

Large-print booklet Archibald Prize 2025

The Archibald Prize for portrait painting

In the 2025 Archibald Prize, artists have their fingers on the pulse, depicting prominent subjects from the worlds of stage and screen, music, media and journalism. Activism, politics and humour are also represented, alongside moments of joy and sadness in everyday life. Artists have turned to self-portraiture, too, as well as to each other, seeking to distil the spirit and likeness of another creative person and mark enduring friendships.

The artworks are all painted from life, with artists meeting their subjects face to face for at least one sitting. Their observations are here transformed into many kinds of portraits – from whimsical and tender reflections to more intense and formal depictions.

Our continuing fascination with the Archibald Prize and with portraiture itself provides a moment for artists to hold a mirror to the face of Australian society and contemplate the nuance of human experience.

Established in 1921, the Archibald Prize is open to any artist living in Australia or Aotearoa New Zealand. It is Australia's most popular – and sometimes controversial – art award. The trustees of the Art Gallery of New South Wales have selected and judged this year's exhibition from over 900 entries, and the winner receives \$100,000, courtesy of presenting partner ANZ.

The Packing Room Prize is awarded by the Art Gallery staff who handle all the entries, and the People's Choice award goes to the painting voted most popular by you, the visitors to this exhibition.

Abdul Abdullah

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

No mountain high enough

oil on linen

The man sitting astride the horse in Abdul Abdullah's painting is Jason Phu, an artist whose often humorous work references folk tales, personal narratives, cartoons, jokes, and demons and gods from Chinese culture. Phu is a finalist in this year's Archibald Prize with a portrait of actor Hugo Weaving.

'He's my best friend,' says Abdullah, a Perth-born artist now based in Bangkok, Thailand. 'We talk on the phone every day, he was the best man at my wedding, and we have travelled together.

'You will often see Jason wandering around. He may look without purpose, but he is undoubtedly on his way to do something. He is a ceaseless adventurer – hence his pose in this portrait – who at any one time is involved in a dozen conversations on a dozen different platforms, bringing his unique perspective to one flummoxed friend or another.

'He has "couch advice" tattooed on his ankle. His work may look like it was made in an instant, but we don't see the preparation that goes into getting to that point. He may deny it, but I see his wanderings, chats and imaginings as the training for the art he makes.'

Describe the landscape in this painting of artist Jason Phu.

Abdul Abdullah has painted Jason astride a horse and on an adventure. Abdul and Jason are best friends and chat all the time. Spot the colourful birds that circle Jason's head. What do you think they mean?

How would you portray your best friend to show something you like about their personality?

Clara Adolphins

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Adrian Jangala Robertson (paintbrush and hat)

oil on linen

'I first saw Adrian's work at the 2024 Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair, and I was completely drawn in by a small painting of his depicting two figures, which I soon discovered were family members. I loved his use of colour and mark-making,' says Clara Adolphins, who lives and works in the Southern Highlands, NSW. Her portrait subject, Adrian Jangala Robertson, is a Warlpiri man from the Central Western Desert region, who is also a finalist in this year's Archibald.

'I spoke to Adrian at the Bindi Mwerre Anthurre Artists studio a few times via video call, alongside the studio manager, before travelling to Mparntwe/Alice Springs for a few days of painting together. We come from different worlds but there are a lot of similarities in our work. He paints his family and I draw on old family photography. Adrian is non-speaking and English is his second language, but we communicated through our painting, sitting side by side,' says Adolphins.

'I took a lot of photos, as my usual work is photography-based. Back in my studio, I made several more portraits. This painting is quite simple, but I think it captures Adrian's quiet confidence and self-assurance as a painter.'

Jessica Ashton

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Katie Noonan

oil on board

Combining her ethereal soprano with a masterful technique, Katie Noonan has been hailed as one of the greatest Australian vocalists of all time. A singer-songwriter, she performs across folk, jazz, rock, opera and choral music, and has five ARIA Awards, 29 albums and seven platinum records to her name. Her other credits include music director of the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2018 Commonwealth Games on the Gold Coast, and artistic director of the Australian Vocal Ensemble (AVÉ), which she founded in 2021.

'I first heard Katie sing on *Play School* when my daughter was young and I was instantly captivated by her exquisite voice. I have followed her ever since,' says Jessica Ashton.

'My goal is to paint women who not only excel in their fields but also contribute to their communities. Katie embodies both. In approaching this portrait, I aimed to capture Katie's warmth and generosity, qualities I encountered when I met her. I used a pink light filter to reflect her kind nature, while the complementary green wall creates a dramatic background.'

Mostafa Azimitabar

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

The definition of hope

oil on linen

‘Survivors understand each other. Survivors have stories to tell,’ says Mostafa ‘Moz’ Azimitabar, a three-time Archibald finalist. He and his subject, Grace Tame, have forged a close friendship since their lawyer introduced them two years ago.

Tame advocates for survivors of sexual abuse and was the 2021 Australian of the Year. A long-distance runner, she broke her own record at the Bruny Island Ultra Marathon in 2024, running the 64-kilometre event in under five hours.

Azimitabar, a Kurdish refugee, sought asylum in Australia in 2013. Held on Manus Island and onshore, he was freed in 2021. When he unsuccessfully sued the Australian Government for damages, Tame was in court to support him. While on Manus Island, Azimitabar learnt to make paintings using a toothbrush, which he continues to do today.

‘Grace and I are connected through an understanding of torture,’ says Azimitabar. ‘I never thought I could be a runner, but Grace believes in the healing power of running and encouraged me. I recently ran a half marathon. I have become stronger, healthier and more positive.

‘In this portrait, the road represents the journey through life. Grace’s right hand looks as if she’s lifting the road, lifting the world. By bravely sharing her story, she inspires people not to give up. She is a hero; the definition of hope.’

Billy Bain

Dharug, Southeast region
Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Rona and Pig at Palm Valley

oil on linen; recycled timber frame with ceramic tiles

Rona Panangka Rubuntja is a Western Aranda artist from Central Australia and a member of Hermannsburg Potters in Ntaria in the Northern Territory. She is deaf and communicates in Auslan and Western Aranda sign language.

‘Rona and I first met at the 2022 Australian Ceramics Triennale in Mparntwe/Alice Springs where we presented on a panel about using humour in our art,’ says Billy Bain, a first-time Archibald finalist who lives and works on Gadigal and Dharug land. ‘We had a good laugh together. Her big personality shines through in her artworks and I’ve been a huge fan ever since.’

Last year, Bain returned to the Northern Territory and visited Hermannsburg Potters to conduct some ceramic workshops.

‘On our last day, the crew took me out in the pottery troopy to Pmurlankinya/Palm Valley. We gathered firewood, cooked up some roo tail on a big bonfire and I took a quick dip in the Finke River. Rona and her dog Pig (aptly named for her eating habits) struck some poses for me to make sketches and take photos,’ says Bain.

‘The portrait is framed with recycled Oregon timber, recovered from the beams of an old house, and fitted with 68 ceramic icons, each hand-built and glazed. They represent the wild, wonderful things I encountered in Ntaria, and pay homage to Rona and her ceramic practice.’

How many different plants and animals can you name on this painting's frame?

Billy Bain has painted a portrait of Rona Panangka Rubuntja, a potter, and her pet dog called Pig. Rona is surrounded by ceramic plants and animals that live in the region in Central Australia where she is from. What other objects has Billy painted?

If you had to make ceramic objects to represent where you live, what would you make?

Natasha Bieniek

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Cressida Campbell

oil on wood

Cressida Campbell is an acclaimed Australian artist whose practice spans more than four decades.

In 2020, she was diagnosed with a rare brain abscess that nearly ended her life. After two operations she became paralysed on her right side. At that time, she wasn't able to pick up a paintbrush or write her name. With the help of treatment, she recovered and is able to continue making art.

'I wanted to approach my portrait with sensitivity but also demonstrate the complexity of human experiences,' says Natasha Bieniek, an 11-time Archibald finalist.

