

SUNSHINE COAST
NATIONAL
ARTPRIZE
2026

Exhibition Catalogue

Sunshine Coast Council acknowledges the Sunshine Coast Country,
home of the Kabi Kabi peoples and the Jinibara peoples, the
Traditional Custodians, whose lands and waters we all now share.

We recognise that these have always been places of cultural,
spiritual, social and economic significance. The Traditional
Custodians' unique values, and ancient and enduring cultures,
deepen and enrich the life of our community.

We wish to pay respect to their Elders – past, present and
emerging, and acknowledge the important role First Nations People
continue to play within the Sunshine Coast community.

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2026
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Caloundra Regional Gallery

gallery.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au | gallery@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au | 07 5420 8299 | 22 Omrah Ave, Caloundra QLD 4551
Opening hours Tuesday to Friday 10am-4pm, Saturday to Sunday 10am-2pm. Closed public holidays.



Welcome to the Sunshine Coast National Art Prize 2026 – a dynamic celebration of contemporary Australian art and a powerful reflection of the creativity, ideas and energy that connect us all.

This prestigious prize continues to champion artistic innovation and thought-provoking perspectives in 2D and new media. 40 exceptional finalists have been selected, each bringing their unique voice and vision to this year's exhibition.

These works explore personal, political, environmental, and cultural narratives, offering a compelling window into contemporary life.

The winning work, selected by our esteemed judge, will be acquired into the Sunshine Coast Art Collection as a lasting legacy of this vibrant and evolving cultural endeavour.

Whether you are moved by a single brushstroke, a digital gesture, or the power of an idea, I also encourage you to cast your vote in the People's Choice Award.

This vibrant collection of artworks can be enjoyed online or in person during the eight-week exhibition at Caloundra Regional Gallery.

Thank you for joining us in celebrating the artists, their creativity and the ideas they bring to light. We hope this exhibition inspires, challenges and excites you – just as great art should.

The Prize is made possible thanks to Sunshine Coast Council's continued investment and the generous support from local sponsors, philanthropists and partners. Thank you all.

I know you'll enjoy this wonderful exhibition.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rosanna Natoli". The script is fluid and cursive.

Mayor Rosanna Natoli

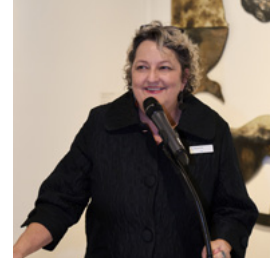


Image courtesy of
Rhana Devenport;
Photo by Saul Steed

This year's esteemed guest judge, Rhana Devenport ONZM, is a curator, writer and academic based in Sydney/Gadigal. She is the former director of Art Gallery of South Australia, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki and Govett-Brewster Art Gallery | Len Lye Centre. She was Senior Project Officer with the Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (1994–2004) at Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art and held senior positions with Sydney Festival and Biennale of Sydney. She currently serves on the Mori Art Museum International Advisory Committee, Tokyo and The Power Institute Foundation, Sydney.

We are delighted to present the Sunshine Coast National Art Prize 2026, a vibrant celebration of some of the most compelling contemporary art practices in Australia today, spanning both 2D and moving image mediums.

Now in its 21st year, this prestigious award has become the Sunshine Coast's flagship visual arts event. The 40 finalist works bring together a rich and diverse set of perspectives, each offering a unique lens on the world we inhabit. Across traditional and experimental approaches, audiences will encounter works ranging from oil and acrylic painting, textiles and works on paper, to ambitious digital and new media compositions.



This year's prize attracted over 475 entries from artists across every state and territory, reaffirming its position as a significant national platform. We extend our sincere thanks to all who entered. Reviewing such an extraordinary breadth of practice remains one of the great privileges of presenting this award; an opportunity to witness the depth, innovation and vitality of contemporary artmaking spanning our country.

Across mediums both physical and digital, a shared commitment resonates throughout the exhibition: to explore, challenge, illuminate and connect; artists have pushed material and conceptual boundaries. Together, these works hold space for storytelling, memory and dialogue, reflecting the complex issues and ideas shaping our national and global conversations. I have no doubt that audiences will find themselves engaged, challenged, delighted and inspired by this year's exhibition.

We are deeply grateful to our sponsors and supporters, whose commitment recognises the essential role of the arts in our community. Our sincere thanks go to major prize partner Argon Law Sunshine Coast, along with longstanding supporters, the De Deyne family, alongside our other supporters, Montville Country Cabins for the Artist in Residence accommodation, Coastline BMW for the Artist in Residence vehicle and International Art Services, who assist us in transporting works from around the country here for us to enjoy.

This year, we are honoured to welcome esteemed guest judge Rhana Devenport ONZM, a highly respected curator, writer and academic who brings a wealth of knowledge and skills to the extremely hard task of selecting the winning artworks.

Thank you to Rhana and congratulations to the winning artists, as well as the finalists. I would also like to thank all the artists who entered this year's prize, we value your contribution to the creative landscape of our country. To all those who visit and view the exhibition, we are proud to present you with a vital experience of contemporary Australian art practice.

Jo Duke
Director, Caloundra Regional Gallery

Jordan Andreotta | *Veil of despair*

The BOOreaucrats | *Fieldwork: provenance loss (After Hokusai, Wall...)*

Matt Butterworth | *The artist's father*

Kevin Chin | *Unwinding*

Donovan Christie | *Margaritaville*

Joanne Currie Nalingu | *River light mountain shadow*

Karee Dahl | *Pieces of landscape*

Gerwyn Davies | *Meat tray*

Zartisha Davis | *Movement and flow*

Jessica DiCosta | *KOMA*

James Dodd | *Revolution modulation track 05*

Sheree Dohnt | *Mother's Day*

Mark Forbes | *Musical chairs*

Louise Galea | *Was it just a dream*

Bridie Gillman | *On the bend, while I waited*

Tim Gregory | *Postcard, 1946: Cook Monument and tree planted 9th Aug, 1881, by the Late Prince Victor of Wales.*

Kim Guthrie | *Reg reclining, Mary Street, Gympie*

Grace Herrmann, Andrew Kimberley and Rachel Kimberley | *Careful creature*

Brandi Hughes | *Pick me*

Alun Rhys Jones | *Self scream at 17*

Kate Just | *A sign of the times: a hand knitted translation of Zoe Leonard's
'I want a president', installed in 2016 on the New York Highline*

Jennifer Kent | *Djaawun*

Martin King | *Dawn chorus in twenty-six volumes*

Michael Langley | *Life is not a rose garden*

Stephanie McClory | *I just need a moment*

Laith McGregor | *Through the night*

Louella Michael | *Untitled experience*

Libby Moore | *Follow me*

Jake Moss | *Big kid*

Marlies Oakley | *Random conversations between two lovers*

Marco Pennacchia | *Brushstrokes of identity - self portrait*

Colin Pennock | *Our quiet languages*

Anna Madeleine Raupach | *Slow violence (Palisades, LA)*

Bruce Reynolds | *Collapse on the South Coast*

Dylan Sarra | *Cultural burn 1*

Erica Seccombe | *Operation inflation*

Damien Shen | *My cuzzy Nate and the 654 Club*

Dave Sparkes | *Byrrill Creek*

Kumanjayi (Walala) Tjapaltjarri and Michael Eather | *We are still creating ourselves II*

Datsun Tran | *Ghost forest*

Exhibition Dates

Friday 21 August to Sunday 11 October 2026

Major Prize \$25,000

Sponsored by Argon Law and
Sunshine Coast Council



Highly Commended Award \$5000

Sponsored by the De Deyne Family



People's Choice Award \$2500

Sponsored by Sunshine Coast Council



Artist residency accommodation

Supported by Montville Country Cabins



Artist residency vehicle

Supported by Coastline BMW



Artwork transportation and logistics

Supported by International Art Services (IAS)





Jordan ANDREOTTA
WA

Veil of despair 2024
Oil on board
50 x 50cm
Image courtesy of the artist

My artwork depicts a curled-up figure draped in a vibrantly-coloured flowing sheet of fabric that conceals their form. The bright drapery symbolises the lively exteriors we present to the world, while the hidden figure represents our own vulnerabilities that we tend to conceal.

