2001–2019
Acquisitions Collection
Established in 2001, the Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize attracts strong support from artists, collectors and critics and is the first national acquisitive prize for an original, freestanding sculpture of up to 80cm in any dimension.

Over 500 entries from Australian and international artists are received annually and approximately 45 finalists’ works are exhibited at the historic Woollahra Council Chambers in Double Bay, Sydney, Australia.

The main award each year is the acquisitive ‘The Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize’ which expands the Council’s permanent public collection. On display all year round for the community to enjoy for free, visitors can discover some of the world’s most exciting contemporary sculptures and often be introduced to the most innovative artists working in the medium.
2019

Winner (Top)
Merran Esson, Autumn On The Monaro

Special Commendation (Middle Left)
Benjamin Jay Shand, Array 3

Highly Commended (Middle Right)
Jess Leitmanis, Spouts from which to drink

Highly Commended (Bottom)
Jackson Keita, Braggadocio
Snare is from a larger body of work called Shimmer Suite. Materiality plays a significant role in the conceptual underpinnings of my artwork.

In my works I have eschewed traditionally weighty materials such as steel or bronze in favour of materials that are either industrial or those found in the home.

In Shimmer Suite I have used a common domestic object used to scrub pots to create art.

My collective practice explores an interest in the transformation of ordinary objects into something poetic and metaphoric.

Judged by:

**Deborah Edwards**
Curator of Australian Art,
Art Gallery of New South Wales

**Ben Genocchio**
Art Critic, The Australian

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Sebastian Di Mauro
Snare – Shimmer Suite

stainless steel pot scourers, aluminium, nylon thread

55 x 45 x 45 cm

Located at Woollahra Council Chambers
Jan King’s recent work is preoccupied with abstract interpretation of physical gesture, and in the case of Leda, the way this gesture expresses emotion.

Judged by:

**Keith Cottier**  
Architect

**May Barry**  
Sculptor

Located at Woollahra Council Chambers
A framing of space like a line might wrap around the surface of blank paper in a drawing. Sculpture is traditionally about gravity, weight, volume, form, and the three dimensions.

Here, the sculpture is all volume; weightless and transparent so that you see through to the surrounding environment. The act of looking at and through the surface is more akin to how one might apprehend a painting or even a building.

A “looking-through” space. The space or void inside the sculpture becomes almost visible through its framing. ‘Nothing’ is given aura by encasing it. ‘Nothing’ becomes matter, even content.

Judged by:

Rachel Kent
Curator of Contemporary Art, MCA and Roslyn Oxley, Gallerist,

Roslyn Oxley
Roslyn Oxley9, Paddington.

Mikala Dwyer
Empty Sculpture
plastic
80 x 80 x 60 cm

Located at Woollahra Council Chambers
Bruce Slatter
Smashing

wood, metal, paint
30 x 50 x 60 cm

The sculpture explores the expectation and potential of everyday objects and structures from the urban environment. Ideas of endeavour, anxiety, apprehension and empathy are prevalent in the works through the carefully constructed miniatures sited within possible scenarios.

By diminishing the scale, the work attempts to intensify focus, to distil the essence and, meaning of an object, while still retaining its original form.

The diorama casts the viewer as participant, reminding them of familiar and shared experiences and as witness by providing an all seeing perspective and understanding.

Judged by:

**Wayne Tunnicliffe**
Curator of Contemporary Australian Art, AGNSW

**Ken Unsworth**
Eminent Sculptor

Located at Woollahra Council Chambers
This work is part of a collaborative series that explores how humans interact with the natural world. The sculpture, a rabbit, is made by moulding left-over oil paint from previous work.

By recycling a traditionally two-dimensional material and transforming it into a three dimensional material, the artists – both painters, connect with and extend their painting practice into their sculptural work, and vice versa.