'Although Cressida is an incredibly successful artist, she is completely down-to-earth, humble and warm. I've painted her in her home, surrounded by the things she loves. Behind her hangs an original Utamaro print – an 18th-century Japanese artist who was an early influence for Cressida. Her beloved garden is framed by a doorway in the background, and she is wearing a dress created by her sister Sally, who is a textile designer.'

Angela Brennan

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Bridget in my painting

oil on linen

Bridget Brennan is an award-winning Indigenous journalist. She is also artist Angela Brennan's niece.

A Dja Dja Wurrung and Yorta Yorta woman, based in Naarm/Melbourne, Bridget is a newsreader and co-host of *News breakfast* for the ABC. She was previously the ABC's Indigenous affairs editor and, as the first Aboriginal foreign correspondent at the broadcaster, spent nearly two years in London.

In 2023, she was one of the reporting team investigating the crisis of missing and murdered First Nations women for *Four corners*, which won a Gold Quill award. She also anchored the ABC's coverage of the Indigenous Voice to Parliament referendum.

'I have painted Bridget a number of times since she was a child,' says Angela Brennan. 'Bridget is always a joy to be with. She is kind and compassionate, and makes for a wonderful painting subject.'

'My painting practice is predominantly concerned with abstraction, though I have painted portraits since the early 1990s. This painting was inspired by the yellow pantsuit I've seen Bridget wearing while presenting for the ABC. I wanted to create an image of her stepping into one of my abstract paintings.'

Yuriyal Bridgeman

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Sana Balai, curator, visits Yuriyal's studio

enamel on linen

Sana Balai is a Bougainville elder from Buka Island, Papua New Guinea (PNG), who migrated to Australia in 1990. She is a curator, writer and researcher renowned for her work with Pacific, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander collections.

Yuriyal Bridgeman, from Australia and the Highlands of PNG, first met Balai in Melbourne in 2011 when she visited one of his early exhibitions. 'She is a guide, supporter and mother figure to many diaspora artists,' says Bridgeman, a first-time Archibald finalist.

'Aunty Sana came to my studio for a sitting. The walls are painted pink and green, and decorated with *bilums*, handwoven bags that represent motherhood.

'I painted her in the black-and-white dress she was wearing. I added a *kakapa* (grass skirt) and traditional *bilas* (body adornment) in the form of white dots (*a bun turu tubur*) that symbolise ancestors and a pathway.

'I inserted myself in the portrait wearing my work boots and holding a *kuman*, a shield from my region in PNG.

'Aunty Sana sat with her hands curled on her lap. It looked like a love heart, so I added this as a sign of her giving nature.'

Mitch Cairns

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Stephen Ralph

oil on linen

Stephen Ralph is a sculptor. He makes abstract and figurative works, using a range of materials and techniques, including concrete, ceramic and wood, and most recently, carved marble heads and anatomies.

He is also a musician and plays alongside fellow Sydney artists Mitch Cairns, Nick Strike and Michael Snape in the band *Terrible Music*.

‘Stephen is a close friend – a master on the fiddle and a meticulous artist. He carries his exemplary craftsmanship across disciplines with care, precision and gentility,’ says Cairns, who won the Archibald Prize in 2017.

‘Stephen and I met almost 20 years ago at Stonevilla Studios in Sydenham where he works – an extraordinary studio with a rich history in its own right.

‘This portrait followed a path of least resistance. It began with the rediscovery of a linocut I made around five years ago – an image that, at the time, wasn’t consciously of Stephen. But seeing it again, it became him. It opened up an opportunity to reflect and formalise in paint our friendship, our shared time playing music together, and the occasions we’ve exhibited alongside each other.’

Do you recognise the musical instrument in this painting?

This portrait of sculptor Stephen Ralph is by Mitch Cairns. Mitch and Stephen play music together in a band. Look closely at the flowing shapes and curves behind Stephen that give a sense of movement and rhythm.

Imagine the sounds Stephen is making and move your arms to the music.

Mathew Calandra

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

His face like my face – self-portrait as Robert Englund playing Freddy Krueger

gouache, synthetic polymer paint and ink on paper

‘Robert Englund is an actor who plays Freddy Krueger in the 1984 film *A nightmare on Elm Street*, which is one of my favourite movies; it’s very good,’ says Mathew Calandra, a first-time Archibald finalist and an artist at Sydney’s Studio A.

‘I have a picture of Robert Englund in my bedroom. I did my self-portrait as Freddy Krueger because I love horror movies and horror characters. I was born a few days before Halloween and so I’ve always loved anything spooky.

‘This is the biggest piece I have ever done and it was really extra hard work. I work slowly with small watercolour brush pens because it’s better that way. The background is ink – and it’s red like fire and blood.’

Peter Ke Heng Chen

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

I'm a little fish in New York (ripples of ambition)

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Peter Ke Heng Chen has channelled his pride, love and belief in his son, comedian Aaron Chen, into this portrait.

'The idea for the piece was inspired by Aaron's words, "I'm just a little fish in New York",' says Peter, a first-time Archibald finalist.

Aaron has a big following in Australia. He won the People's Choice Award at the 2024 Melbourne International Comedy Festival and was nominated for two 2025 AACTA Awards for his work in the television shows *Fisk* and *Guy Montgomery's Guy Mont spelling bee*.

'From winning the Melbourne International Comedy Festival's national competition for high-school students, Class Clowns, to performing at the Sydney Opera House, Aaron embarked on his journey. To see what the Big Apple has to offer, he moved to New York in 2023, where he has made waves in the comedy scene,' says Peter.

'This painting started with Aaron, Sydney and New York as the focal points. I was then inspired to include images of shifting clouds, fish leaping over waves and Times Square, leading to a star-studded path symbolising ambitions of Hollywood. Van Gogh's rough brushstrokes seep into the composition. Like a jazz improviser, I create instinctively. This vision took shape over two months, guided by passion and spontaneity.'

How many famous landmarks do you recognise in this painting of comedian Aaron Chen?

Aaron's dad, Peter Ke Heng Chen, painted this portrait to show how proud he is of Aaron's achievements.

Notice how waves and goldfish swirl around Aaron, leading your eyes around the painting, passing trophies and medals along the way.

What objects could someone paint in your portrait to show your skills and achievements?

Rachel Coad

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Home

oil on linen

What is home? Is it a place? Is it the people you love or the city you grew up in? Or is home where your heart sings the loudest?

These were the questions pulsing through Rachel Coad's mind when she painted this portrait of Ken Leung, a global creative director who has shaped the visual language for some of the world's biggest brands including UNIQLO and DKNY.

'We met almost 30 years ago when we were working together at a local newspaper and have been close friends ever since,' says Coad, a figurative painter and comic maker based in Margaret River, Western Australia. This is her first time in the Archibald Prize.

'Ken was born in Malaysia to a Chinese family who migrated to Australia in search of better opportunities. After growing up in Perth, he left to develop his career in London and New York, returning to Australia during the pandemic after two decades overseas.

'The sitting took place at Ken's home. He was preparing to move back to New York again, with mixed feelings. This portrait captures his dilemma of living between cities at the opposite ends of the world, while raising a larger philosophical question – what is the true meaning of home?'

Yvette Coppersmith

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Self-portrait with two cats

oil and sand on jute

Throughout the history of portraiture, animals have often appeared as metaphors or emblems, symbolising status and lifestyle.

‘In my own experience, the relationship with my pets transcends mere representation, becoming an integral part of the creative process – serving as both studio companion and model, quietly inhabiting the space,’ says Yvette Coppersmith.

‘Their presence brings a sense of calm and intimacy, offering an antidote to the noise and chaos of the world beyond the frame. Through this unique bond, my work gains a deeper emotional resonance, as my cats shift from passive figures to active collaborators in the artistic process. This quiet yet profound connection reflects the timeless human need for companionship, offering both solace and inspiration.’

To achieve the unique velvety texture of her painting’s surface, Coppersmith has used both oil paint and sand ‘to add extra warmth and depth’.

Coppersmith won the 2018 Archibald Prize with another self-portrait, which referenced George Lambert’s self-portrait from the 1922 Archibald Prize.