This juxtaposition explores how identity is often masked behind bold façades, inviting reflection on what remains unseen.



The BOOreaucrats VIC

Fieldwork: provenance loss
 (after Hokusai, Wall...) 2025
 Edition 2/3
 Digital image on archival paper
 73 x 103cm
 Image courtesy of the artists

The BOOreaucrats are two middle-aged administrators bumbling around in search of the truth of things. In an abandoned site at the edge of a river, these men in suits lose their documents to 'a sudden gust of wind'! Set against a backdrop where industry meets wilderness, the 19th century location could be Fort Lytton on the Brisbane River.

Referencing the famous Hokusai print of 1832, and with a nod to photographer Jeff Wall's 1993 photographic homage, The BOOreaucrats continue their out-of-place bumbling while nodding to the cyclical nature of history and the bureaucracies that gatekeep our stories.



Matt BUTTERWORTH VIC

The artist's father 2026

Oil and acrylic on board

19.5 x 14.5cm

Image courtesy of the artist and Han
Feng Art Space and Studio, New York

I began this portrait of my father with a series of drawings from life. I sat with him. We talked, laughed, paused and I looked. I felt an overwhelming sense of connection through these initial drawings, so I moved to make this painting.

Again, I began working from life (completed in-studio). I have always enjoyed the proximity and intimacy when working with the subject there, with me. It heightens the intensity; there's more at risk.

I knew right from the start that I wanted this portrait to whisper rather than shout. To enter a quiet dialogue between two men (father and son). I knew I wanted to offer the audience a gentle conversation.

My father is a strong man who taught me (and my siblings) how to be vulnerable. To open one's heart at risk of being hurt. He is a man that battles anxiety and Parkinsons. A progressive disorder that challenges his ability to move freely within the world.

I don't know what I was trying to say with this portrait, but when I look at it, engage with it, I connect to his struggle. Constant, deep and silent.



Kevin CHIN VIC

Unwinding 2025
Oil on Italian linen
148 x 138cm

Image courtesy of the artist and
This Is No Fantasy, Melbourne

In this pieced-together dream-space that only exists through painting, *Unwinding* tests how landscape and architecture converge to open spaces where we can fit in. Here the comfort of domestic interiors and the expansiveness of nature paradoxically interweave, because both connect us to feelings of safety and respite.

My interest in this state of mind stems from a collective, global search for sturdy ground during these confusing times. The painting pulls together imagery from across continents. Skies, lakes, windows, reflections, walls: Painterly surfaces create openings and slippages, to test how we orient ourselves in this supposedly interconnected world.

The neo-futuristic green architecture, that feels somewhat ubiquitous, references this contemporary age of connectedness yet uncertainty. The title, *Unwinding*, refers to escaping through greenspace – nature, urban planning, or even just daydreams – and how our sense of place can unwind around a painted pole.



'THE BIG PELICAN' NOOSAVILLE, QLD

Donovan CHRISTIE
VIC

Margaritaville 2026
Oil on linen in custom frame
48 x 40cm
Image courtesy of the artist

Donovan Christie's work celebrates the nostalgic character and charm of everyday life, those often-overlooked moments, places and objects that quietly shape our collective memory. Emerging from Adelaide's graffiti scene as a teen, Donovan developed a heightened awareness to his surroundings, which continues to inform his work today. His witty paintings often appear simple at first glance, but upon closer inspection, they reveal layers of deeper meaning, reflection and personal connection. With a realist approach and a strong eye for detail, Donovan invites us to pause and re-examine the familiar.

Through oil paint and installations, he documents the urban landscape and cultural relics of contemporary Australia: corner stores, ghost signs, snack foods, advertising, and household icons, capturing their significance before they inevitably fade away. His work functions as a time capsule of a recent era, resonating across generations and backgrounds by unlocking memories long forgotten by the viewer.



Joanne CURRIE
NALINGU

Gungahri QLD

River light mountain shadow 2026

Acrylic on canvas

49 x 148cm

Image courtesy of the artist and
FireWorks Gallery, Brisbane

Joanne Currie Nalingu has developed an instantly recognisable style that reveals her distinctive sense of place. Elegant and minimal, her paintings feature flowing lines that echo river currents and mountain ranges, occasionally opening into eye-like forms that invite reflection on the layered meanings beneath these implied surfaces.

For more than 30 years, Joanne has continued to refine her celebrated river line technique, experimenting with textured backgrounds and luminous finishes. Inspired by her childhood living at the Yumba on the banks of the Maranoa River in Mitchell, her river imbues both personal memory and universal metaphor she explains as “a symbol for all rivers, for all people.”

Soft background shadows of pink and orange, described by the artist as “that particular glow at dusk,” blend rhythmic (black and white) river lines to create a metaphysical landscape that quietly mesmerises, unfolding slowly over time.



Karee DAHL
QLD

Pieces of landscape 2026
Polyester thread, wash'n'wear
glue, mounted with pins on
acoustic pinboard
70 x 150cm
Image courtesy of the artist

I draw with thread, using fibre as a continuous line that is looped, layered and accumulated to create works that sit between drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture and textiles. My practice is grounded in repetition – an obsessive, rhythmic process in which the hand moves instinctively and the mind drifts. Through this labour-intensive approach, each work becomes a record of time, gesture and thought.

Thread allows me to work with a tension between fragility and strength. Delicate on its own, its accumulation forms dense, structured surfaces that both absorb and emit light. Colour is built rather than applied, creating fields that shift and vibrate as the viewer moves. Influenced by my surroundings, domestic life, memory and lived experience, my practice reflects the repetition and quiet labour embedded in everyday routines. I am interested in how small, persistent actions can accumulate into something complex and resonant.

A site-responsive engagement with landscape and what happens on the land has been central to my practice. This work is part of *Pieces of landscape*, a new series that sits alongside *In Our Own Backyard*. Wooden and plastic pegs, water tanks, 44-gallon drums, taps and other everyday objects continue to find their way into both bodies of work. These overlooked elements quietly occupy our landscapes and backyards, often unnoticed despite their essential role in daily life.

Through a playful use of colour and the repeated line of thread, I seek to reframe these familiar objects and the environments they inhabit. Each object carries its own story, purpose and place within a larger network of human activity, offering an entry point for understanding my relationship to place and the interconnected systems that shape our landscapes that ultimately extend far beyond the boundaries of our own landscape/backyard.



