THE TRUSTEE

Judging the Prize: an interview with Janet Laurence, artist and AGNSW trustee.
Janet Laurence is a mixed media, installation artist whose work has been included in major survey exhibitions and collections, nationally and internationally. She exhibits regularly in Sydney, Melbourne and Japan. Her work explores a relationship to the natural world from an architectural context. It extends from the gallery space into the urban fabric, and has involved collaborations with architects and landscape architects. Janet Laurence has been a trustee and judge for the Archibald Prize since 1997.

Q. What is it like to be a judge for the Archibald Prize?
A mixture of things. It is an enjoyable experience. It is quite fun to be involved in the frivolity of the Prize. On the other hand, I also realise it’s serious for the artist.

Q. How intuitive is your approach to judging the Prize?
The judging process is quite fast. You like to think you’ve got in mind what portraiture is today when selecting the works. At times there seems to be no time for real discussion about what portraiture is.

Q. What is the basic process? Describe it step by step.
The 11 members of the Board of Trustees at the Art Gallery of NSW are the judging panel for the Archibald Prize. The process of eliminating works and choosing the finalists occurs over a number of viewings. The panel sit in a line and the paintings are brought into the room for viewing. At this stage, there are works that are definite nos. All other works go into the next round. In the second round the discussion starts. This is where you bring in other considerations. The culling process is quite fast. The finalists are then hung in the Gallery space as an exhibition and the panel then chooses the winning portrait.

Q. What are the advantages and disadvantages of judging in a group?
At times it can be difficult yet it can also be interesting to discuss ideas with others. It makes it fun and can also make selection more difficult. Half of the group do not have an art background and are not used to looking at art all the time. They are also sensitive to that and listen to the art oriented members of the panel. They also feel that their experience offers another viewpoint. The prize is a public exhibition and therefore public opinion counts.

Q. Does the winning entry tend to stand out?
Finalists tend to stand out. At least half the finalists are unanimously selected. Some finalists are at first not considered.

Q. Do you think the Archibald Prize has moved with the times?
Yes, slowly. This exhibition is personality driven. It keeps it the sort of show it is. It tends to be driven by the non art public. The Prize attracts an audience that enjoys seeing pictures of people rather than the paintings themselves. This is good because the audience can see what paintings can do to the people.

Q. How do you view the role of the Archibald Prize in and outside the art industry?
Regarding the audience outside the art industry it brings people to the Gallery who wouldn’t necessarily come to the Gallery. It therefore broadens the audience. Inside the art industry it is not viewed very seriously. On the other hand it is also an opportunity to develop an artist’s career and to be hung at the Gallery and be seen by so many people. A lot of artists don’t enter the Prize.
Q. Has your opinion about the Prize changed since judging it?
I am much more aware of what it can do for an artist’s career when they win it. I am also aware of what goes into it. There is a lack of contemporary artists entering. More contemporary artists would bring a fresh and exciting outlook. The trustees have a varied appreciation for art and at times contemporary art is difficult to place in the restrictive framework of the judging process and to allow it to shine. Adam Cullen is an example where the contemporary artist is successful in achieving the winning portrait.

Q. Do you view the Prize differently as an artist as opposed to being a judge?
I do view the Prize differently.
As an artist I feel for the artist entering. Not all works are given as much attention, however, in saying that, the artist knows what they are entering.

- How intuitive is the judging process? Create a judging panel for the Prize in your classroom and choose a winner from this year’s finalists. Consider who would be on the panel and why? What criteria would you consider in making your selection?
- Discuss how you came to your decisions.
- In what way does public opinion count in the success of the Prize? Compare the winner chosen by the Trustees to the Packers Prize winner and the People’s choice award.

THE CRITIC

Discussing the Prize: The role of the media
Read the article Enter at your own risk by Joyce Morgan in the Sydney Morning Herald Spectrum section March 6–7 2004 and consider the following case study issues.