Luke Cornish and Christophe Domergue

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Blood, sweat and tears

spray paint on pigmented resin and fiberglass peeling

The subject of this work is Yvonne Weldon, a Wiradjuri woman and the first Indigenous councillor to be elected to the City of Sydney.

The collaborative work blends the photorealistic stencil work of Luke Cornish (aka ELK) with the innovative 'peeling' process of Christophe Domergue. This process involves applying pigmented resin to urban surfaces and then peeling it back to incorporate tangible pieces of the physical environment in the artwork.

The peeling in this work was taken from the floor of Sydney's Eveleigh Railway Workshops, capturing the DNA of the site's rich industrial history.

'The image of Yvonne is based on a photograph of her, aged around eight. She is standing outside Sydney Town Hall next to her uncle, Paul Coe, a prominent land rights advocate, as he addresses a crowd that had just marched from Redfern,' say the artists.

'The story of Redfern is a significant, often-overlooked chapter in Australia's history, embodying social change and the unwavering pursuit of self-determination by First Nations peoples.

'Yvonne now has an office in Sydney Town Hall. As a community representative, she follows in the footsteps of her elders. *Blood, sweat and tears* is a reminder that our actions reverberate through time.'

Jonathan Dalton

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Natasha in the other room

oil on linen

'I met Natasha in 2017 when our portraits were Archibald neighbours, and we've since become friends,' says Jonathan Dalton, a seven-time Archibald finalist. His subject, artist Natasha Walsh, is also a finalist in this year's Archibald Prize.

'I wanted to represent Natasha as regal and curious, in another space, on a journey only briefly interrupted by the viewer.

'In her own practice, Natasha sometimes co-opts, sometimes hijacks, the work of other artists, not with overt judgment but with a deft touch and subtle wit. Her eloquent art challenges and redefines the way women both view and are viewed in art.

'The paper dolls symbolise that long line of historically white male artists, with women often reduced to token representation. The oversized tailor's scissors also acknowledge Natasha's process (collages often act as a starting point for her paintings) and bring a subtle touch of humour to the delicacy and intricacy of her own work.

'She's wearing a dress designed by Nicol & Ford, the subjects of her 2024 Archibald entry, with a silhouette echoing both John Singer Sargent's famous painting of Madame X and the German expressionist film *Nosferatu*,' says Dalton.

Whitney Duan

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Banquet (Rainbow Chan)

oil, sand and gold leaf on canvas

Chun Yin Rainbow Chan 陳雋然 is an artist and musician whose work weaves together sound, textiles and performance. As a child of Hong Kong migrants, she belongs to a generation of Australian artists interrogating and subverting the tropes of their parents' and grandparents' experiences to express their cross-cultural identity.

'I discovered Rainbow's work as a teenager,' says Whitney Duan. 'She became a beacon of inspiration as she navigated pressures to pursue the non-creative career path encouraged by many migrant parents.

'In this portrait, the banquet table becomes a stage for these tensions – between tradition and reinvention, inheritance and authorship. The fruits, laden with symbolism, reference her mother's Weitou cultural heritage, whose peoples were Hong Kong's first settlers. Weitou women's cultural knowledge, including ritual songs and laments, underpin much of Rainbow's work as she seeks to conserve fading oral histories and decide how to receive them in the face of change,' says Duan.

Painted on reclaimed canvas, destined for landfill, this work echoes the themes of preservation and transformation from Duan's own experience of Australian–Chinese cultural identity. Her portrait pays homage to Chan's practice while reflecting on the ways we shape – and reshape – our cultural inheritances.

Have you ever eaten in a restaurant that has a turntable ('lazy Susan') to share food?

Whitney Duan has painted artist and musician Rainbow Chan, who is reflected in a shiny serving turntable. Spot the fruit on the turntable and describe the different types of decoration in this scene. Who could the arm on the left belong to?

Imagine you are sitting across from Rainbow Chan. What would you chat about?

Jeremy Eden

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Felix Cameron

oil on canvas

Australian actor Felix Cameron is best known for playing the young Eli Bell in the Netflix series *Boy swallows universe*, based on Trent Dalton's award-winning novel. In 2024, at just 15, Cameron won two Logie Awards for his performance – Best Lead Actor in a Drama and Most Popular New Talent. He also appeared in the 2020 film *Penguin Bloom* alongside Naomi Watts.

'I was inspired to paint Felix after seeing his Logies acceptance speech; it was incredibly moving,' says artist Jeremy Eden.

'I was already a big fan of *Boy swallows universe* and I thought Felix gave such a powerful, grounded performance. After meeting him and his family, I wanted to portray him not as a character, but as himself: a teenager at home, passionate about sport.

'I painted him spinning a cricket ball in his family's home in regional Victoria, wearing the shirt he wore to the Logies. Behind him is the view from their property.'

The portrait took three months to paint, with Eden describing it as 'the most ambitious work' he's attempted to date. Eden won the 2022 People's Choice award for his portrait of Samuel Johnson in that year's Archibald Prize.

Remy Faint

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Ramesh (with mask)

synthetic polymer paint and ink on silk, painted and stitched canvas, fringe, felt, laser-cut brackets, wood

Remy Faint's subject is Sri Lankan-born Australian artist Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran. Best known for his irreverent, innovative approach to ceramic media, Nithiyendran works with a range of sculptural materials, as well as painting and printmaking. A previous Archibald finalist, he has been the subject of three other Archibald portraits.

'I have known Ramesh for six years as a friend and mentor – though our relationship is more a meeting of minds where our different life experiences, ages and cultural backgrounds help us both grow,' says Faint, a first-time Archibald finalist.

'Ramesh has a unique charisma that resonates in his art and outgoing personality. This made me think about performativity, a theme Ramesh has explored in his work through the recurring motif of masks, both as a form of adornment and a conceptual idea.

'The choice of silk as the painting surface is something I've been exploring in my own practice, reflective of my Chinese heritage. I incorporated collage to create a layered facial facade, or "mask", with zoomorphic features, such as a tiger, which is often associated with protection and echoes mythological threads in Ramesh's work. The composition also references his ongoing interest in seated figurative sculpture.'

David Fairbairn

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Head of BF no 2

acrylic gouache, pastel, etching and ink on paper mounted on board

David Fairbairn's portrait subject is cardiothoracic surgeon Professor Bruce French, head of cardiothoracic surgery at Liverpool Hospital in South Western Sydney.

'Outside of work, he and his partner, artist Pamela French, have raised their four children, living completely off the grid,' says Fairbairn. 'They are active advocates for the use of non-polluting energy and the preservation of the natural environment, including biodiversity on the fringes of our urban cities, specifically the Cumberland Plain Woodland in Western Sydney.'

This painting marks Fairbairn's tenth time as an Archibald finalist. He describes his working process as a combination of painting and drawing: 'I predominately see myself as a draughtsman, with the drawing and linear aspect holding the structure and integrity of the work together.'

'Bruce's striking appearance, with his lean physique and almost skeletal bone structure, immediately drew me in,' Fairbairn says.

'As a rule, my subjects tend to be people in their later years, who have had rich, varied life experiences, which makes it possible for me to create a more emotive, expressive and visually stimulating response.'

Timothy Ferguson

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Keiran

oil on canvas

Timothy Ferguson's subject is Sydney artist Keiran Gordon, whose practice combines painting, drawing and sculptural elements. Gordon's abstract compositions merge the grotesque and the playful, reflecting existential concerns through layers of humour, irony and colour.

'Keiran and I have been friends for almost two decades, since we studied together at the National Art School,' says Ferguson, a first-time Archibald finalist, who teaches visual arts at Sydney Grammar School.

'In this portrait, beneath Keiran's inscrutable expression lies a sense – I hope – of his resolve, intellectual curiosity and wry humour. Although I initially envisaged a larger work, I eventually decided on a smaller scale that might invite closer contemplation but remain striking from a distance.

'My style is influenced by the artists of the Baroque period, who used very strong contrasts of light and dark to create an arresting visual effect, and in particular the dramatic naturalism of Jusepe de Ribera, whose painting *Aesop* hangs in the Art Gallery of New South Wales.'