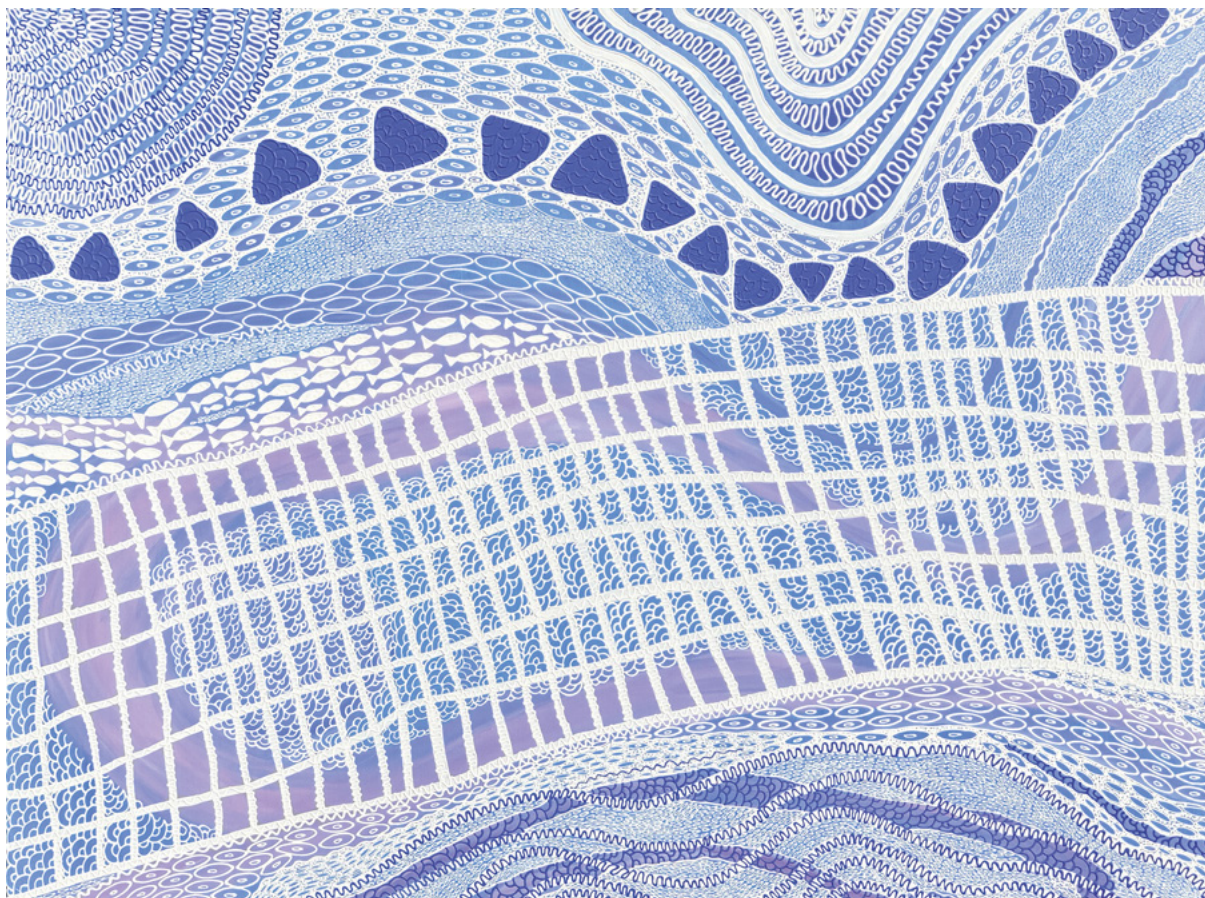
Gerwyn DAVIES
NSW

Meat tray 2025
wall-based textile made from
repurposed costumes
145 x 95cm
Image courtesy of the artist,
Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane and
Michael Reid Galleries, Sydney/Berlin

With a primary focus on photographic self-representation and costume design, the textile work *Meat tray* represents an evolution in Davies' personal practice. This wall-based work is fabricated from a series of distinct, sculptural costumes that have each been disassembled and then reconfigured together in a glittering new form.

In a declaration of Davies' deep affection for the lurid and the lowbrow, *Meat tray* is a textile patchwork of everyday signage commonly encountered down the nation's *bowlos*. Here however, the vernacular aesthetics of suburban Australian are queered. Rendered in rhinestone, spandex and sequin, the readily familiar is transformed and brought to life through a vibrant materiality.

In line with Davies' broader photographic and costume works, *Meat tray* explores the aesthetic potentials of camp – a strategy that toys with taste, visual abundance, material excess and the stressing of surfaces that shimmer, shine and radiate with queer states of in/visibility.



Zartisha DAVIS
Kabi Kabi, Cobble Cobble
and Butchulla QLD

Movement and flow 2026
Acrylic on canvas
92 x 122cm
Image courtesy of the artist

Movement and flow delves into the timeless rhythms of Sea Country, echoing the ancestral pulse of hunting and gathering practices sustained for millennia. It's a visual exploration of the profound, symbiotic relationship between land and sea, as witnessed and honoured by my Kabi Kabi ancestors along these shores.

The presence of shell middens throughout the landscape stands as a testament to their enduring connection and stewardship, a tangible archive of generations intertwined with this vibrant ecosystem.



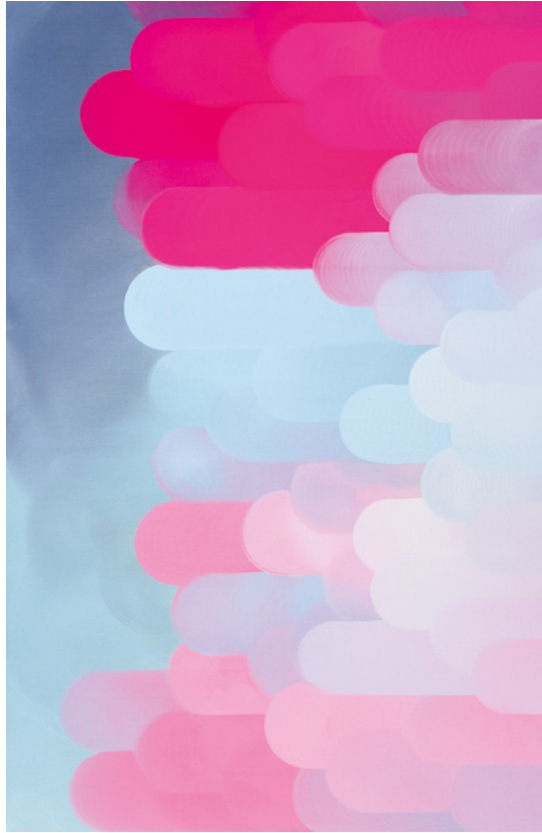
Jessica DiCOSTA
NSW

Cinematographer: Harleigh English
Sound design and original score:
Jessica Meier
Colourist: Sam Holman

KOMA 2024
Digital video
Duration 10:35
Image courtesy of the artist

KOMA captures the poignant transformation of a small town amidst gentrification as it navigates the delicate dance between progress and preservation. Through an observational lens, it reflects on the evolution of local identity as the physical world evolves.

KOMA is not a lament, but a witness to the resilience of place, the fragility of memory and the human impulse to both build and belong. It asks us to see not just what is gone, but what remains in the face of inevitable change.



James DODD

SA

Revolution modulation track 05
2026

Acrylic on canvas
145 x 104cm

Image courtesy of the artist and Hugo
Michell Gallery, Adelaide
Photo by Sam Roberts Photography

Revolution modulation track 05 is part of an ongoing body of work that embraces mechanical devices operated by the artist to generate marks and gestures. In a world in which we embrace mechanical and digital translations, it seems appropriate to invite these things into a painting practice. At times the machines are central to the outcomes, accompanying the artist in performative presentations. At other times the paintings are presented standalone.