Judged by:

**John Stringer**
Curator of the Kerry Stokes Collection, Perth

**William Wright AM**
Herman Foundation Fellow in Contemporary Art, University of Sydney

Located at Woollahra Council Chambers
The starting point for this work and a famous historical example for me is Hans Holbein’s painting “The Ambassadors” (1533).

In the foreground of this painting is an anamorphically distorted skull; this distortion is corrected if the painting is viewed from the far right. From this I created The Ambassador’s Skull 3.1.

The profile work is also derived from this but is a work based upon a laser scan of my head.

Judged by:

**Anthony Bond**  
Director Curatorial and Head Curator International, Art Gallery of NSW

**Felicity Fenner**  
Curator, Ivan Doherty Gallery, NSW College of Fine Arts

**Professor Anne Graham**  
Chair of Fine Art, School of Fine Art, Drama and Music, University of Newcastle

Located at Woollahra Council Chambers
Yvonne Kendall is looking for a new house, but unlike her family of turtles she cannot load her loved ones and possessions on her back and simply re-locate. We all have so much baggage. Home, hearth and family continue to bet the inspiration for Kendall’s new work, but with very personal significance.

Judged by:

Laura Back
Curator of Art,
Australian War Memorial

John McPhee
Art Consultant

Yvonne Kendall
Passengers

curtain material, string, glue
42 x 38 x 75 cm

Located at Woollahra Council Chambers
Adam Cullen
Pegasus Flying over Sydney

shells, bullets, wood, metal, blue tongue skin, chrome
40 x 50 x 28 cm

Pegasus flying over the CBD of Sydney is a metaphysical model of Sydney...a city that will never be ‘finished’...growing yet falling apart due to bad management, disposable architecture and an undercurrent of violence and crime....one of the most urbanised cities in the world, it is in constant ruin; a place where gods fly over.

Judged by:

Edmund Capon AM OBE
Director,
Art Gallery of NSW

Deborah Edwards
Senior Curator of Australian Art Art Gallery of NSW

Located at Woollahra Council Chambers
The Marble carving work I...U considers notions of self-presentation and communication. A ‘hoodie’ jersey lies crumpled on the ground, as if casually discarded by the wearer. Obscured lettering can be read on the crumpled chest of the jersey, ‘I...E U’. The ambiguous missing centre word ending in E could be love, hate or something else? The partial message in sms text shorthand within the carved folds implies the transience, and inbuilt melancholy of frustrated and abbreviated expression. The design nods at ‘I love NY’ and team jerseys.

Judged by:

**Geoffrey Cassidy**
Director of Artbank

**Neil and Diane Balnaves**
The Balnaves Foundation

Located at Woollahra Council Chambers
Archie Moore uses a wide variety of different media, depending on the subject of his works. With his carefully crafted paper sculptures, Moore communicates an experience for Aboriginal people of colonization and the introduction and perpetuation of Christianity.

Moore comments on the interventions into peoples’ lives by Church and State through a replica church emerging from an open bible (miniature version).

This is a variation on earlier works involving paper sculptures from bibles, usually opened to the book of Deuteronomy – a very imperialistic and bloody book.

Judged by:

**John Kaldor AM**  
Principal of Kaldor Public Art Projects

**Monica McMahon**  
Curator,  
University of Western Sydney

**Glenn Barkley**  
Curator,  
Museum of Contemporary Art

Located at Woollahra Council Chambers
In this work I have re-interpreted the traditional ballet ‘pas de deux’ – a movement sequence choreographed for two dancers. A horizontal screen is mounted on industrial castors. Positioned at ankle height, the screen displays a video of two feet walking.

In my ‘pas de deux’ the video represents one dancer and the viewer is the other.

The viewer is invited to maneuver the object around the exhibition space, thereby becoming a performer.

My work references the cautious approach and retreat, or give and take ‘dance’ involved in negotiating difficult social and personal interactions.