Robert Fielding

Yankunytjatjara, Southern Desert region; Western Aranda,
Central Desert region; Afghan
Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Malatja malatja (into the future)

synthetic polymer paint, unu (ash) and binder on linen; kulata (spear) made from speargrass, kangaroo tendon and spinifex resin

Robert Fielding is a Yankunytjatjara and Western Aranda artist working out of Mimili Maku Arts in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands, South Australia. Known for his deeply layered works that honour both past and present, Fielding blends cultural knowledge with contemporary techniques to speak back to colonial narratives.

This portrait depicts Fielding's grandson Arnold Dodd, a master spear-maker. Arnold continues a long lineage of craftspeople, learning under the watchful eyes of his grandfather Sammy Dodd. Fielding painted this portrait using ash and pigment from the same fires that shaped the spears, embedding both subject and process with the material of culture.

'This painting is not just about Arnold. It's about all of us who came before and all who will come after,' says Fielding. 'It's about what survives – language, skill, story. He holds it with strength and grace. Through him, our culture walks boldly into the future.'

'I paint to remind this place – these walls, this nation – that we've always been here, strong, still standing. Kulata kunpu ngaranyi – the spear continues to stand strong.'

Julie Fragar

Archibald Prize 2025 winner

Flagship Mother Multiverse (Justene)

oil on canvas

Justene Williams is a Brisbane artist who works across different media to produce vibrant amalgamations of video, photography, sculpture and performance.

'There is nobody like Justene. She thinks big and makes bigger, deploying everything from car bodies to opera singers to make work as fearless and feeling as she is,' says Julie Fragar, a four-time Archibald finalist.

'Justene says she learned to use materials in this wild way while growing up around her father's car wrecking yard in Western Sydney, and in later years, while working in visual merchandising for industrial retail. Her studio back catalogue – some of which is in this painting – is a multiverse of characters and events that confront the relentless weirdness we go through en route to the other side.

"Flagship Mother" in the title comes from Justene's recent endurance performance in New Zealand titled *Making do rhymes with poo*. It was about the labour of getting by. For Justene, like many women artists, that means the labour of a day job (Justene and I work together at an art school), of making art to deadlines, and the labour (and love) of being a mother.

'In the lower left of the painting you can see Justene's daughter Honore looking up at her mum half in awe and half asking if this is what she will have to manage too.'

Describe some of the unusual objects in this portrait.

Julie Fragar has painted artist Justene Williams as if she is floating in the night sky. In the shadows, there are examples of some of the artworks Justene has made, along with odd figures and contraptions that create a dream-like quality.

Spot the little figure of Justene's daughter on the left balancing high on the top of a sculpture. What do you think she is about to say to her mother?

Linda Gold

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Still standing and fighting

oil on canvas

Former AFL player and legendary football coach Neale Daniher was diagnosed with motor neurone disease (MND) in 2013. The following year, he co-founded the charity FightMND, which has raised over \$115 million for medical research to help find a cure for the disease he calls 'The Beast'. He was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia in 2021 for his advocacy and fundraising work.

Linda Gold first became aware of Daniher when her husband, Julian Gold, a professor who works at Sydney's Macquarie University, received a research grant from FightMND.

'I was inspired by Neale's determination to continue fighting despite the disease robbing him of speech and upper body movement,' says Linda Gold, a first-time Archibald finalist and a former nurse.

'I wrote asking if he would consider posing for a portrait. He kindly agreed to a 15-minute sitting at his home. In the end, I spent more than an hour with Neale and his wife Jan.

'Seated in his high-back chair, in his most comfortable pose, Neale wears a beanie, scarf and sweater with the MND logo, which he sports at every opportunity. His socks are the AFL club colours of his beloved Essendon, where he played,' says Gold.

'I was delighted to see Neale appointed as the 2025 Australian of the Year. I can't think of a more inspiring and deserving role model.'

Jaq Grantford

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Sisters

oil on canvas

The sitting for this portrait of sisters Antonia and Nicole Kidman took place in Sydney last Christmas Eve. The painting is a tribute to their mother, Janelle Kidman, who passed away in September 2024.

‘This was their first Christmas without her, which must have been difficult,’ says Jaq Grantford, a three-time Archibald finalist.

‘One of Janelle’s dying wishes was to have this portrait painted to celebrate her daughters’ close family bond. I felt honoured and touched that they agreed to a Christmas sitting,’ says Grantford. The fact that they could all get together on such a special day was ‘a Christmas miracle’ according to Nicole.

Antonia, a former journalist, is a lawyer working in family law, while Nicole is an internationally renowned actor and producer. They both have children and place a strong importance on family.

Grantford draped material around them as a reference to children playing make-believe and a way to unite the sisters, showing their close relationship. The luxurious brocade, which is patterned with flowers that their mother loved, is a nod to Hollywood and glamour, while the fading edges are reminiscent of old family photos and memories from the past.

Yolande Gray

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

I won't wish, I will

oil on canvas

Yolande Gray's subject is renowned ceramic artist Pippin Drysdale, whose career spans three decades. Working from her studio in Fremantle, Western Australia, Drysdale combines a passion for her craft with a love of the landscape. Her ceramic works – which in recent years have focused on Australia's desert landscapes – exude intense colour matched with evocative linear markings.

Having admired Drysdale for many years, Sydney-based artist Yolande Gray reached out in December 2024 to ask if she could paint her.

'I spent a week with Pip in January, making sketches and taking photos. I was drawn to her commanding character and rigorous work ethic. The jovial spirit that imbues her every action is always pitched at maximum intensity – from her explosive laugh to her extravagant generosity and total commitment to her work.

'The process was important in the development of my final idea, which came towards the end of that week. I began thinking about Rodin's statue of Balzac and used that as the inspiration for the composition to reflect Pip's power, tenacity and standing in the art world,' says Gray, a first-time Archibald finalist.

'The title was suggested by Pip herself. I felt it perfectly matched the person I'd met, and what I was trying to capture in the portrait.'

Tsering Hannaford

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Meditation on time (a left-handed self-portrait)

oil on board

Using her non-dominant hand, Tsering Hannaford painted this self-portrait seven months after sustaining a disabling tendon injury in her right wrist.

'My right hand is not just connected to my work and livelihood, but to my sense of independence, agency and identity,' says the Adelaide artist, an 11-time Archibald finalist.

'As a 38-year-old woman, I have become acutely aware of the slow but certain effects of the passage of time on the body's capabilities, especially from a reproductive perspective. However, the injury confronted me with the reality of the body's fragility in a more immediate way – both physically and psychologically – as I grappled with emotions of loss, moving through denial, depression and finally acceptance.

'I saw a path forward through the development of my non-dominant hand and this painting became a challenge to myself. A self-portrait is a place to experiment, take risks and practise, and the creation of this work became a useful and transformative exercise,' Hannaford says.

'Art can have the power to transform suffering and, if anything, my experience with chronic pain has made me more sensitive to the challenges of others, and grateful for the blessings I do have.'

JESWRI

Gadigal, Southeast region
Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Nooky, The Voice

spray paint and synthetic polymer house paint on linen

JESWRI's subject is Corey Webster (aka Nooky), a Yuin and Thunghutti rapper from Nowra, on the NSW south coast. Nooky is a solo performer and member of the hip-hop band 3%, the host of Triple J's *Blak out* program, and the founder of the Indigenous social enterprise We Are Warriors.

'Nooky and I have been fans of each other's work for years,' says JESWRI, a Gadigal street artist and a first-time Archibald finalist.

'Our work is rooted in ensuring the young mob have access to creative freedom and the opportunities to chase their dreams. We believe First Nations people should retain exclusive rights to tell our own stories – until we've reached treaty.

'Nooky and I are proud fathers to young, deadly daughters. Nooky's music often speaks to the criminalisation of our youth, with incarceration in this country starting from age ten.

'This portrait captures him right after his 2024 ARIA performance, wearing a bulletproof vest adorned with imagery by Wiradjuri and Ngiyampaa artist Melnunnie. That night, Nooky had an undeniable presence, which needed to be immortalised,' says JESWRI.