Whilst the mechanical nature of this process is eminent, it is not at the expense of the visceral experience of painting. The marks and gestures of this work are nuanced and the result of extensive experimentation and resolution. Oscillations, repetitions and lurid colours lean into visuals that imply a digital translation of some kind.



Sheree DOHNT
WA

Mother's Day 2026
Ink on watercolour paper
84 x 121cm
Image courtesy of the artist

Mother's Day depicts a moment from May 2022, when an afternoon tea was organised for the mums of my daughter's pre-primary class and prepared by her teachers, Mrs Partington and Ms Fulford. The children were looking out for their parents as they filed into the classroom, as the teachers were settling the children into their places and prepared music for a performance. Matching crowns were crafted for each mum, along with a handmade poster featuring little handprints and questionnaires. A lot of work went into the making of this moment, and it felt good to see my daughter's excitement when she spotted me in the crowd. Teachers are crucial during the formative years of everyone's lives and it is easy to take the work they do for granted, as those years fly by in the day to day.

Mother's Day is part of a recent series of paintings which reflects on women's experiences in undertaking all forms of labour. As a mother and artist, the line is blurred between each role, as one inspires the other. I am compelled to paint these scenes of women working in the context of caregiving and the everyday, to reconcile with it and to celebrate the realities of women's lives. I am painting more about my immediate surroundings, with a reflection on community and how the people we encounter become characters in our own stories.



Mark FORBES

VIC

Musical chairs 2024

C - type silver halide colour print

65 x 74cm (Framed)

Image courtesy of the artist

The space feels recently vacated – as if presence has just slipped out of frame, leaving only an imprint behind. I work through subtraction, there is no explicit need for the human figure when you can amplify its echo: a chair slightly turned, a reflection caught mid-glance, a place that still holds the temperature of someone who is no longer there.

These interiors and urban fragments resist completion. They exist in suspension, suspended between function and memory, between what has happened and what can no longer be witnessed. The absence is not emptiness – it is residue. A quiet tension lingers, asking us to reconstruct a narrative that refuses to fully return. In these images, humanity does not announce itself, it accumulates. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, it inhabits the space where presence should be. It is the relatable and common thread that binds us all together.



Louise GALEA

VIC

Was it just a dream 2024

Photograph

110 x 144cm

Image courtesy of the artist

Was it just a dream. Icons – the relationship we have with them.



Bridie GILLMAN
QLD

On the bend, while I waited 2026

Oil on linen

137 x 107cm

Image courtesy of the artist, Edwina

Corlette Gallery, Brisbane and Hugo

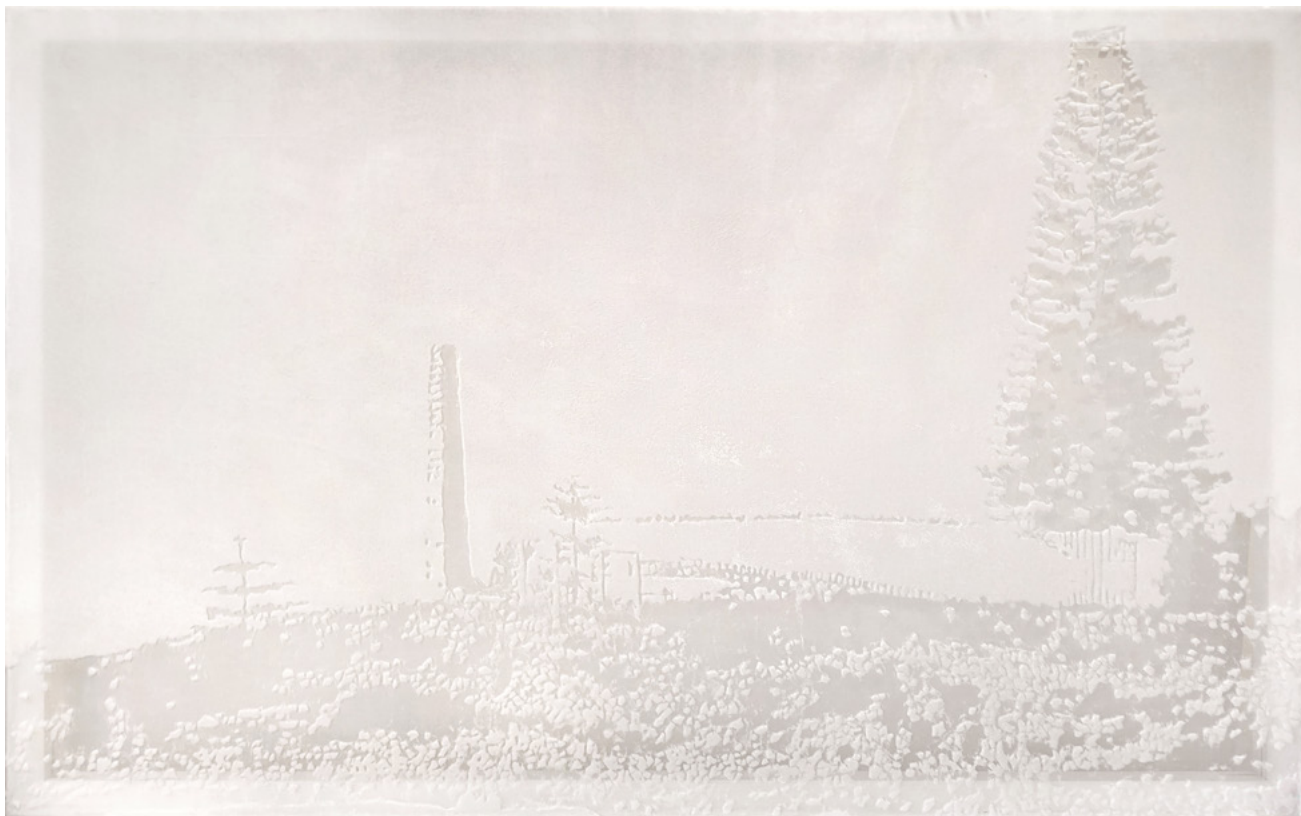
Michell Gallery, Adelaide

Photo by Louis Lim

My painting practice has become a meditative act of recalling my experiences of a place through abstraction of colour, shape and form. Each piece is made in response to everyday observations – from a fleeting moment to a slower, studied observation. Translated through colour, these seen things become landmarks through which I navigate a place.

On the bend, while I waited is part of my *Land marks* body of work, developed in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, last year. It was made in response to a small building I came across while I walked and waited for my stepfather, Sugih, while he had a foot massage. An unassuming, shuttered building on the bend of a busy road, I was drawn to its sweetly-coloured fading paint and the strong verticality of the aluminium accordion door. I returned many times over the following months, studying the colours, the wear and the imagined histories. Each time, I wondered why I had preferred to wander the streets under a hot sun than have a pijat (massage) too.

This looking and thinking was subsequently channeled into the painting – it contains all of it. I am endlessly intrigued that an object, a building, a colour can hold different histories and stories for each of us. The pink in the painting is reminiscent of the pink linen shirt Sugih wore on our first day exploring Yogyakarta together. Maybe the pink is Sugih.



Tim GREGORY
NSW

Postcard, 1946: Cook Monument and tree planted 9th Aug., 1881, by the Late Prince Victor of Wales 2026
Velvet devore
65 x 100cm
Image courtesy of the artist

The work is based on a 1946 postcard of the Cook Monument at Kurnell that the artist purchased on eBay. By purchasing the postcard, the artist takes it out of the circulation of colonial trinkets. The postcard image is painted onto velvet using the devore process. This is a technique where acid burns away the pile of the velvet leaving the back netting support.