Judged by:

Dr Gene Sherman AM
Executive Director, Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation

Professor Ted Snell AM
Chair of the Visual Arts Board Australia Council.
Thor Beowulf
The Carbon Credit Machine

mixed media – bonsai, gauges, metal tubing & other instruments
67 x 46 x 52 cm


With the growing awareness and concerns about environmental despoliation, climate change and the fragile interdependence between humans and their natural environment, this living bonsai sculpture highlights the problematic relationship between humans, technology and the natural world.

The artist symbolically deconstructs the natural processes of carbon-based plant growth, photosynthesis and transpiration by representing these natural functions with an array of recycled instruments and mechanical devices of metal, glass and plastic. The centrepiece is the living organism itself, an Australian native Ficus bonsai tree, which here represents all trees as nature’s own efficiently functioning carbon storage and carbon dioxide conversion machines. With this work the artist seeks to raise awareness of the incomparable beauty and sublime functionality of trees and living organisms.

Judged by:

Guido Belgiorno-Nettis AM
Trustee of the Art Gallery of NSW and Director of the Transfield Foundation

Natalie Wilson
Assistant Curator of Australian Art at the Art Gallery of NSW

Professor Janice Reid AM
Vice-Chancellor of the University of Western Sydney and Trustee of the Art Gallery of NSW

Located at Woollahra Council Chambers
Julia Deville is fascinated with the aesthetic used to communicate mortality in the Memento Mori period of the 15th to 18th centuries, as well as the methods the Victorians used to sentimentalise death with adornment.

She works in traditional gold and silver smithing techniques, combined with materials that were once living such as jet, human hair and most importantly, taxidermy.

Deville uses these materials as a Memento Mori, or reminder of our mortality and incorporates the symbols of death throughout her work.

Deville believes it is important to identify with the concept that we are mortal creatures.

“I believe if we can accept our own mortality, we can in turn appreciate the significance of life. As a strict vegetarian, I consider my taxidermy to be a celebration of life, a preservation of something beautiful. I feel strongly about the fair and just treatment of animals and to accentuate this point I use only animals that have died of natural causes.”

Judged by:

Nick Mitzevich  
Director of the Art Gallery of SA  
Professor Ian Howard  
College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales

Sorrow  
stillborn deer, glass, antique platter, rubies 0.35ct, enamel paint  
56 x 35 x 15 cm

Located at Woollahra Council Chambers
Natalie Guy’s practice is concerned with design and function, currently specifically around pseudo modernist design. This continues an exploration of the inherent relationships between objects and the formal interplays between objects in space.

This direction has recently focussed on the domestic interior and utilising the familiarity of everyday objects and mid-century sculpture/design. These objects are reworked, and reconfigured with the intention of creating a mix of the familiar and the ambiguous.

“The objects, or objets d’art of the modernist mid-century interior are loaded with design memories and assumptions, especially around style and taste. These objects are now very collectable and are often utilised to contextualise contemporary aesthetics and art in both the private interior and gallery showroom.”

Judged by:

Lisa Havilah  
Director of Carriageworks

Justin Miller  
International Art Advisor and former Chairman of Sotheby's Australia

Gretel Packer  
Arts Patron and Trustee of the Art Gallery of NSW

Located at Belle Property, Double Bay
This work is from a continuing series of sculptural forms that theoretically engage the conditional and possibility of failure. They investigate the gap, the moment that a projected plan splits from the unfolding of a different system. There is the character of unbounded life, yet in a certain limited form – a drawing of space, and in space.

Judged by:

Dr Michael Brand
Director of the Art Gallery of NSW

Penelope Seidler AM
Arts Patron and Director of Harry Seidler & Associates

Barbara Flynn
International Curatorial Advisor

Robert Owen
Symmetria #37

Painted stainless steel
62.5 x 72.5 x 65.5 cm

Located at Woollahra Council Chambers
Todd Robinson
Psychic Staircase

2016

balloon: cast hydrocal, SLS print, automotive lacquer
base: MDF, steel, plywood veneer
55 x 21 x 28 cm

*Psychic Staircase* (2016) is a sculptural work originating from an ongoing series of balloon inspired sculptures featured in Oooh and Experiments in Natural Philosophy.