'Nooky amplifies the voices of First Nations people through his music, activism and mentorship. This portrait embodies him as the voice of our people – powerful, unfiltered and ever-present.'

Brittany Jones

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

New Madonna

oil on linen

Working primarily as a portrait artist, Brittany Jones says she is 'at the front end of what feels like a lifelong relationship with self-portraiture based on much self-reflection'.

'I chose to include my son in this self-portrait to commemorate his life with me earthside at roughly the same amount of time he spent inside before he was born,' says the first-time Archibald finalist. 'I drew inspiration for the pose from the classical depictions of the Madonna and Child.'

'As the painting progressed, the Madonna and Child pose became more and more apparent, as did the visual difference in my son's and my ethnicities. I began to see us with an outside gaze. The very nature of our appearances introduces a dramatic shift that challenges and reimagines the traditional iconography.'

'*New Madonna* suggests a move beyond the traditional religious or mythological context to encompass the diversity of modern motherhood and emphasise its universality across different cultures.'

'And, at the end of the day, it's also just a self-portrait of me feeding my son.'

Solomon Kammer

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Kim

synthetic polymer paint and charcoal on paper

Solomon Kammer's subject is artist Kim Leutwyler, who has been an Archibald finalist on seven occasions.

'Kim and I have been friends for years and I visit them on every work trip to Sydney,' says Adelaide-based artist Solomon Kammer, whose work examines the intersection of bias, social constructs and healthcare inequalities.

'Kim's art has always been much like the artist themselves – vibrant, joyful and unapologetically queer. These past few years, Kim has been working to dismantle the barriers that have increasingly pulled them away from the truest version of themselves.

'We met earlier this year. Between this meeting and the last, Kim had undergone gender-affirming surgery, and it was immediately evident that this external transformation had effected an internal realignment and comfort I had never seen before. It was beautiful to behold, but the joy of living more authentically has come with a sharpened awareness of how differently the world responds. Visibility, while empowering, can also elicit a new kind of hostility,' says Kammer.

For Kammer and her sitter, this portrait 'celebrates Kim reclaiming themselves, but acknowledges that it's not without a cost. They advocate for the depoliticisation of trans bodies and lives so that trans people may access their right to live safe, joyful, thriving lives.'

Madeleine Kelly

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Diana through threads

oil and synthetic polymer paint on polyester

Diana Wood Conroy is a textile artist, painter and emeritus professor of visual arts at the University of Wollongong. Over a six-decade career, she has created hundreds of beautifully woven tapestries, connecting ancient and modern art, and authored several books.

'I chose to paint Diana for the Archibald Prize because we share a love of geometry, colour, shape and pattern,' says Madeleine Kelly, a German-born artist who lives in Wollongong. She is a first-time Archibald finalist.

'This portrait melds Diana's obsession with numbers and patterns with the structure of the painting. I expose the method I used by having Diana's arm rest on the foundation of the triangle, which is fundamental to the geometry of the work.

'The loom through which we see her is a field of lines that has the effect of creating a passage between the viewer and Diana's creative power. The threads in between facilitate a kind of entry into her big, deep eyes,' says Kelly.

'By magnifying the eyes, I make them stare back at the viewer, with an assertive, determined quality, intensifying her gaze. There's an asymmetry to them, which has a much more interesting effect than straight realism.'

Daniel Kim

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Thom Roberts

oil on linen

'I have known Thom for many years. I see him at Studio A in Sydney where we go to make art. Thom has a special nickname for me – he calls me 'Andrew'. I think Thom loves the artwork I make, and I thank him for being in awe of my paintings,' says Daniel Kim.

'Thom and I have both been Archibald finalists before and have had artworks exhibited at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Thom and I also did some sketching at the Art Gallery at a late-night art event.

'Thom was a good model for my portrait. We set up an area at Studio A for Thom to sit where I could do some sketches. Thom posed in front of the pink background. I did a painting from life in oils and we took some photos. It was an experiment to leave out the background, so the focus is just on Thom's face. This was difficult for me, as normally I paint everything I see. But I am happy with how it turned out.'

Bronte Leighton-Dore

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Monica in her studio

gouache on paper

Monica Rani Rudhar is an artist who works across sculpture, video and performance. Born to Indian and Romanian migrant parents, her artwork explores cultural disconnection, particularly around her ethnicity.

'Monica and I met when we were both studying at COFA (the UNSW College of Fine Arts). Known for her large-scale ceramic heirloom jewellery, she has been creating great work and the art world is taking notice,' says first-time Archibald finalist Bronte Leighton-Dore.

'When I'm painting landscapes, I tend to work *en plein air* (outdoors) and I took a similar approach here. While the portrait was painted indoors at Monica's Granville studio in Western Sydney, I brought my basket of paints and brushes and my portable paint table. Monica sat in front of her beautiful wall display of earrings and studies. I made a couple of sketches, then set out the paints.

'I don't mind movement in my sittings; it helps relieve the pressure and creates a more relaxed atmosphere. In this case, Monica is shown chatting with me.

'My aim is to capture the person in minimal marks, keeping it light and immediate. During the sitting, Monica told me she's now known as "the earring artist", so I made sure to include her own jewellery as a painterly ode to her practice.'

Richard Lewer

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

You are only as good as your last painting

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Richard Lewer's self-portrait depicts him stepping back to examine his painting, having taken off his glasses.

'This portrait is an exploration of artistic discipline and the relentless pursuit of improvement. The title of the work, *You are only as good as your last painting*, speaks to the collective experience of being an artist, the solitude of the studio, and the unending drive to make a painting better than your last,' he says.

Born in Aotearoa New Zealand and based in Melbourne, Lewer is a five-time Archibald finalist.

'In the portrait, my clothes are flecked with the smears and splotches of paint from months in the studio. There is a physicality to the outfit; it is a palette, a uniform, and a record of repetition, routine and the discipline of making. The glasses in one hand and paintbrush in the other are metaphors for the act of looking and making; the tools of observation and inspiration.'

Fiona Lowry

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Ken Done

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

'I chose to paint Ken Done for the Archibald because his art and design was woven into the fabric of my childhood,' says Fiona Lowry. Done is an internationally recognised artist known for his paintings, textiles and design work.

'I remember my mother buying his bedspreads. They felt rich and vibrant, like bringing joy into the home. I used to draw his fish, completely absorbed in their playful shapes and colours that echoed the ocean and my home town. His frangipanis and hibiscus still sit in my memory as symbols of the changing seasons – of warmth, light, and a uniquely Australian kind of beauty.'

Lowry won the 2014 Archibald Prize for her portrait of architect Penelope Seidler.

'Portraiture, for me, is about recognising someone's presence and contribution,' Lowry says. 'While Ken's work has sometimes sat outside the usual conversations around contemporary art, his influence runs deep. His belief that art should be everywhere – not just in galleries, but part of everyday life – has shaped how generations of Australians see, feel and remember.'

'This portrait is a small way of honouring that expansive vision, and the role his work has played in shaping our collective imagination.'

Col Mac

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Miranda and Prince

oil on canvas

Col Mac was watching Miranda Otto play the cunning Maxine in the Australian television series *Thou shalt not steal* when he decided to ask if she'd sit for a portrait. A longtime fan of her work, he was thrilled when she agreed.

Otto's acting credits include the films *The Lord of the Rings*, *War of the worlds* and *The daughter*, and the television series *Homeland* and *Rake*.

They met at Otto's home, where Mac found her to be 'a very engaging, thoughtful person. We were outside for most of the morning before ending up in the living room, which is why Miranda is wearing those amazing bright sneakers,' says Mac, a first-time Archibald finalist based in Brisbane.

'When I saw the couch, I immediately wanted to paint her in repose, drawing on the work of American artist John Alexander White. Her cat Prince came in during the sitting for pats. Miranda was recently in the television series *Chilling adventures of Sabrina*, playing a witch with a black cat, so Prince looked like he'd strolled off one of her sets. When I started to paint them together it reminded me of a scene from a Pierre Bonnard painting. I like the way painting can blur boundaries with those kinds of links and coincidences.'

