](#) – a leading Australian supported studio for professional artists with intellectual disability – is thrilled to announce five of its artists have been named as finalists in the prestigious Archibald and Sulman Prizes.

Artists Daniel Kim, Meagan Pelham and Catherine McGuiness have each been selected as Archibald finalists for the third time, while Mathew Calandra celebrates his first inclusion as an Archibald finalist with a formidable self-portrait.

Having just opened his landmark solo exhibition, [The Immersive World of Thom Roberts](#) at the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra, Thom Roberts has been named as a finalist in the Sir John Sulman Prize.



Left: Daniel Kim, *Thom Roberts*, oil on linen, 63.5cm x 94cm. Right: Catherine McGuiness, *Shan is a little little little mermaid*, synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 107cm x 177cm.

These five exceptional artists, represented by Studio A, showcase the diversity of talent fostered by the studio, which is dedicated to professionally empowering artists with disability and to have their voices heard within contemporary Australian culture. Over

the past five years, Studio A artists have been shortlisted an impressive twenty-three times for the Archibald and Sulman Prizes.

"In 2025 Studio A artists are really getting the spotlight they deserve, with four Studio A artists selected as Archibald Finalists and Thom Roberts selected as a Sulman Prize Finalist alongside his solo show at the National Portrait Gallery. The artists have strong representation in both state and national leading arts institutions - their success reflects Australia's changing cultural landscape - one that rightly platforms diverse voices including artists with intellectual disability." says Studio A CEO and Artistic Director, Gabrielle Mordy.

[Daniel Kim](#)'s striking oil portrait *Thom Roberts* honours his long-time friend and fellow artist. "I have known Thom for a long time, for many years. I see Thom at Studio A where we go to make art, and I do some oil painting. Thom has a special nickname for me, he calls me 'Andrew'," Daniel shares. Both Daniel and Thom are founding members of Studio A, and their deep creative friendship is beautifully reflected in the painting.

[Catherine McGuiness](#)' Archibald work, *Shan is a little little little mermaid*, is a portrait of queer Australian artist Shan Turner-Carroll, who works across sculpture, performance, photography and film. The pair met four years ago and have collaborated on several projects, including Catherine's debut solo show *Night Blossom* at Mosman Art Gallery, curated by Shan in 2024.

In the portrait Shan wears an elaborate, embellished 'mermaid' gown that the two crafted together for a curated art event in 2022. *"When we work together we always dance around and he (Shan) laughs his head off at me."* says Catherine. *"He is always so funny...I can't stop laughing when I see him. He makes me very happy and I love him so much. I am very proud of my painting of him - I worked so hard and I love it."*



Mathew Calandra, *His Face Like My Face - Self Portrait as Robert Englund Playing Freddy Krueger*, gouache, synthetic polymer paint, ink on paper, 161.6 x 139.5cm

Many months in the making, [Mathew Calandra](#)'s self-portrait is a large and meticulous piece that references one of the artist's favourite films.

Mathew explains, *"I did my face portrait as Freddy Krueger because I love horror movies and horror characters. I was born a few days before Halloween and so I've always loved anything spooky. This is the biggest piece I have ever done and it was really extra hard work."*

Returning to the Archibald Prize this year is [Meagan Pelham](#) with her work *Magic Nikki & Charlie Fancy Pants Party...D - Jaaaaaaaay*, a portrait of creative couple Charlie Villas and Nikita Majajas, known collectively as Chakita. Charlie is a sought-after DJ and Nikita is an acclaimed artist. The embellished gouache artwork, with sparkling touches of glitter and nail polish, is framed with custom acrylic elements created for the piece by Nikita in collaboration with Meagan.



Left: Meagan Pelham with Chakita at their sitting at Studio A, St Leonards. Right: Meagan Pelham, *Magic Nikki & Charlie Fancy Pants Party...D - Jaaaaaaaay*, gouache, synthetic polymer paint, glitter, nail polish and embellishments on watercolour paper with custom framing of laminate and acrylic elements by artist Nikita Majajas, 121.5 x 116cm

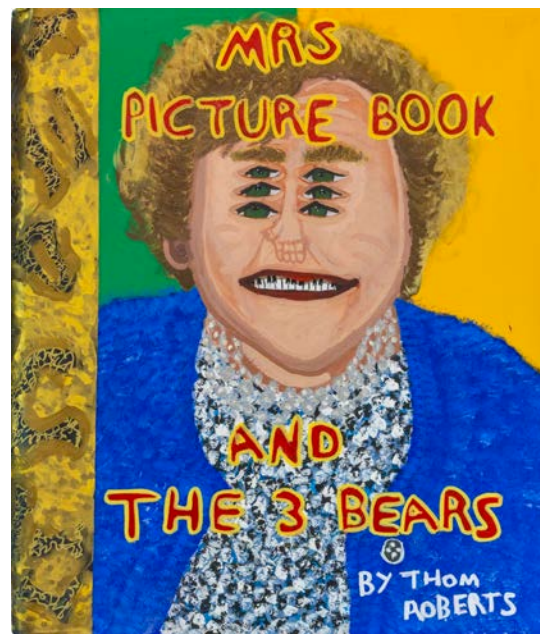
Meagan first crossed paths with Chakita at Romance Was Born's 2024 Art Bar at the Museum of Contemporary Art, where they shared the stage for a Love Song Karaoke performance. *"I am the ultimate romantic and I think they are too."* says Meagan. *"I just love fashion, falling in love, getting married! Oh so romantic!!! LOVE IS LOVE MY DARLINGS!"*

[Thom Roberts](#) is a four-time Archibald finalist, but this year sees him selected for the Sulman Prize for his hinged triptych *Mrs Picture Book and the Three Bears*. Inspired by his former school teacher, now in her 90s, Thom recalls, *"Her real name is Mrs Staveley, but I call her Mrs Picture Book. She would read books to us in the library. My favorite book was 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears'."*

It is a significant year for Thom and Studio A with the artist's first solo exhibition *The Immersive World of Thom Roberts* currently on show at the National Portrait Gallery.

Curated by Isobel Parker Philip and officially opened by Her Excellency the Honourable Ms Sam Mostyn AC, Governor-General of Australia, the exhibition spans over 100 works from Thom's prolific career.

Gabrielle Mordy says, *"Studio A is excited for first time Archibald Finalist Mathew Calandra whose compelling self-portrait is inspired by his love of the 'Nightmare on Elm Street' film series. All the Archibald finalist works celebrate the artist's relationship with other esteemed creative professionals ranging from film and music to visual artists. Thom Robert's Sulman Prize entry is particularly special, an ode to his primary school teacher."*



Thom Roberts, *Mrs Picture Book and the Three Bears*, hinged triptych, synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 120 x 99.5cm

Studio A is a Sydney-based not-for-profit arts organisation and social enterprise. Established in 2016, the studio exists to provide employment to their artists through sustainable creative industry careers. Supported by Studio A, their artists are exhibiting and selling work, receiving commissions, licensing their intellectual property and working with leading companies in the commercial and arts sectors.

The Immersive World of Thom Roberts is now open at the National Portrait Gallery until 20 July, 2025. Find out more [here](#).

The 2025 Archibald and Sulman Prize exhibitions will be held at the Art Gallery of New South Wales from May 10, 2025.

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Hi-res images [here](#).

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