The image becomes a one-bit image, white on white. The monument is etched into the fabric, becoming a negative space. The land and monument are erased and ghosted across the fabric. Velvet devore is commonly seen in intricately patterned Victorian dresses, curtains and pillows. The artwork directly connects the excesses of the luxury colonial textile trade with the processes of occupation and erasure.



Kim GUTHRIE
QLD

Reg reclining, Mary Street, Gympie
2026

Giclée print
67 x 100cm

Image courtesy of the artist

I'm an artist who employs street photography as a medium to document my encountered experience of Australian-ness. Gympie in Queensland is a favoured location to capture what I feel is the authentic nature of our national character.

I happened upon Reg reclining on the footpath in Mary Street, completely engrossed in something on his phone. His pose struck me as an ironic take on the much-used artistic trope of a reclining figure (usually nude and female), coupled with a statement about contemporary device culture.

So, I excused myself and asked if he would mind if I took a photo of him exactly as he was. He was OK with that, so I did.



Grace HERRMANN,
Andrew KIMBERLEY
and
Rachel KIMBERLEY
QLD

Careful creature 2024

Digital video

Duration 1:37

Image courtesy of the artists

Careful creature was created by Caloundra artist Grace Herrmann and Brisbane-based brother-sister duo Rachel and Andrew Kimberley, known as Ancient Monkey. The work combines Herrmann's handmade paper carvings with Ancient Monkey's photography, compositing and animation practice to form a looping digital video work.

The narrative follows a seemingly fragile creature moving across an increasingly volatile ocean, ultimately entering a maelstrom and an uncertain fate before returning to the beginning in a cyclical, Sisyphean loop. While the journey is universal in feel, from an artist's perspective it reflects the ongoing nature of creative practice itself – each project requiring renewed risk, persistence and emotional and financial uncertainty, despite awareness of its fragility.

In contrast to an era of rapidly generated digital imagery, *Careful creature* embraces a slower, materially-grounded process. Handcrafted paper forms are built, photographed and then transformed through digital animation, bringing together physical labour and digital construction in a collaborative workflow. The result is a meditation on fragility, repetition and the endurance required to continue making work.



Brandi HUGHES
QLD

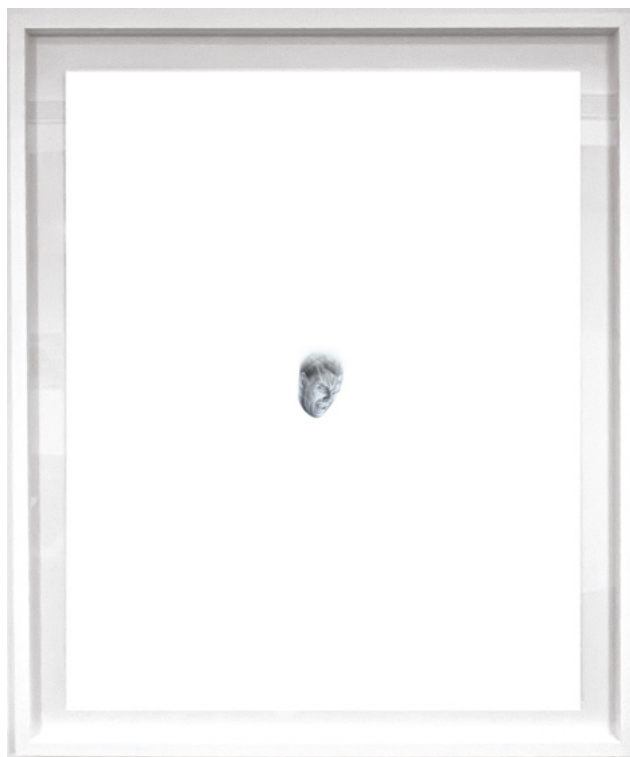
Pick me 2026
Oil on poly cotton canvas
152 x 152cm
Image courtesy of the artist and the
G Contemporary, Noosa Heads

Pick me transforms a familiar LEGO flower into a monumental still life, elevating an everyday toy into an object of reflection. Enlarged beyond its intended scale, the plastic form shifts from plaything to symbol, inviting viewers to reconsider the significance of the ordinary.

Instantly recognisable across generations, the LEGO flower evokes memories of childhood while reflecting on the parts of ourselves that remain long after childhood has passed. Built from individual pieces, it becomes a symbol of growth and the experiences that shape us throughout our lives.

By isolating and magnifying this familiar object, the painting considers how everyday things can carry extraordinary emotional weight. The flower suggests that imagination, curiosity and play are not qualities we outgrow, but foundations that continue to shape who we become.

Through colour, form and familiarity, the painting reconnects with the inner child and reflects on the enduring power of play as something both deeply personal and universally shared.



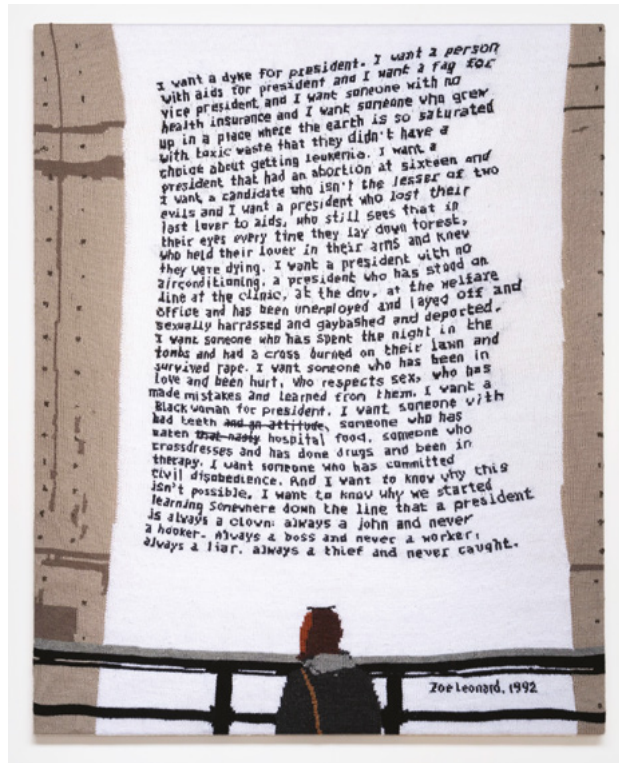
Alun RHYS JONES
VIC

Self scream at 17 2024
Graphite and charcoal on
Stonehenge paper
148 x 122cm
Image courtesy of the artist

In *Self scream at 17*, I depict a younger version of myself as scared, vulnerable and alone, capturing a moment shaped by emotional turbulence and confusion. The work explores deeply personal feelings of isolation, anger, loneliness and adolescent despair – states that are often internalised and left unspoken. By foregrounding these emotions, I aim to challenge the traditional cultural expectations placed upon young men, which frequently demand strength, silence, toughness and emotional detachment.

This work allows me to revisit a formative period in my life and acknowledge the ways in which dominant ideals of masculinity influenced my sense of self. These ideals, reinforced through social norms, media representations and interpersonal relationships, often discouraged vulnerability and emotional openness. As a result, they contributed to a sense of isolation rather than connection.