- What role does the media play in the success of the Prize? How important is an article in the Sydney Morning Herald for the artist who wins and for the Art Gallery of NSW? In what way does it influence the audience who will come to see the exhibition?
- Collect articles from a variety of sources and develop your own critic on the Archibald Prize. Consider the language used as well as the style and aim of the critic.
- Who is the greatest winner; the artist, the audience or the Art Gallery of NSW? Discuss.
- Research 2 artists that have not been mentioned in this article and discuss their experiences since winning the Prize.
THE ARTIST

Winning the Prize: an interview with Del Kathryn Barton, contemporary Australian artist

‘This painting celebrates the love I have for my two children and how my relationship with them has radically informed and indeed transformed my understanding of who I am.’

Del Kathryn Barton 2008

Del Kathryn Barton won the 2008 Archibald Prize for You are what is most beautiful about me, a self portrait with Kell and Arella. Barton’s work combines traditional painting techniques with contemporary design and illustrative styles. Although she does a lot of figurative work, much of it self-referential, she doesn’t do a great deal of portraiture. She was represented in the 2007 Archibald Prize with a painting of art dealer Vasilis Kailman.

Born in Sydney in 1972, Barton has a Bachelor of Fine Art from the College of Fine Arts, University of NSW, where she taught for three years until 2003. She has had regular solo exhibitions since 2000 and has participated in national and international group shows including the Helen Lempriere Travelling Art Scholarship, the Blake Prize for Religious Art and the Sulman Prize. She was a finalist in the 2007 Dobell Prize for Drawing.

Q. Did you create You are what is most beautiful about me, a self portrait with Kell and Arella with the intention of entering the 2008 Archibald Prize? Why did you decide to enter the Archibald Prize?

This is a painting that I had wanted to make ever since I became a mother. Within attempting to meet many deadlines, entering the Archibald was a perfect opportunity to give myself the excuse to prioritise completing this work. It is a work that I would never sell. Connected to this I do believe that portraiture is an important discipline for a figurative painter. It brings a rigor to my practice that other aspects of my work do not demand. I try to complete one portrait every year.

Q. Describe the process you took to create this painting. Did you ask your children to pose or did you work from sketches and photographs. How did you know when this work was finished?

I did start with an idea of how I wanted to configure the bodies within the composition. My children and I posed for many happy snaps that we took in the studio. I worked mainly from these photos and also from memory.

Knowing when a work is finished is such an elusive thing. With my paintings (as opposed to my drawings) I find that I have to exhaust the pictorial space before I feel that I can release it from the studio. Given that I am always working towards deadlines, often it is this date that helps define a finish point. Given the obsessive nature of my methodologies I could at times keep working indefinitely on my paintings.

Q. How would you describe this intensely personal self-portrait? What have been some of your major influences in developing this artwork?

This painting celebrates the love I have for my two children and how my relationship with them has radically informed and indeed transformed my understanding of who I am. I don’t feel as though I have drawn from influences directly for this particular work. Many people however have suggested links to Egon Schiele and Gustav Klimt both of whom were artists I was very interested in at art school many years ago. I was also obsessed with traditional Indian miniatures especially the colour symbolism. These concerns have emerged within this work where I have tried to use iconography to symbolise the fertility of love and life.

Q. Describe what it was like to win the Archibald Prize and become a public figure within minutes of the announcement.

Nothing could have prepared me for the media storm that accompanies winning the Archibald. It is a bewilderling and overwhelming event. Being catapulted into such a public sphere was an aspect of this experience I was very uncomfortable with. Being this exposed brought up a lot of anxiety in me.

Q. How has winning the 2008 Archibald prize affected your art practice?

The most exciting thing about winning the Archibald was that it brought a much larger viewing public to my work. Given that the Archibald painting is in many ways not that representative of my broader practice this was the most exciting aspect of the win for me! Serendipitously I had a large solo show open in Melbourne the same week I won the Archibald. Thousands of people saw that show who would not have had otherwise. I also had a work appear on the front cover of Art & Australia that same week. This was a relief in many ways... it would be unfortunate if the Archibald painting became my most well known painting!
Q. What advice would you offer to artists intending to enter the Archibald prize? Has your opinion of the Archibald prize changed since winning the prize?

The only advice I would give is for artists to enter bravely, based on the quality, verve and integrity of the painting. Avoid engaging too much in the media hype. Be prepared to be criticized regardless of whether you win, being hung in the Archibald exposes you to a very broad public. You will find that everybody has an opinion on the Archibald finalists and winner.

