

studio A

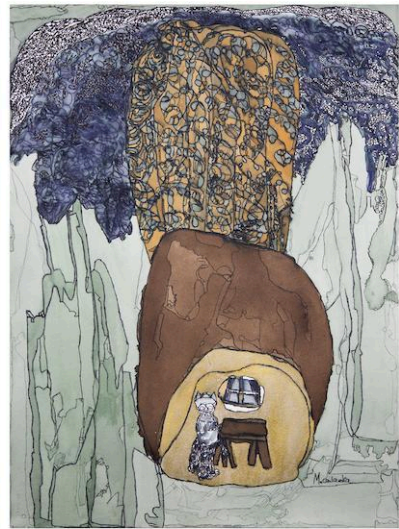
Media Release

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Archibald and Sulman success for Studio A



L-R: Victoria Atkinson, *Trent mango tree all the colours of the rainbow Trent*, 2021, acrylic on canvas, 76 x 101.5 cm.
Thom Roberts, *A Portruff of Adam (Shane Simpson AM)*, acrylic on canvas, 101.5 x 101.5cm.



Mathew Calandra, *Stations of the Cross*, 2020, watercolour, ink and coffee wash on paper.

Three artists from Studio A – a social enterprise arts studio that supports neurodiverse artists - have been named as finalists in Australia's most prestigious and oldest art prizes, the Archibald and Sulman Prize.

Victoria Atkinson and Thom Roberts have been selected to exhibit in what will be the Archibald's 100 year anniversary, while Mathew Calandra has been selected to exhibit in the Sulman Prize.

The three finalists are all represented and supported by Studio A, a social enterprise that paves professional pathways for artists with intellectual disability by providing studio space, mentorship and the tools to be successful and renowned visual artists.

For her entry into the Archibald, Victoria painted the Federal Member for North Sydney, Trent Zimmerman. Titled, *Trent mango tree all the colours of the rainbow Trent*, the portrait exhibits Victoria's characteristic use of bright, bold colours to capture "rainbow love".

Thom painted his good friend, Chair of Studio A, and founder of the Arts Law Centre of Australia, Shane Simpson AM.

Shane, a cultural property lawyer and Special Counsel at Simpsons Solicitors, has been Chair of Studio A since its inception, while Roberts is one of the studio's founding artists.

The pair have forged a strong bond over the years through their mutual love of art. *A Portruff of Adam (Shane Simpson AM)*, is the result of this friendship.

"I wanted to do a portruff of Adam on a great big canvas. He's like my big brother," says Thom, who loves painting on a large scale.

Asked why he called the portrait 'a portruff', he says: "I do it Thom's way".

Mathew Calandra's watercolour and ink triptych, *Stations of the Cross*, is his exploration of the Easter story, merging myths and characters to investigate experiences of struggle and recovery.

"There was an Easter bunny carrying a cross. A big bad dog bit the rabbit's leg. The bunny got a little bandage in the tree home. The bunny was wounded but recovered and came alive again," Mathew explains.

Studio A is New South Wales' only supported studio for professional artists with intellectual disability. The Crows Nest-based not-for-profit studio, which was established in 2010, helps artists overcome the challenges they face in accessing conventional education and professional development pathways needed to be successful and renowned visual artists.

The studio exists to ensure neurodiverse artists have a voice in contemporary Australian culture and to provide employment to their artists through sustainable and creative careers.

Studio A is no stranger to the Archibald, with fellow artist Emily Crockford named as a finalist in the 2020 Archibald Prize. Both Thom and Emily have also been selected for the alternative Archibald Prize, the highly-respected Salon des Refusés, in previous years.

Studio A artists have been featured in major public works across the city of Sydney and further afield from Ultimo to Kingsgrove through recent commissions. The most notable to date has been *Love owls and mermaids singing in the rainbow pop*, a mural spanning 300 square metres in the Entrance Court of the Art Gallery of New South Wales. The artwork, which was inspired by the theme of togetherness, was commissioned by the Art Gallery of NSW for their 2020 Archie Plus program.

The studio has also been selected as the inaugural partner of the [Incognito Art Show](#) which opens on June 5. Incognito will exhibit and sell original postcard sized artworks that have been donated by some of Australia's most renowned and emerging artists.

The work will be sold anonymously, with the artist revealed only after the work has been purchased. All profits will be donated to Studio A. Visit incognitoartshow.com for more information on the exhibition.

The 2021 Archibald and Sulman Prize exhibitions will be held at the Art Gallery of NSW from June 5, 2021.

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