

Mosman Art Prize 2024 Judge's Report.

Julie Ewington

The 2024 Mosman Art Prize has attracted a record number of submissions—over 1600—and a remarkable diversity of subjects and styles. Now that online submission has been established, artists from all over the country, from every state and territory, are entering the Prize. I want to warmly congratulate all the artists who have submitted works, and who are being exhibited: you are all contributing to this country's rich imaginative life.

The diversity of geographical origin is matched by a wealth of different approaches to painting; it speaks to the vibrancy of painting in Australia today. Works by many First Peoples artists are innovative expressions of Country, culture, and conviction, as are works from artists coming from the Chinese, Lebanese, Vietnamese and other communities. Above all, I was struck by the invention, curiosity and energy of these artists. The four artists chosen for awards this year work in profoundly different ways, and it has been a privilege to work with the Mosman Art Gallery to select them. An even greater delight has been the opportunity to see so much exciting new work.

Mosman Art Prize (major acquisitive prize) - \$70,000

Gemma Smith

Pollen Prism 2024, synthetic polymer paint on linen

Gemma Smith undertakes glorious explorations of colour and gesture. These are governed by rigorous protocols that Smith uses to direct each painting, ensuring that every work will be fresh and surprising, including for the painter. Essentially, Smith's paintings are exercises in inspired perversity. *Pollen Prism* is an ode to sensuality; made during a residency in upstate New York, in high summer, it testifies to the season's warmth with its rich colours, and the way it registers the exact conditions of its making. Splendid, confident, and affirmative, *Pollen Prism* holds its divergent energies together in an unlikely, and wonderful, tension.

Margaret Olley Commendation Award supported by Gillian and the late Brian Jones - \$10,000

Khaled Sabsabi

Popaganda (part A & part B) 2024, synthetic polymer paint, watercolour and gouache on dye diffusion thermal transfer prints, 3d parts

These postcard-sized paintings are reports back from a conflict zone, one not so far from those seen nightly on Australian television, and identical in their evidence of devastation. Khaled Sabsabi has made thousands of photographs on numerous travels back to his native Lebanon, here rethought through the act of painting. Some images show destruction, others sublime views out to sea; all are heart-breaking, because of the intensity of Sabsabi's gaze, the sumptuous smoky depth of the colours he chooses, and the painter's loving touch.

Not souvenirs, then, but definitely fragments of memory. Unflinching. And look again at the title: there are several stings in this tale.

Guy Warren Emerging Artist Award (35 years and under) supported by Fourth Village Providore - \$3,000

Jacquie Meng

playing pool 2024, oil on canvas

Jacquie Meng plays with images drawn from popular cultures, as well as the history of art, but her take on these is, I suspect, entirely personal. Meng's large-eyed female protagonist seems to be an avatar of herself, multiplied by the many personages on the field of play. Life here is a game of chance; one may be lucky or not. What is very clear, however, is the intensity of the pool-player, in her brilliantly coloured universe: she is intent on winning this game. I applaud her energy, her determination!

Allen Gamble Award, supported by Brezic Whitney - \$5,000

Nick Santoro

5G Panel 2024, synthetic polymer paint on board and aluminium

This deadpan take on mobile telephone relay towers around Wollongong, where the artist lives, is a novel account of the contemporary urban landscape. Each section is based on a photograph of a particular location and was taken on his mobile telephone, but collectively the images are a quasi-surreal view of the curious beauty of the everyday environment. Mysterious, even lovely, these landscapes suggest a certain foreboding: is this a celebration or an elegy?