- Investigate Del Kathryn Barton’s art practice and body of work. Describe her technique and approach to artmaking. What are the key themes and ideas in her work? Collect articles from a variety of sources and consider how winning the Prize has contributed to her success as an artist.

- Do Archibald Prize winners reflect contemporary art practice? Should they? Discuss by comparing the work of this year’s Prize winner with that of a contemporary Australian artist.

- Choose an artist that has been a finalist for the Archibald Prize and research their body of work. How does the portrait they enter show similar or differing approaches to their art practice.

- Is portraiture, popular culture and celebrity evident in his work? Discuss. List some of the other portrait subjects – would you consider them ‘regular’ subjects for portraiture and the prize?
Behind the famous faces
Organising the Archibald is no simple task. Just ask exhibitions officer, Stefanie Tarvey. She’s been doing it for ten years – with a little help from her colleagues – and she’s seen it all.

Q. When do you start organising the Archibald?
After each Archibald closes, we have a post-mortem. We analyse how things can be improved – small refinements rather than big changes. The exhibition schedule dictates when the works will be coming in for the next Archibald. This year, because of Bill Henson being on later so it could line up with the Sydney Festival, the Archibald won’t open until April 30. It’s normally early to mid March. We try to get the entry forms out three or four months before. Artists ring up or write to us to get their names put on the mailing list.

Q. How many departments and staff are involved?
Deborah Spek in administration deals with a lot of it. She maintains the mailing list and deals with a lot of the queries. She is down there helping when the works come in. I couldn’t do it without her. Steve Peters is the public face. He is responsible for unpacking the works and handing them back. There is also marketing, publicity, public programmes, exhibition staff and the installation crew.

Q. What is the cut off date for entries this year?
April 15. So there are five days between Monday April 11 and Friday April 15 when the works come in. Friday is always absolute hell. As well as individual artists bringing their work in, freight companies come in. For example, one will bring in a whole truck load picked up from Melbourne. On those five days we stay back late and try to unpack as many as we can.

Q. When does the judging commence?
The trustees will come in on Saturday April 16 to choose works for the Wynne. You have to have all the works unpacked because you don’t know which ones are for Wynne or Sulman or Archibald. The works for the Archibald are chosen the following day. The installation crew ‘walk’ each of the works past the trustees for them to choose the paintings to be hung.

Q. What sort of issues arise from year to year?
Size, fragility, works that are delicate, works that don’t have protective framing, works that are wet, works that have things sticking out that could damage other artworks. You are also dealing with some emotional artists: people who are worried about getting their work here, people who don’t know which prize to enter their work into. About two years ago we introduced a size restriction because things were becoming unmanageable. It’s now 90,000 square centimetres – about nine square metres – which is still generous.

Q. How many entrants were there last year?
There were 732 – that’s the second highest year. The highest figure is 751 but that was when people could put in two works. When we introduced the size restriction we also pulled it back so people could only enter one work. There were 2046 works for all the competitions in 2004, which gives you an idea of how many we are dealing with.

Q. Is it a difficult exhibition to install?
It’s not like hanging an exhibition that has some intellectual rationale behind it. Edmund Capon or Barry Pearce will decide where the works should go. Sometimes it might be a tight hang and other times we have much more space. It just depends on how many works the trustees want in the final selection. They are conscious of the limitations of space and how it will look as an exhibition.

Q. Is there special attention to where the rostrum is placed for the announcement?
It’s not like swinging a cat in there so they have to put it in the middle room. The trustees come in on the morning of the announcement at about 7.30am. At that stage they’re seeing it hung on the wall properly lit, with extended labels. That’s when they make their final choice. The show is already hung. It’s not as if we can move it around. There’d be no excitement if the rostrum was already in front of the winner, would there?

Connell Nisbet Behind the Famous Faces Look Magazine April 2005
THE ARCHIBALD EXHIBITION PROCESS

The Archibald Prize is a stand alone exhibition. The procedure is vastly different to an exhibition that is organised by a curator. It is treated as a competition rather than a conventional exhibition.