These feature balloons that droop and slump as the force of gravity appears to bear down upon them. The series explore sculptural presence, materiality and conditions of audience reception.

In conceiving this particular work, I am interested the physical sensation of vulnerability that one experiences through the feeling of vertigo, as well as the psychology surrounding particular architectural features such as stairs and landings.

The work is cast directly from a latex balloon and finished with automotive lacquer. The balloon is balanced precariously on top of a model staircase. Notably the stairs are not realistically proportioned but rather distorted, with very narrow treads, emphasising the sense of isolation.

Judged by:

**Wendy Whiteley** OAM
Ambassador for the visual arts

**Rhonda Davis**
Senior Curator at Macquarie University Art Gallery

**Barry Keldoulis**
CEO and Group Fairs Director of Art Fairs Australia.

Located at Woollahra Council Chambers
A major conceptual thread running throughout my art practice is the critique of ‘value’ in the ecology of the art world: the way that value is gained and lost in the most elusive ways in art ecologies. My version of Brancusi’s ‘Sleeping Muse’ is very much de-monumentalised; the original sculpture of my face and head had been kicked around the back yard like a football by my cheeky dog Charlie, who also chewed its nose and ears off.

I love that as the piece became increasingly battered, it simultaneously became increasingly ‘muse’-like, in the Brancusian sense – the edges had been affected by the chaos of daily life: softened and rounded out by the sheer force of living. Needless to say, I chose to cast it just as I found it.

Judged by

**Djon Mundine OAM**
Curator, Writer, Artist and Activist

**Roslyn Oxley OAM**
Gallerist and Arts Benefactor

**Alexie Glass-Kantor**
Executive Director of Artspace Sydney and Curator of ‘Encounters’ at Art Basel, Hong Kong

Located at Woollahra Council Chambers
34 x 44 x 20cm

Working with materials that change over time, Silver’s work forms a poetics of decomposition, an entanglement with rupture and destruction as processes of making, where decomposition is figured not as the antithesis of composition but as an aesthetics of (dis-)organisation.

Time is present as a dialogue with history – in *Untitled (When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d)*, Silver produces a series of porcelain busts of himself reproducing Bruce Nauman’s iconic *Self Portrait as a Fountain* (1966-67). Silver’s reference to Nauman, which is in turn a reference to Duchamp’s iconic *Fountain* sculpture (1917), extends a conversation on the history of contemporary art between artists across different time periods, locations and contexts.

The busts have then been tagged and graffitied by different groups of ‘youth’, a moment of collaboration that indexes the modern public bathroom as a site of anonymous mark making and a playful meditation on the history of conceptual art and the status of the readymade.

*Excerpt from Catalogue Essay by Andrew Brooks, 2016*

Judged by

**Amanda Love**  
Director Loveart,  
Independent Art Advisory

**Michael Lynch ao cbe**  
Australian Arts administrator,  
former Director of Sydney Opera House and former CEO of West Kowloon Cultural District Authority, Hong Kong

Located at Woollahra Council Chambers
Autumn is a sign of change on the land, a signal that summer is ending. The colours of autumn are best seen in the European trees planted in groups throughout the Monaro area of NSW, or in the rolling hills of Tumbarumba, and all journeys in between. In the landscape the purpose of these trees is to create shade from the hot summer sun and protection from the winter winds. They are the passing images that become familiar, revealing themselves in the creative processes that inform this art. They realise an abstract simplification that triggers one’s own sensations.

Judged by

**Professor Ross Harley**
Dean of the Faculty of Art & Design and UNSW Chair of Arts and Culture

**Louise Herron AM**
Chief Executive Officer, Sydney Opera House

**Tim Ross**
Design and Architecture Advocate, Broadcaster, Author and Comedian

Located at Woollahra Council Chambers