By questioning and deconstructing these ingrained tropes, I begin to understand how they have shaped my identity. More importantly, the work becomes a space in which I can actively redefine those influences, reshaping them in a way that aligns with my own lived experience and emotional truth. *Self scream at 17* is therefore not only an expression of past pain but also an act of reclamation -- an attempt to assert a more nuanced, honest and compassionate understanding of masculinity and selfhood.



Kate JUST VIC

A sign of the times: a hand knitted translation of Zoe Leonard's 'I want a president', installed in 2016 on the New York Highline 2026
Hand-knitted acrylic yarn, timber and canvas
155 x 122cm
Courtesy of the artist and Hugo Michell Gallery, Adelaide

My 2026 series, *A sign of the times*, involved me hand-knitting pictures of many well-known text-based political art signs that have been installed in public by other artists across the world that are relevant to our current political and social climate.

The largest work in my series was this work, *A sign of the times: a hand knitted translation of Zoe Leonard's 'I want a president', installed in 2016 on the New York Highline*.

My hand-knitting of Zoe Leonard's *I want a president* text as it appeared in New York, is one of the most challenging pieces I have ever completed. Zoe Leonard is an award-winning American artist who began working as an artist in New York City in the 1980s, an era marked by heightened political awareness due to the enormous loss of the AIDS epidemic. *I want a president* was first written/typed by Leonard in 1992 in response to her friend and poet Eileen Myles' bid to run for president alongside George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton and Ross Perot. The continued reproduction and re-citation of Leonard's work, including during the 2016 U.S. election, propelled the original document beyond political art and into popular culture.

I knitted my homage to Leonard's work on 3mm needles. This labour of love in the reknitting formed a conversation between my own queer life, feminist and political sentiments and Leonard's own.



Jennifer KENT
Jinibara, Kabi Kabi,
Quandamooka and Yuggera
QLD

Djaawun 2026
Multimedia
Duration 2:21
Image courtesy of the artist

Djaawun is a digital artwork created using multiple programs and bird and nature sound recordings from *Jiniabara-dja*. This artwork has been digitally hand drawn, inspired from an original acrylic artwork that was painted for the Horizon Festival's *Medicinal Plants* exhibition held at Mary Cairncross Scenic Reserve in 2026. The featured tree is the sandpaper fig and the title, *Djaawun*, which is a Jinibara word meaning 'place, country, forest or breathing'. The artwork celebrates the forest and the significant cultural heritage of the sandpaper fig medicine tree while also featuring appearances of possum, crow, pademelon and goanna tracks. The purple moonbeam butterfly and sandpaper fig wasp are also represented as having a special mutualistic relationship with the unique tree as well.

The artwork is designed to portray life, weather, seasons and time, encapsulating the beauty and essence of what it took to create a forest and appreciate the significant cultural heritage that these forests have to us all.



Martin KING VIC

Dawn chorus in twenty-six volumes
2025

Etching, lift ground aquatint, spitbite,
photopolymer intaglio, chine collé,
hard cover books and ribbon

111 x 139cm

Image courtesy of the artist,
King Street Gallery on William, Sydney
and Australian Galleries, Melbourne.
Photo by Matt Stanton, Melbourne
Museum Photography

Dawn chorus in twenty-six volumes references the genres, still life and natural history painting. It is drawn from observation and modified by imagination.

The work is a synthesis of a number of things, human and animal, life and death, beauty and the macabre, nature and 'nature morte', among others.

The lyrebird is a symbol of beauty and exuberance, and the tail feather skulls reference the idea of life, death and regeneration.

When these opposites are distilled in the imaginative space, the synthesis results in ambiguity and irony, a slightly vexed expression of reality.

It is a metaphysical reality, an underlying reflection on the nature of, and vital connections that exist in the world we inhabit.

Embedded in the work are photo-etchings of the exquisite watercolours of birds from the diary of Australian pastoralist and naturalist, John Cotton (1802–1849).



Michael LANGLEY NSW

Life is not a rose garden 2026
Hand drawn, digitally coloured,
1:1 unique Giclée print on museum
grade paper
120 x 80cm
Image courtesy of artist

My work is grounded in close observation of everyday life. This piece reflects on a familiar cliché: the persistent message that emotional, physical and financial success should come naturally. Across all forms of media, we are continually presented with curated versions of achievement and happiness. When our own lives fail to mirror these representations, it can feel as though we are somehow falling short. In truth, life is not a rose garden and struggle is not necessarily a personal failure.

Artistically, my practice balances two contrasting elements: the traditional and the subtly modern. Each piece begins as a hand-drawn image, shaped by tactile process and careful detail. It then evolves into a 1:1 unique Giclée print. The digital component serves only to introduce colour, transforming the original drawing into its final form while preserving the integrity of the handmade foundation.



Stephanie McCLORY
NSW

I just need a moment 2024
Acrylic on canvas
61 x 91cm
Image courtesy of the artist

I just need a moment. A moment to think. A moment to cry. To be frustrated.
Angry. Overwhelmed. Relieved. To hide. To be disappointed. To sit in the quiet.

This piece explores the weight of emotions we often keep hidden – the moments between breaking down and rebuilding, between retreating and re-emerging. Sometimes strength is not found in pushing through, but in allowing ourselves the time and space to pause and let go.

This piece captures that private moment where emotions surface without judgement, a space where we don't always have to appear composed. A reminder that vulnerability is not a weakness and that healing often begins when we allow ourselves to simply feel.



Laith McGREGOR
NSW

Through the night 2026
Oil and graphite on canvas
153 x 122cm
Image courtesy of the artist and
Station Gallery, Melbourne/Sydney

Through the night is a meditative painting exploring ideas of polarity. Concepts of duality have presented a multitude of challenges for the planet, from social injustices to climate emergencies and ecological neglect. These inconsistencies with the rhythm of the natural world are interconnected and troubling to say the least.

This work reflects my own feelings of helplessness, isolation and expectancy during these unprecedented times. Vulnerability is highlighted through the depiction of a ship at sea, drifting, perhaps in control, perhaps not? Graphite and oil paint intermingle on the surface, creating a ghostly presence, while the work is anchored by two ambiguous perforations, opening questions.

I see this work as a self-portrait and a response of collective awareness, a moment in time that is perhaps a pivotal turning point, floating between the real and the unreal.



Louella MICHAEL
QLD

Untitled experience 2024
Crochet quilt
125 x 125cm
Image courtesy of the artist

Untitled experience heightens awareness of the cognitive shifts we undertake hundreds of times a day when transitioning from physical to online space. Through scanning the work, viewers are taken to a web form and directed through a looping series of awareness shifts that redirect attention between the two spaces.

A QR code is only useful in physical encounters (printed materials or on screen) to direct you somewhere online – functionally, a portal that facilitates further engagement online. Predominantly used in marketing contexts, a QR code is best equipped for consumer follow-through and data collection. *Untitled experience* undermines this prescribed purpose by repeatedly asking the viewer to leave the online space to focus more on their physical surroundings. Contradicting itself, the work instigates distraction to encourage greater attention.

Crochet, and textiles in general, are tactile. A quilt is often given as a gift and is symbolic of care and community. Sterilised as an artwork, the quilt's warmth and comfort is subsumed by the QR code's utility. The focus of the work on physicality is reinforced by its labour-intensive method of creation. This absurd overinvestment in an instantly generated form challenges the socially ubiquitous need for immediacy, emphasising the material and physical as the most potent avenue of connection.

Ultimately, what do we invest, and what do we give up for instantaneous connection? What is lost and gained?



