

MEDIA RELEASE

EMBARGOED UNTIL 7pm Friday 13 October 2017

woollahra
the
small
sculpture
prize



*Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize presented to Melbourne artist
- Sanné Mestrom awarded \$20,000 acquisitive prize -*



Image: Sanné Mestrom, Sleeping Muse, bronze, 2017, 30 x 20 x 20cm

Sydney, Australia: The 2017 Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize – Australia’s pre-eminent national award for small sculpture – has been awarded to Melbourne artist Sanné Mestrom. Ms. Mestrom has been awarded the \$20,000 acquisitive main prize for her work, *Sleeping Muse*, a four-kilogram bronze sculpture of the artist’s head that has been knocked around and chewed on by Mestrom’s dog.

Ms. Mestrom says: *“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 Romanian artist Constantin 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.”*

Ms. Mestrom will be awarded the acquisitive prize money of \$20,000 on Friday 13 October at the opening of the free exhibition of finalist’s art works that will be exhibited from 14 October until 5 November 2017 at Woollahra Council in Sydney. “The winning sculpture will be a welcome addition to Council’s permanent public sculpture collection,” the Mayor of Woollahra Council Peter Cavanagh said.

675 entries were submitted to the Prize this year, the second highest number of entries in prize history, with Ms. Mestrom’s sculpture being one of a selection of 47 finalists. The judging panel for the 17th annual Prize was comprised of curator, writer, artist, activist and first Indigenous judge for the Prize **Djon Mundine, OAM,**



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Executive Director, Artspace, Sydney and Curator, Encounters, Art Basel | Hong Kong **Alexie Glass-Kantor**, and gallerist and benefactor **Roslyn Oxley, OAM**.

Commenting on the choice of winner, Alexie Glass-Kantor said: *“Sanné is a tremendous young early career artist producing extraordinary work with a great level of ambition. This sculpture is really resolved in terms of its conceptual structure but also its technical realization and we love that balance in her work that she really has a strong sense of art history and its precursors when she thinks about contemporary sculpture now.”*

Commenting on the judging process, Roslyn Oxley, OAM said: *“The exhibition as a whole is dynamic, it’s interesting, with a variety of textures and materials being used and a lot of works I’m not very familiar with which is pretty excellent.”*

This year’s Special Commendation Award goes to Sydney artist Madeleine Preston for her ceramic and felt sculpture *Smoker Series – After Guston*. Commenting on the work, Djon Mundine, OAM, said: *“The shapes, colours and incompleteness of the objects are almost perfect but not quite and that’s the tease that there’s things that irritate you. I think good art exists when you look at it and the minute you go away it stays with you and you have an irritation and it’s the same with this piece.”*

Established in 2001, the Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize is Australia’s first national award for an original, freestanding sculpture of up to 80 centimetres in any dimension. The Prize attracts a diverse range of professional and emerging sculptors from around the world with a total of \$24,000 in prize money awarded to winning artists across four categories. The Prize categories are the main acquisitive award, increased this year from \$15,000 to \$20,000; a Special Commendation award of \$2,000; the Viewers’ Choice award of \$1,000; and the Mayors Prize of \$1,000.

The prestigious prize has been previously won by a number of well-known artists, including Todd Robinson who won the 2016 Prize, Robert Owen (2015), Julia DeVille (2013), Mikala Dwyer (2003), Louis Pratt (2006), Adam Cullen (2008), Alexander Seton (2009), Archie Moore (2010) and Thor Beowulf (2012).

The 2017 Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize finalist artists exhibiting works in the exhibition are: NOT (NSW); Abdul-Rahman Abdullah (WA); Sally Blake (ACT); Lauren Brincat (NSW); Angela Butler (NSW); Penny Byrne (VIC); Peter Cooley (NSW); Selena de Carvalho (TAS); Tracey Deep (NSW); Mariana del Castillo (NSW); Lynda Draper (NSW); Mark Dubner (NSW); Merran Esson (NSW); Emma Fielden (NSW); Stevie Fieldsend (NSW); Trevor Fry (NSW); Natalie Guy (NZ); Lizzie Hall (NSW); David Hamilton (TAS); Michael Harrell (NSW); Tevita Havea (NSW); Sergio Hernandez (NSW); Bianca Hester (NSW); Alison Hill (QLD); Phil James (NSW); Michelle Kirk (NSW); Mike Kitching (NSW); Rene Kulitja (NT); Claire Lambe (VIC); Guy Maestri (NSW); Sanné Mestrom (VIC); Dan Moynihan (VIC); John Nicholson (NSW); Karin Olah (NSW); Kenny Pittcock (VIC); Rodney Pople (NSW); Louis Pratt (NSW); Madeleine Preston (NSW); Julia Robinson (SA); Giles Ryder (VIC); Huseyin Sami (NSW); Michael Snape (NSW); Andrew Southall (VIC); Abdullah Syed M I (NSW); Richard Tipping (NSW); Mark Titmarsh (NSW); Peter Vandermark (ACT).

The winner of the Mayor’s Award will also be announced at the official launch event on the evening of Friday 13 October 2017 held at the Woollahra Council Chambers in Sydney, and the Viewer’s Choice award will be decided at the end of the exhibition.

The Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize receives generous support from Principal Sponsor Mark Moran Vaucluse and Gold Sponsors John Symond AM, Belle Property Group Double Bay and Scott Farquhar and Kim Jackson and media partner *The Wentworth Courier*.

Ends



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EXHIBITION DETAILS:

A free exhibition of all the finalist sculptures will be presented from Saturday 14 October until Sunday 5 November 2017 at the Woollahra Council Chambers. All sculptures are available for sale with the exception of the winning work that is acquired into Woollahra Council's public collection. Winners will be announced at the launch of the exhibition on Friday 13 October, 6pm at the Woollahra Council Chambers. A series of Artists' Talks will be presented as part of the program. Further information is available at <http://sculptureprize.woollahra.nsw.gov.au>.

SANNÉ MESTROM BIOGRAPHY:

Sanné Mestrom's practice draws on 20th century iconic modernist works to explore the psychological, emotional and cultural significance attached to them. She explores how value is accorded to these objects, how they are always tied to their cultural and art historical contexts and how they may become substitutes for particular values or beliefs. Through replication, appropriation and disruption her work filters historical mythologies through her own systems of reference, questioning notions of lineage, originality and influence, further altered through her experience of 'making'.

Born in the Netherlands 1979, Mestrom moved to New Zealand in 1983, and now lives and works in Victoria.

Mestrom holds a PhD in Fine Art (2008) and a Graduate Certificate in Public Art (2011), both from RMIT University. She was a studio artist at Gertrude Contemporary in 2010-11, and has also held residencies in Mexico City, 2010, and Seoul, South Korea, 2001.

Mestrom lectures in sculpture and drawing at Federation University, Gippsland.

ABOUT THE PRIZE: The Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize is a national prize for sculptures of smaller dimensions and has attracted strong support from artists, collectors, benefactors, critics, and the local community. The Prize was initiated in 2001 by Council to promote and celebrate artistic excellence, and encourage local community access to the Council Chambers as a site for celebrating and sharing cultural development. The Prize attracts local, national and international entries each year.