Submission forms are sent to artists on the mailing list, open to anyone enquiring, three months prior to the exhibition. This encourages first time entries, as well as repeat entries on a yearly basis.

Submitted works for the Archibald, along with Wynne and Sulman Prizes, arrive at the Gallery over a five day period and are judged over a day. 708 works were entered in the 2009 Archibald Prize. This year 39 works were chosen as finalists.

The Art Gallery of NSW Board of Trustees selects the finalists for the Archibald Prize. There are currently 10 members on the Board. The finalists are hung in the exhibition space and lit appropriately before the Trustees make their decision on the winning portrait.

Edmund Capon, Director of the Gallery oversees the hanging of the Archibald Prize finalists in the exhibition space. He is not involved in the judging procedure.

The winner of The Archibald Prize is selected on the morning of the announcement, the day prior to the opening of the exhibition to the public.

The People’s Choice Award and Packing Room Prize are considered to be very popular with the general public. These awards rarely reflect the decision made by the Board of Trustees.

Source: Stefanie Tarvey, Exhibition officer, Australian art department, Art Gallery of NSW.

- Investigate curatorial practice and the exhibition process. Compare the exhibition process of the Archibald Prize with that of a curatorial lead exhibition. How do they differ in procedure, aims and outcomes? Investigate the role of the curator and artist in each process and consider the audience’s engagement with the artwork as a result of each type of exhibition.

Winners and losers
- Winners and losers, who decides? Who wins and why? What influences these decisions? Does taste and fashion have a role to play?
- Consider the influence of conservatism versus innovation in art prizes. Do art prizes lead the way for, or are they followers of, Contemporary Art?
- How, and in what way, does controversy play a role in an art prize? Investigate the opposing dialogue of critical debate verses public opinion in such circumstances.

Portraiture’s Changing Face
- Research the evolving definitions of portraiture. Is there room for the avant-garde in this genre?
- Painting for a prize—what are the expectations?
- Do artists make portraits specifically for the Archibald Prize each year? Does this in turn make these exhibitions predictable and generate a ‘house style’ that can be recognised?
- Investigate how portraiture can document the changing face of a country or culture over time. Are the subjects in the Archibald representative of the particular time they are entered, or a certain section of society, or are they simply a reflection of an individual artist’s interests. Research all of the winning works throughout the history of the Archibald Prize. Can they be read as a narrative of Australian culture over time?

Your Say
- The Archibald Prize is an opportunity for artists to show their work to a wider audience. Discuss the role of the audience with regard to an art prize. Why does it encourage such debate amongst a general, often non-art audience like no other exhibition?
- Investigate the purpose and role of the Peoples Choice Award and the Packing Room Prize. Compare the winning works from these awards with the Archibald Prize winner from the current exhibition. Do the choices for each award reflect the judges who made them? Which audience (art/non-art) does each award relate most to? Which choices do you agree with? Explain.

Locate and read these articles. Use as source material to investigate the issues above:
The conceptual framework: The art-world web
Years 7–12

Art does not exist in a vacuum. To understand the significance of prizes (e.g. The Archibald Prize), one must appreciate the complex connections between the various people and the institutions (agents) that make up ‘the art world’, a virtual web of dependencies and influences.

The diagram below represents some of the main agents in the Art-World Web.

Activities
• Copy this diagram onto an overhead transparency, whiteboard or blackboard. In a class discussion, complete it by drawing in as many connections or relationships as possible with arrows between the agents. (See over the page for some ideas.) You may even add some agents of your own.
• As you complete the exercise, discuss the issue of motives and incentives by various agents.
Art judges
judge art works for scholarships and competitions
may be artists
may be benefactors
may be art museum trustees
may be university academics
consults mass media

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Art Museums
display and reproduce work of artists, help make artists known
buy art from private galleries
try to attract general public
try to attract benefactors
try to attract corporations (as sponsors)
employ curators
administer trusts for scholarships & competitions
appoint art judges (for competitions)
consult mass media
may apply to legal system

Art Museum Curators
may liaise with artists
recommend purchases for art museums
write articles for art journals (mass media)
consult mass media
may be university academics

Art Museum Trustees
may be artists
may be benefactors
may be art competition judges
set policy for art museums
consult mass media
may be board members for corporations

Artists
supply art to private gallery dealers
may liaise with art museum curators
enter competitions and apply for scholarships
may be art judges
may be art critics
apply for grants from the government (eg Australia Council)
may apply to legal system

Corporations
buy art works from private galleries
employ freelance curators
try to appeal to general public
help fund art museums (as sponsors)
consult mass media
advertise via mass media
pay taxes to government (hopefully!)

