

studio A

Media Release

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Archibald and Sulman success for five Studio A artists



L-R: Catherine McGuinness, Rosary with the Seagull, acrylic on canvas, 92 x 122cm.

Emily Crockford, The Pattern in the Mountains of Studio A, Best Friends Emma and Gabrielle, acrylic on canvas, 92 x 122cm.

Five 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.

Emily Crockford and Thom Roberts have been selected for a second time as finalists in the Archibald Prize, while Catherine McGuinness and Meagan Pelham make their debuts. Victoria Atkinson returns to the Art Gallery of NSW off the back of her 2021 Archibald Prize selection, this year as a finalist in the Sulman Prize.

The five finalists are all represented by Studio A, NSW's only supported studio for professional artists with intellectual disability, which provides studio space, mentorship and the tools to be successful and renowned visual artists.

"Studio A is bursting with pride to have four of our artists, Catherine McGuinness, Emily Crockford, Meagan Pelham and Thom Roberts, recognised as Archibald Finalists along

with Victoria Atkinson selected for the Sulman Prize. This is the result of years of work, years of painting and drawing daily and the development of deep relationships built over many years of creative practice. Studio A is thrilled for our artists and we are even more inspired to see the art world increasingly recognise the work of diverse artists - may this only continue." says Studio A CEO and Artistic Director, Gabrielle Mordy.



Meagan Pelham, Romance is LOVE, watercolour, gouache and acrylic on paper, 78 x 112cm

There was a strong female focus this year with four out of five artists selected identifying as female. The subjects of all five entries were also women.

Returning Archibald finalist Emily Crockford painted Studio A's Gabrielle Mordy and Principal Artist, Emma Johnston. Titled 'The Pattern in the Mountains of Studio A, Best Friends Emma and Gabrielle.', Emily used her signature bold colour and intricate pattern to depict the colleagues and close friends.

"It looks so spunky and beautiful, colourful and bright...just like Emma and Gab!" Emily exclaimed.

First time entrants to the Archibald Prize, both Catherine McGuinness and Meagan Pelham, chose to depict creative collaborators.

In 'Rosary and the Seagull' Catherine used her exuberant and bold style to paint artist and long time friend to Studio A, Rosie Deacon. "I visited Rosie at her art studio where she dressed up in costumes for me to draw and paint. I painted Rosary and the Seagull because she's gorgeous." explained Catherine.

Brought together by their shared love of all things romantic, Meagan Pelham painted Anna Plunkett, one half of Australian fashion house Romance Was Born whom Meagan has collaborated with for a number of years. Titled 'Romance is LOVE', the watercolour, gouache and acrylic painting is a celebration of just that.



L-R: Thom Roberts, Rachey in the Mirror, gouache, acrylic and resin on mud ceramic, 38cm diameter

Victoria Atkinson, Angel Mum, Noel Humphrey, acrylic on plywood and LED lights, 113 x 77cm

Returning again to the Archibald after being accepted for the first time last year for his painting titled 'A portriffin of Adam (Shane Simpson AM)', Thom Roberts painted Shelley Simpson whom he calls 'Rachey'.

CEO, designer and founder of mud Australia, Simpson's portrait is painted on a porcelain disc and is depicted with four eyes and fingers for a nose.

"I like to paint people's nose as a foot or a finger to make people laugh. It makes me laugh," explained Thom of the artwork he titled 'Rachey in the Mirror'.

After being selected as a finalist in the 2021 Archibald Prize for her portrait of Trent Zimmerman MP, Victoria Atkinson has returned to the gallery space with her work 'Angel Mum, Noel Humphrey'. Selected for the Sulman Prize, the painting on plywood haloed by neon light memorialises Victoria's mother who passed away last year.

"I like to put lights on the painting because I think my Mum's spirit shines on me like the sun is on me everyday. I imagine my Mum floating on the clouds in the sky," Victoria said of the work.

Studio A is a Sydney-based not-for-profit arts organisation and social enterprise. Established in 2016, the studio exists to ensure neurodiverse artists have a voice in contemporary Australian culture and to provide employment to their artists through sustainable creative careers.

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 in 2020.

The studio has also been selected to partner for a second time with [Incognito Art Show](#) which opens mid June. 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 2022 Archibald and Sulman Prize exhibitions will be held at the Art Gallery of New South Wales from May 14, 2022.

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