Libby MOORE NSW

Follow me 2026

Acrylic on canvas

79 x 79cm

Image courtesy of the artist

Imbued with personal significance, this selection of coloured glassware serves as an homage to the female form. Through the acts of collecting, assembling, choreographing and ultimately painting these glass and ceramic vessels, I've constructed a group that embodies a range of distinct personalities and complex relationships. Like a family, harmony is not constant. Tensions exist alongside moments of balance, and this universal dynamic unfolds on the canvas.

At first glance, the group gathered here seems like a harmonious ensemble. Look again. How do you imagine the ochre-tinted, four-tiered glass bauble vase on the far left feels about being pushed to the edge of the circle? And what sort of pressure is the tiny cream-coloured jug under, expected to lead from the front and set the standard for the rest? As with any relationship, appearances only tell part of the story. No one truly knows what goes on behind closed doors, especially when there are multiple individuals involved.

As the mother of four children and two stepchildren, I experience caregiving as a multifaceted process of holding, supporting, balancing, withholding and releasing. The five shapely forms become stand-ins for these lived realities, evoking femininity, womanhood and the layered experience of motherhood. They suggest not only connection and care, but also the cyclical, ever-shifting nature of the female experience and human existence.



Jake MOSS QLD

Big kid 2026
Acrylic on linen
101.5 x 101.5cm
Image courtesy of artist

This painting of a goat is, in a quiet way, a kind of self-portrait. To be clear, I'm not calling myself THE GOAT (as in, Greatest of All Time). Just a goat. I haven't always found goats impressive, but that's just because I've never really known much about them. They're just goats. Who cares, right?

Well, I've recently learned a little. So now I care a little. Goats aren't glamorous animals, but they survive on difficult ground and find nourishment in places that do not seem especially generous. There've been times when I felt I was supposed to present myself as something else. A lion, maybe. But I am not a lion. I am more like a goat: not at the top of the food chain, not immune to fear or difficulty, but still here. Still surviving. For me, the goat is a symbol of perseverance despite surroundings.



Marlies OAKLEY
QLD

Random conversations between two lovers 2026
Collage in recycled bottle tops
123 x 94 cm
Image courtesy of the artist

Random conversations between two lovers explores the unpredictable rhythms of human communication through the language of collage. Using discarded comic book speech bubbles, I have paired fragments of dialogue and sealed them within bottle tops – small, intimate frames that invite close inspection.

The randomness of the text echoes the spirit of Dada poetry, where meaning emerges not from logic, but from chance. Each pairing forms a tiny, accidental narrative – sometimes humorous, sometimes disjointed – reflecting the strange, fragmented exchanges that occur between people who know each other too well.

In relationships, we often speak without truly listening, our words overlapping and tangling like the mismatched phrases in these collaged bubbles. By isolating and recombining these snippets, I aim to capture the beauty and absurdity of everyday communication – the tender misunderstandings, the playful nonsense, the shared noise that somehow still connects us.



Marco PENNACCHIA
VIC

Brushstrokes of identity - self portrait
2025
Oil on canvas
95 x 70cm
Image courtesy of the artist

Brushstrokes of identity explores the complex relationship between identity, vulnerability and self-perception. In this self-portrait, the figure is entirely wrapped in patterned fabric, becoming both concealed and revealed at once. The absence of visible facial features shifts the focus beyond individual identity, inviting the viewer to reflect on the universal experience of hiding, protecting and continually reshaping the self.

The fabric, a recurring element throughout my practice, symbolises memory, heritage and the emotional layers we carry. It functions as both armour and veil, expressing the tension between what is hidden and what is disclosed.

The paintbrush, held gently in the figure's hand, becomes the only direct clue to identity, suggesting that artistic practice itself can be a means of self-definition.

Through realism, rich texture and controlled light, I aim to create works that invite quiet contemplation. *Brushstrokes of identity* reflects on belonging, transformation and the ways our sense of self is shaped by memory, lived experience and creative expression.



Colin PENNOCK
QLD

Our quiet languages 2026
Oil and gouache on board
122 x 122cm

Image courtesy of the artist, Arthouse
Gallery Sydney and Otomys Gallery
Melbourne.

Photo by Carl Warner

It's a very fulfilling moment when you realise you have a connection to a culture so different from your own. Whilst on a residency in Fowlers Gap, in outback NSW, I met an artist, Barkantji Elder Badger Bates, and we instantly clicked. I listened to his stories and he seemed to recognise the Irish storytelling culture in me.

We weren't competitive. It was a moment to share. I began to see connections and answers I'd been looking for and I was flattered that he could see something about my work which connected and triggered something in him also.



Anna Madeleine
RAUPACH
ACT

Slow violence (Palisades, LA) 2025
Embroidery thread on thermal blanket
118 x 100cm
Image courtesy of the artist

Slow violence (Palisades, LA) extends a series of works made by hand-stitching bushfire maps into emergency blankets, from Australia's Black Summer to Los Angeles' urban wildfires. By stitching satellite imagery of burnt land into a surface that signals emergency, heat and crisis, I reinterpret extreme weather events through a material process that collapses planetary-scale data into tactile, human-scale forms.

In these works, the slow technique of stitching is a repetitive and meditative practice that simultaneously destroys and repairs its grounding substrate. Primarily designed to retain heat but also a potential signal reflector, the thermal blanket references global warming and signifies the tipping point of fire from restorative to catastrophic. The term 'slow violence' refers to invisible implications of climate change that are temporally and spatially removed from sites of immediate destruction. I explore this idea through a tactile investigation of temporality and scale, where the accumulated time and labour of individual actions dissolve into satellite imagery at human scale.

The gold thermal shield reflects multiple social contexts that resonate with both Southern California and coastal Australia. This vivid material conveys car culture, satellite technology and the spectacle of wealth. Behind this façade are the environmental affinities of hot, dry climates, fire-adapted ecologies, road infrastructures and high-value real estate occupying hazardous locations. While a reciprocal firefighting partnership has historically allowed Australia and the US to share resources, the Palisades fire of January 2025 shows our opposite fire seasons are now ominously overlapping.



Bruce REYNOLDS
QLD

Collapse on the South Coast 2026
Linoleum on wood panel
85 x 110cm
Image courtesy of the artist

This is a representation of a specific event early this year, in a place of geographic and personal significance, in Murrumbidgee National Park. Urban materials of our recent history are inlaid to suggest a dialogue with geology linking personal, political and coastal experiences.

The metaphoric and the decorative are conjoined in a construction of destruction. It is a painting without paint, built on elements of design.



Dylan SARRA
Gooreng Gooreng
and Taribelang
QLD

Cultural burn 1 2024
Acrylic on linen
62.5 x 122.5cm
Image courtesy of the artist and
Mitchell Fine Art, Brisbane
Photo by Louis Lim

Cultural Burning, also known as Cool Burning, is a traditional Aboriginal land management practice that has been used for over 60,000 years.

Cultural Burning aims to reduce fire hazards, facilitate the growth of plants and protect native wildlife already living on Country.

The continuation of the practice helps keep culture alive, as the knowledge is shared across generations and it connects members of Community to each other and the ancestral lands.

Through the sharing of knowledge and culture, it is my aim that all people can not only be intrigued by Indigenous culture but can also start to appreciate the role we all play in acknowledging First Nations people.