Catherine McGuinness

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Shan is a little little little mermaid

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Shan Turner-Carroll is a queer Australian artist of Burmese descent who works across sculpture, performance, photography and film.

'Shan is an artist and my Prince Charming. He helps me with my sketching and we have made lots of artworks and exhibitions together,' says Catherine McGuinness, an artist at Studio A in Sydney.

'Shan helped me with my solo exhibition called *Night Blossom* at Mosman Art Gallery. We did a performance there as Elvis and Priscilla Presley. He is cute and he is always so funny. When we work together we always dance around and he laughs his head off at me.

'In my painting, the dress Shan is wearing is special because he helped me design it for an exhibition we had. It is a mermaid dress and I wore it at the exhibition. He was my handsome prince and I was the little mermaid. Now, he is a little mermaid too.

'Shan makes me very happy and I love him so much. I can't stop laughing when I see him. I am very proud of my painting of him. I worked so hard and I love it.'

Kerry McInnis

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Savanhdary

oil and synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Kerry McInnis's subject is Savanhdary Vongpoothorn, a Lao–Australian painter and installation artist known for her perforated canvases and intimate works on paper.

Arriving in Australia with her parents when she was seven, Vongpoothorn draws on Lao cultural references, interwoven with Australian and other cultural influences. Spiritual references are important to her, especially Lao-Pali texts and concepts from Theravada Buddhism, while motifs and symbols from traditional Lao textile weaving are also intrinsic to her practice.

'I have long admired the integrity and execution of Savanhdary's oeuvre, appreciating the complexity of the intercultural connections it illuminates,' says McInnis, a two-time Archibald finalist based in Bungendore, regional NSW.

'I approached Savanhdary about sitting for a portrait, which led to us meeting on several occasions. I decided to make her central to the composition, holding a favourite textile, with a reference to her work genre in the background. This required a detailed discussion about her technique, and various trials on my part to represent the background painting as an idea, rather than attempting to copy one of Savanhdary's own beautiful abstractions.'

Kelly Maree

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Jackie O

synthetic polymer paint on linen

Jackie Henderson, better known as Jackie O, is a radio presenter who has been on the airwaves for over three decades. She is the co-host of the popular and sometimes controversial radio program *Kyle & Jackie O Show*.

'I used to listen to her on the radio on my commute to work from Wollongong to Sydney, and I recently read her memoir *The whole truth*. I admire her as a strong, empowered woman, who simultaneously appears kind-hearted and down-to-earth,' says Kelly Maree.

'I reached out to her agent, and was surprised to discover that Jackie had seen my painting of actor Josh Heuston in last year's Archibald Prize and that it was her favourite portrait.

'After meeting at a cafe to discuss the painting, we did the sitting at her office studio. I wanted the portrait to feel whimsical as if she were outside beneath the moonlight. I positioned her leaning forward and looking towards the viewer as if caught in a moment of thought. The dress was imperative to the piece. I wanted it to appear ethereal, almost glowing, so I framed her against a dark backdrop to amplify the colours within the fabric. Jackie was nothing but kind and completely open to the painting process.'

Vincent Namatjira

Western Aranda, Central Desert region
Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

King Dingo

8 panels: synthetic polymer paint and oil stick on linen

In 2020, Vincent Namatjira became the first Indigenous artist to win the Archibald Prize with a portrait of Adam Goodes. This year, the Western Aranda artist, born in Mparntwe/Alice Springs, is represented with a self-portrait.

‘When I paint self-portraits, I want people to get to know me a bit and see what is important to me – Country, family, history, power, recognition. Self-portraiture is a way of sharing what it might be like to be in my shoes. It’s also an opportunity for me to look at the history of this country and ask, who has the power, and why?’ says Namatjira.

‘Portraiture is one of the ways we record our history, so I want to use my practice to ensure that Indigenous people are properly recognised and acknowledged. We don’t need any more heroic portraits of royals and colonial figures!

‘In this work, I’ve painted myself in the style of historical portraits of the rich and powerful, as a reversal of colonial authority and ownership. It’s part of an ongoing series in which I’ve painted the dingo – a protector – as a symbol of Indigenous power. *King Dingo* represents Aboriginal strength, pride and resilience, and respect for Country, culture and Indigenous leadership past and present.’

Look at the different versions of Vincent Namatjira in this painting.

Portraits from the past often show kings and queens, but Vincent has painted himself to show the strength and pride of Indigenous people. He includes a dingo – a protector – as a symbol of Indigenous power and resilience.

What animal would you choose to represent your best qualities?

Chris O'Doherty (aka Reg Mombassa)

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Self-portrait with nose tube

oil on board

This is the second time that Chris O'Doherty (aka Reg Mombassa) has been represented in the Archibald Prize with a self-portrait.

'This painting is based on a selfie and some sketches I made while in hospital a couple of years ago,' he says.

'I find self-portraits easier to set up as I am readily available and will not complain about a negative or ugly portrayal. Plus I don't need to be stuck in a room with a stranger.

'In this picture I have tried to express the existential horror that accompanied the pain, discomfort and occasional humiliation experienced during a two-week stay to have my prostate, lymph glands and appendix removed, and three hernias repaired.

'It was at the height of the pandemic and raining incessantly, which contributed to the surreal gloom of the experience. I thought the nose tube added a note of grim humour and a complimentary diagonal element to the composition.

'The hospital staff were professional, kind and friendly, and thanks to their excellent work I am fully repaired and still around. So a big thank you to the Australian medical system.'

Sassy Park

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Casey

bisque porcelain, glaze

Sassy Park's subject is Casey Chen, a ceramic artist who blends childhood nostalgia with East Asian ceramic traditions, applying imagery from folklore, mythology and pop culture to hand-thrown plates and vases.

They met at the National Art School, Sydney, when Park was completing her master's degree and Chen was an undergraduate. Both artists play with the history of ceramics, blending traditional forms with personal and cultural narratives.

'I've enjoyed a generous friendship with Casey and his friends. We still meet up to swap technical ceramic advice and play mahjong,' says Park, a first-time Archibald finalist.

The ceramic surface has become a place for Park to paint. 'I've been experimenting with wall pieces based on fragments of fresco; under-firing the porcelain clay to resemble plaster and using underglazes to paint. This panel cracked in the initial firing, but incorporating it into the work was an acknowledgement of the nature of ceramics. The glazed yellow vase and background pattern reference Casey's work, while the black feline in the foreground represents the cats that both Casey and I have.'

Sid Pattni

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Self-portrait (the act of putting it back together)

oil, synthetic polymer paint and hand-beaded appliqué on canvas

Sid Pattni's self-portrait examines how he has come to understand himself through visual languages shaped by orientalist and colonial histories.

'The work borrows and adapts imagery from a range of sources – including Company paintings [made in British India in the 18th and 19th centuries], botanical drawings and Mughal miniatures – and links disparate pieces together,' says Pattni, an Indian–Australian artist, born in London, raised in Kenya and now based in Melbourne. This is his first year in the Archibald Prize.

'Crucially, these references are about getting it wrong; about producing pictures that speak of the here and now. I'm very attracted to the cycle of collapsing interpretations, telling a story of how India is perceived externally and how generations of Indians came to internalise and inhabit Western projections of "Indian-ness" today.

'Ultimately, my portrait is not a fixed statement but a dynamic exploration of identity, which is a constant negotiation between inherited histories and the lived realities of the present.'

Look at the intricate details in the borders of this painting.

Sid Pattni was inspired by botanical drawings, old colonial paintings and Indian miniatures to create this decorative self-portrait. Sid is an Indian–Australian artist who explores ideas of identity in his work. Look at Sid’s elaborate clothing and how he has chosen to only portray his eyes, so we have to imagine the rest of his face.

What clothing would you wear to represent who you are?

Meagan Pelham

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Magic Nikki and Charlie Fancy Pants Party ... DJaaaaaaaay

gouache, synthetic polymer paint, glitter, nail polish and embellishments on watercolour paper; custom framing with laminate and acrylic objects by Nikita Majajas

Nikita Majajas is a designer and jeweller, while her wife Charlie Villas is a DJ.

'Nikita is such a talented artist. I love her work because it is so colourful and fun and makes me happy. I had the best time DJing with Charlie at the MCA (Museum of Contemporary Art Australia); we were vibing, rapping and just living it up on stage,' says Meagan Pelham, an artist at Studio A in Sydney.

'I'm all about hip hop, good music and having a blast. That's why I chose them as subjects for my Archibald portrait.

'I'm also the ultimate romantic and I think they are too. I got them to wear their matching couple suits, which are red with gold love hearts – OMG so fashionable. I just love fashion, falling in love, getting married. Love is love, my darlings!

'I've added touches of nail polish to the painting for a little extra sparkle. The frame is decorated with custom-made acrylic pieces by Nikita, each one representing something I absolutely love – think OMG, BFF, cocktails, fancy pants and lots of love hearts ... It's a total vibe!'

Describe the textures and shapes in this artwork.

Meaghan Pelham has used fun phrases and hot pink, red and gold colours for this portrait of DJ Charlie Villas and jewellery designer Nikita Majajas. Spot the jewels, shimmering paint and stuck-on objects. Which one is your favourite?

What phrases or shapes would you add around a portrait of a friend or family member?

Jason Phu

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

**older hugo from the future fighting hugo
from right now in a swamp and all the frogs
and insects and fish and flowers now look on
synthetic polymer paint on canvas**

Jason Phu's subject is actor Hugo Weaving. Phu (who is also a subject in this year's Archibald Prize), says:

older hugo from the future is fighting hugo from right now in a swamp, f*** everyone is a f***** c*** aren't they, even the older version of you who was sent back in time to stop the world falling to s*** but couldn't resist finding you and telling you about what you were doing wrong with your life, but like in a really personal and nasty way so that you somehow got into a fight in this swamp and all the frogs and insects and fish and flowers now look on and you both just look like a bunch of f***heads d***f*** horsec*** s***eater worm rat slugs.

Adrian Jangala Robertson

Warlpiri, Central Desert Region
Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Warwick Thornton

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Adrian Jangala Robertson is a Warlpiri man from the Central Western Desert region, who now lives in Mparntwe/Alice Springs. His subject, Warwick Thornton, is a Kaytetye man, born and raised in Mparntwe. Thornton is an internationally acclaimed film director, screenwriter and cinematographer, whose credits include *Samson and Delilah* and *Sweet Country*. He is currently working on a sequel to the latter.

In both their practices, Robertson and Thornton communicate their deep connection to Country, family and the role of the past in the present day, creating thoughtful work, loaded with meaning and memory.

Growing up in Papunya, Robertson witnessed the inception of the Western Desert painting movement. Since 2002, he has painted with Bindi Mwerre Anthurre Artists, a supported studio for First Nations artists.

This is Robertson's second time as an Archibald finalist and he is proud that this year's sitter is again a celebrated First Nations person from home. Robertson is also the subject of Clara Adolphs' portrait, included in this year's Archibald Prize.

Joan Ross

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Kidjerikidjeri

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Joan Ross is known for confronting Australia's colonial history through her interdisciplinary practice. She is a three-time Archibald finalist. This year, her subject is First Nations curator Coby Edgar.

'I don't do a lot of portraits, but when I decide to attempt one, I want the sitter to be involved, because the way we see ourselves is important,' says Ross.

'Coby is a friend. A strong, straight-talking Gulumerridjin (Larrakia) woman and an amazing writer, she recently co-curated my show at the National Portrait Gallery, which I couldn't have done without her.

'The title *Kidjerikidjeri* (willy wagtail) is her given name. Coby is a queer woman and the bright red and orange symbolises this. I had the idea of portraying her in a colonial dress. She suggested it be pulled down to the waist to emulate the portraits of her ancestors, photographed by Paul Foelsche in the 1800s. Her body is painted in a wash of ochre and the tattoos were designed by and represent people in her family. She chose to hold red seeds that her ancestor Billiamook gifted to the first colonials. I have used hi-vis (as I often do) as a stamp of colonisation to show that it's a stain on us all.'

Sally Ryan

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Lette loose

oil on board

The indefatigable author Kathy Lette rose to fame with her iconic 1979 novel *Puberty blues*, set amid Cronulla's surfie culture in Sydney's south. Co-written with Gabrielle Carey, it was made into a film and became a cult classic.

'Kathy's subsequent novels are often credited with pioneering the 'chick lit' genre. However, her work is more than just light-hearted entertainment – it's rooted in strong feminist themes that have evolved with each stage of her life: from teenage angst to motherhood, and now the world of menopause,' says Sally Ryan.

'Through it all, Kathy has championed women's issues, with a cheeky sense of humour and a sharp, insightful perspective. As someone who enjoys a good laugh and shares Kathy's age demographic, I felt I could relate to her. So, I was thrilled when she agreed to be my sitter.

'It was an absolute joy to capture her essence – full of energy and mischief – with her Cronulla roots serving as the perfect theme for my composition. At her request, I added some sharks into the mix – a playful reference to her most recent novel, *The revenge club*.

'However, Kathy isn't swimming with the sharks; she is on top of the water, in control and keeping them at bay.'

Evan Shipard

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

The green man

oil on linen

A green-fingered ambassador for all things great and small from the kingdom Plantae, Costa Georgiadis is a landscape architect, environmental educator, author and host of the ABC television series *Gardening Australia*.

Evan Shipard painted him during a portrait session with the Bowral & District Art Society in their studios in NSW's Southern Highlands.

'Costa is a warm, inquisitive individual, who is passionate about his causes and very interested in the painting process,' says Shipard, a Sydney-based artist and first-time Archibald finalist.

'He is an animated character on screen, but I aimed to capture a quieter, more pensive moment that hopefully offers a fresh insight into this popular man. After spending a day painting him, it felt as if we were old friends. He checked in on the work during breaks, but was careful not to get too close as he was excited about the final reveal.

'I added the figs and floral arrangement later in my studio. The figs are one of his favourite plants and symbolise his Greek heritage. Adorning his beard with flowers was inspired by his look at the recent Logies.'

Loribelle Spirovski

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Finger painting of William Barton

oil on canvas

William Barton is a virtuoso of the yidaki, also known as the didgeridoo. A proud Kalkadunga man, he is a composer and producer who has expanded the horizons for his instrument through an engagement with classical music.

Loribelle Spirovski met him in 2024 after one of his concerts. 'I had heard him speak at a panel the day before, and was captivated by his humble wisdom. On stage, his presence was both serene and electric. He agreed to a portrait sitting, inviting me to his home,' she says.

'He told me about writing music during long walks. That's what his music is like – a long walk, with the senses free to roam. When it came time to work on his portrait, I played his composition "Birdsong at dusk".

'For years, I've been recovering from an injury that has made painting difficult and painful. Many times, I've questioned my role as an artist,' says Spirovski.

'As the music began, my hand set the brush aside and I dipped my finger into the soft, pliant paint. I turned the volume up, the music guiding me. Without a brush, painting was almost painless. As the portrait painted itself, I felt alive in a way I hadn't for a very long time.'

Vipoo Srivilasa

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Self-portrait as a cat king

colour pigment on porcelain

First-time Archibald finalist Vipoo Srivilasa is a Thai-born Australian artist, based in Melbourne. He works predominantly in ceramics, creating contemporary porcelain sculptures that address complex issues around queerness, migration, the environment and spirituality.

'I've had my two Burmese cats for 14 years. They arrived around the same time as I bought my house in Melbourne. At first, I used them as subjects to practise my painting skills, but over time, I realised I simply loved looking at them,' he says.

'To create this self-portrait, I used my phone in selfie mode instead of a mirror, but I found far more joy in observing my cats than in looking at my reflection.

'Since I work primarily with ceramics, I chose to paint it on a handmade porcelain tile. In Thailand, painting on porcelain is common and often seen in ritual wares. This connection to porcelain reflects my Thai background and ceramic practice, while the cats represent my everyday life and experiences in Australia.