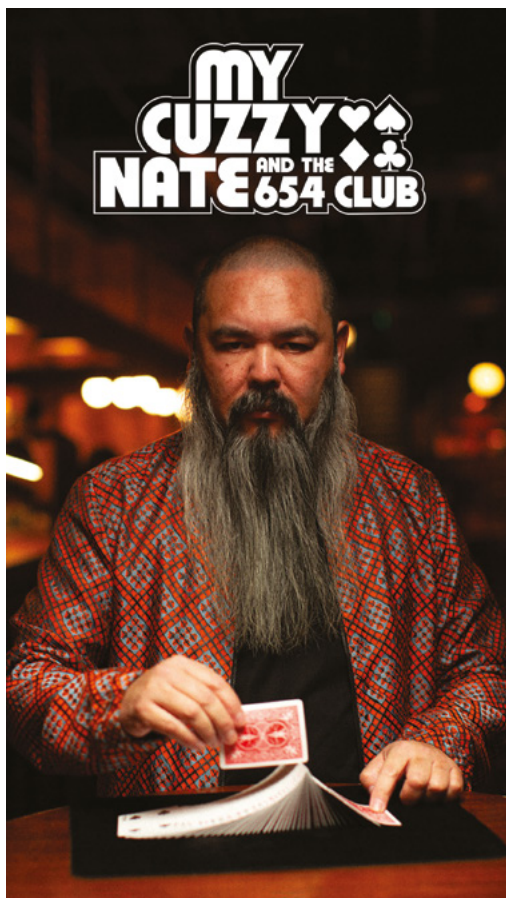


Erica SECCOMBE
NSW

Operation inflation 2026
20 digital pigment-ink prints on paper
155 x 155cm
Image courtesy of the artist

Operation inflation is a series of inkjet prints that draws on the history of poster art and protest graphics. Inspired by the inflatable spectacle of the American No Kings demonstrations, I have recreated images that circulated on social media and news outlets. This work explores the subversive use of humour within protest culture, opposing authoritarianism and anti-immigration rhetoric. Protesters risk their lives and face armed troops with satire and absurdity, transforming public space into a platform for collective critique, where laughter serves as a form of resistance.

The works highlight how visual language spreads quickly through protest movements, transitioning between street, screen and print. Although rooted in imagery from demonstrations in the USA, the issues this work addresses, such as rising xenophobia and the decline of democratic values, resonate well beyond national borders and suggest that the tensions driving these protests are increasingly global, affecting all our lives.



Damien SHEN
Ngarrindjeri and Kurna
SA

My cuzzy Nate and the 654 Club
2025

Video and sound

Duration 5:32

Image courtesy of artist and MARS
Gallery, Melbourne

Photo by Perri Eddy

Esteemed artist Damien Shen's new moving image work explores storytelling, magic and Aboriginal excellence and optimism.

The narrative-based, multi-part card trick, Sam the Bellhop, was created in Chicago in the 1930s and made famous by the legendary magician Bill Malone. In this moving image work, the trick is adapted and performed by the artist, in the guise of a professional magician, for an audience of Aboriginal spectators. The intricate, expertly timed script of the trick is updated to become a story of Aboriginal joy and celebration, using culturally authentic slang and prompting genuine, unrehearsed reactions.

Stemming from Shen's childhood fascination with stage magic and 12 months of practice and development, this work provides important cultural diversity to the predominately white history of stage magic. Shen has deliberately sought to instill his recent work with a sense of joy and wonder, frequently returning to imagery and experiences of childhood.



Dave SPARKES
NSW

Byrrill Creek 2026
Watercolour on paper
90 x 60cm
Image courtesy of artist

I've always looked at the landscape and imagined how it once was. It's a kind of longing, almost melancholia, about how things could still have been. Much of my work is done *en plein air* and I slip easily into reverie, which reliably transports me anywhere from hundreds to many thousands of years back in time.

Distilling the complexity of the landscape is key to my work and this reducing of the world to its essential elements works in harmony with my reveries of past, since memory, or even just imagination, is itself a form of refining a place and time into a simplified vision. It's almost a visual euphemism, a selected savouring of only the best parts of a time that may not have been as perfect as we remember. Painting in monochrome, and in particular sepia, enhances that feeling of memory, history and distillation.



Kumanjayi (Walala)
 TJPALTJARRI
 c. 1962 - 2026
 Pintupi WA
 Michael EATHER
 QLD

We are still creating ourselves II 2026
 Acrylic on canvas
 99 x 150cm
 Image courtesy of the artists and
 FireWorks Gallery, Brisbane
 Photo by Mick Richards

Kumanjayi (Walala) Tjapaltjarri and his family (The Pintupi Nine) wandered out of the Western Desert into a remote community in 1984. That same year, Michael made his way across Australia from Hobart, travelling through Alice Springs before arriving in Maningrida where he started his own family.

Both artists have worked independently since that time, but for over 25 years have also often collaborated. Michael's paintings and sculptures feature symbolic narratives including maps, stingrays and portals, while Kumanjayi (Walala) paints graphic interpretations of the Tingari Cycle – ancestral men's initiation stories and creation mythologies that drift across both physical and metaphysical places and spaces.

Together, their works form an interconnected cognitive landscape that explores the relationship between imagination and place, mapping contrast and continuity. Through repetition – pattern, line and colour – the artists reveal shared yet distinctively different worldviews, forging connections across culture and geography.



Datsun TRAN

SA

Ghost forest 2026

Bushfire ink and joss sticks on
mulberry paper

87 x 116cm

Image courtesy of artist

I grew up on Wurundjeri lands, but I was raised in a Chinese household with many rituals honouring ancestors and gods. Whether it was the Hungry Ghost Festival or the Lunar New Year, joss sticks were a constant presence. The rising smoke from joss sticks carry the prayers and offerings of the living to the dead.

Currently, I live on Peramangk lands and bushfires are a yearly threat. In the summer of 2020–2021, a blaze tore through nearby Cherry Gardens and we evacuated for safety. After the fire, I collected the charcoal from burnt out trees to make the ink I used to paint this work.

I also used joss sticks to burn into the paper as a tribute to the flora and fauna that perished during those fires. Thus, combining my family's cultural ritual of connection and prayers to the dead, with the lands in which I now live.

Sunshine Coast Council gratefully acknowledges the sponsors and supporters of the Sunshine Coast National Art Prize 2026.



I was a member of the Caloundra Tourism board in 2005 and had an opportunity to consult with my then fellow members of the board about promotion of the arts on the Sunshine Coast.

It was about a new art prize and initially my idea was to call it the Maleny Art Prize, as my gallery, Art on Cairncross, was located outside Maleny. I consulted with my local councillor, Dick Newman, and the ball started rolling.

I took my idea back to the board, which included then-Mayor Don Aldous, Deputy Mayor Don Smith and local prominent businesspersons.

I floated the Maleny idea along with, maybe, The Caloundra Prize. The Mayor threw the idea of The Sunshine Coast Art Prize into the discussion. I think he knew amalgamation with Noosa Council was imminent.

I then took the idea to John Waldron, who was the curator of the Caloundra Art Gallery at the time, and he liked it. I asked well-known local businessman, art lover and philanthropist, Ferre De Deyne, and Helen Perry from Fresh PR, to assist with the prize formation.

They were extremely keen and the prize commenced in 2006. We had no idea that the prize would succeed and grow into the Sunshine Coast National Art Prize, now in its 21st year.

It has been a pleasure watching it grow.

Cheers,

Tony Gill

Founder and Director, Art on Cairncross



Exhibition dates 21 August to 11 October 2026

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