'I see this self-portrait as both playful and personal, blending identity, culture, and affection for my feline companions into a single frame.'

Do you have a pet or favourite animal?

Vipoo Srivilasa has painted himself on a ceramic tile surrounded by his two Burmese cats posing in different positions. What differences can you spot on the cats to tell them apart?

Vipoo used his phone in selfie mode to make this portrait. How would you pose in a selfie?

Clare Thackway

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

With the shadow

oil on linen

The title of Clare Thackway's self-portrait draws on a Jungian concept relating to the unconscious part of the psyche where aspects of the personality are hidden and suppressed.

Born in Canberra, Thackway now lives in Paris, France. She is known for her intimate portraits and figurative paintings in which she explores ideas to do with psychology, feminism and the history of art. Using the association of cloth and pattern to illuminate the inner threads of our memories and the connectivity between people, her paintings often convey a sense of the unspoken and meanings carefully withheld.

Painted over two years, this self-portrait was made at a time when Thackway was experiencing personal growth. The blurry rendering of the face and body, hidden under the cloth, symbolise a sense of invisibility. The crumpled, grid-like gingham cocoons her, lending a sense of vulnerability but also venerability.

Instead of using a mirror, Thackway used the Photo Booth app on her computer. The poor-quality camera diminished the detailing of her face, which she painted in a few hours, though the fabric took months to complete.

As you move around the room, do the eyes in this portrait follow you?

Look at the detail on the fabric wrapped around Clare Thackway in this self-portrait. Observe how the checked pattern, creases and shadows take up most of the picture. Is Clare lying down or standing up?

What would you wrap yourself in for your own self-portrait?

Natasha Walsh

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

The Yellow Odalisque of Brunswick

oil on copper

Atong Atem is a South Sudanese artist, born in Ethiopia and now based in Melbourne, who uses photography to explore postcolonialism and practices among the African diaspora.

'Her photographs, which often play with her own representation, have always captivated me,' says Natasha Walsh. 'When I asked her which work from art history she would like to reimagine together, she suggested Henri Matisse's *Yellow odalisque*.

'The odalisque genre allowed male artists to play with the erotic and exotic simultaneously through this idea of the Orient. European women, nude or partially nude, bathed in silks in Islamic harems with African servants. Both the women and their servants are slaves to the harem and the owner of the painting. In *Yellow odalisque*, Matisse had begun to modernise the genre with the female figure appearing in European clothing.

'When I met Atong at her home in Brunswick, she was interested in replacing the Moorish patterns in Matisse's work with African textiles, which are important in her own work.

'In representing Atong, I wanted to celebrate her in a more naturalistic style than Matisse used, while still simplifying colour and line to maintain the connection to the original we were reimagining.'

Peter Wegner

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Portrait of Sue Chrysanthou

oil on panel

Sue Chrysanthou is a Sydney defamation barrister; a high-profile, formidable lawyer who has represented a number of prominent clients, gaining a reputation in her own right.

'I recently watched a livestream of Sue in a defamation case and it was at that moment that I considered painting her portrait,' says Peter Wegner, who won the 2021 Archibald Prize for his portrait of artist Guy Warren. 'I was impressed by her energy and the complex ritual of her questioning.'

For this portrait, Chrysanthou wore her senior counsel robes and a silver bracelet, given to her by her four children.

'I was interested in trying to capture a certain casualness through the mark-making and fluidness of the paint. The painting reflects a professional moment, but I hope that Sue's sideways glance takes the portrait beyond a senior counsel. In that time capsule, there is also a parent, pet owner, beekeeper, wildlife carer and alleged amateur breakdancer, with a huge enthusiasm for life.'

Kaylene Whiskey

Yankunytjatjara, Southern Desert region
Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

From comic to canvas

synthetic polymer paint and book pages on plywood

'I loved comic books when I was a young girl. My family would help me save up enough coins to buy a new comic and I would be so excited to read my heroes' latest adventures,' says Kaylene Whiskey.

'Now that I'm an artist myself, I like to say that my artworks are "from the comic to the canvas" because I love to paint my favourite comic book superheroes, especially Wonder Woman. I paint ladies with superpowers because the ladies at Iwantja Arts, where I work, are kungka kunpu (strong women) too! I also love to paint my favourite musicians like Dolly Parton and Tina Turner. I show everyone coming together on Anangu Country, sharing bush tucker like tjala (honey ants) and ngintaka (perentie lizard), and having fun, singing and dancing together.

'I painted this work on old photo books from second-hand shops to make my own *Superqueen's comics*. I want to show the young girls that women are strong, and make each other stronger by caring for each other. They are superheroes!'

Born in Mparntwe/Alice Springs, Whiskey is a third-time finalist in the Archibald Prize.

Look at these colourful comic-style characters.

Kaylene Whiskey has painted some of her favourite superheroes and singers having fun on Anangu Country. Notice how real comic-book pages have been used for the background of each scene.

How many little desert creatures, plants and objects can you spot?

Marcus Wills

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Cormac in Arcadia

oil on linen

Marcus Wills has painted 13-year-old Cormac Wright, who appeared alongside Joel Edgerton and Sean Harris in the 2022 film *The stranger*, written and directed by Cormac's father Thomas M Wright.

Here, Cormac (left of centre in the green hoodie) is witness to a mythical scene from Greek antiquity. King Lycaon of Arcadia tests Zeus's divinity by serving him the flesh of his son Nyctimus.

'Cormac appears in the painting alongside a cast of characters, including my family, friends and acquaintances, who are there to assist in telling the story. They include Cormac's mother (actor Lotte St Clair) and father, who were the subjects of my 2018 and 2017 Archibald paintings; Jack Riley, who featured in my 2020 Archibald entry; and Nikki Tarling, who featured with Jack in my 2023 Archibald portrait. Cormac also appears in a second position, partially hidden behind a figure on the right-hand side,' says Wills.

Wills won the 2006 Archibald Prize with a portrait of sculptor Paul Juraszek, which was modelled on an etching by Flemish engraver Marcus Gheeraerts the elder.

Callum Worsfold

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Self-portrait in the studio

oil on board

A self-portrait where the face is partly hidden? Callum Worsfold found the idea amusing and provocative.

A first-time Archibald finalist, he describes this painting as 'a raw reflection of me in all my grungy griminess. Although the gas mask was initially a mere prop, adding to the grunge aesthetic, the choice to submit a painting which obscures half my face in a portrait prize seemed a funny idea,' says Worsfold.

'It also leans into the perceived controversy around the Archibald Prize, and means it can be interpreted as an anonymous picture that other artists in the field of representation can project themselves onto as they struggle for recognition in an art world which has moved on from this archaic way of painting.

'I used a mirror, which required minimal movement and maximum focus, and the painting was completed in one session. As an impressionist, I find that it's counter to the philosophy of my art to work on a painting for more than one day. I find it especially egregious to use a photographic reference to finish a piece. To me, this means working over the most authentic, freshest layers of paint for a stiffer, more detailed finish.'

Lucila Zentner

Archibald Prize 2025 finalist

Wendy in the gallery

oil on canvas

Lucila Zentner's subject is acclaimed artist Wendy Sharpe, winner of the 1996 Archibald Prize for a self-portrait. Sharpe has held over 70 major exhibitions and won many prizes. In 1999, she was appointed an official war artist by the Australian War Memorial and posted to East Timor.

'Every time I walk into my studio, I imagine an altered version of Dante's words over the door – "Abandon fear, ye who enter here",' says Zentner, a first-time Archibald finalist who is also a practising doctor.

'I met Wendy last year and was struck with a familiarity of sentiment when she said that as an artist you must not censor yourself. That's what moved me to paint her for the Archibald.

'I visited Wendy's 2024 *Spellbound* exhibition at the Art Gallery of New South Wales for her sitting. The figure she cut had a Vermeer-like quality. I immediately had an idea for a painting that was small and secretive – a window into a rich inner life. By using Wendy's motifs and paintings for the background, distorted through my lens and brush, I acknowledge and celebrate that another person's inner life is unknowable, even allowing for a lack of fear and censorship in art.'