Education Sector
(schools, university, academics)
train artists, museum curators & art critics
may be artists
may be art museum curators
may be art critics

Freelance Curators
organise some exhibitions for art museums
write articles for art journals (mass media)
recommend purchases for corporations or wealthy individuals
consult mass media
may be university academics

Mass media
try to attract general public (as readers/viewers etc)
advertise for corporations
reproduce works by artists
employ art critics
may apply to the legal system
Framing the Archibald: questions for discussion
Years 7–12

Subjective Frame
• Imagine the relationship between artist and sitter. How does this impact on the final work? Would it be different if they were strangers, acquaintances or old friends? In what ways? Could an artist paint a successful portrait of an enemy or someone they didn’t admire or agree with?
• As viewers do we engage differently with figurative and abstract works? If so, how and why? How important is the gaze of another human figure to the way we connect with a portrait painting?
• While it is fairly easy to ascertain how an artist might represent a sitter’s physical appearance, how is the psychological dimension of another person communicated? How much of the artist’s personality appear in the portrait of the sitter? How much does our interpretation of the sitter’s personality depend on our emotional response? Are the representational problems involved in painting another person the same when painting oneself? Can artists be objective about themselves?

Cultural Frame
• Consider the role of patronage in relation to portrait painting. How does an artist cope with the tension between what the sitter looks like and how they would like to appear? Has portraiture as a genre survived through patronage alone? If not, what else has kept it alive?
• Discuss the role of portraiture in society. Do portraits operate as a reflection of the character of society at large as well as that of the individual? Can they reflect national sentiment? Has the role of portraiture changed? Is it as relevant now as in the past? Where do we find portraits today besides public exhibitions like the Archibald Prize? Consider snapshots in magazines and newspapers and representations on banknotes or in passports. Are these portraits?
• The Archibald Prize has been described by a journalist as the ‘Melbourne Cup of the art world’. Why are sports analogies used to describe this exhibition? What makes the Archibald Prize such a popular exhibition, while at the same time evoking a degree of criticism and controversy?
• The Archibald Prize requires an artist to paint a portrait of someone ‘distinguished in art, letters, science or politics’. Research a sample of the people artists have chosen to paint for previous Archibald Prizes. Have ideas of prestige and importance changed over time? What about the status of different professions, the ratio of men to women, diversity of race and codes of dress?

Structural Frame
• Research the conventions of European portraiture e.g. poses, compositions, gestures and expressions, signs and symbols, techniques and styles, ideas of beauty. Where do these conventions originate from? Are they operating in the Archibald Prize? Are new ones evident?
• Must a portrait always include a person’s face? What happens when a portrait is defaced? Would the back of a person’s head, a body without a head or just a detail of a face or figure qualify as a portrait? What about an object, animal, building, tree or some other non-human element? Could this be considered a portrait of someone?
• What has been the impact of the invention of photography on portrait painting? Can you tell if a painting has been painted from life or from a photograph? How are painted portraits and photographic portraits different? How are they similar? Is one medium more effective or authentic than another?
• Should a portrait aspire mainly to be an exact likeness or an art object? How important are the roles of exaggeration, idealisation, realism and expressionism in representing another person? Consider the role of the audience. Would a portrait be executed differently if it were for private viewing as opposed to being on display in a public competition?
• Need portraits be of individuals only or can they include more than one person? Who or what is the subject of the portrait in this case?

Post-modern Frame
• Are there any artworks in the current exhibition that refer to other artworks or portraits?
• Are any artworks commenting on the genre of portraiture or the Archibald Prize itself? If not, how might an artwork achieve this?
• Is humour or parody evident in the works in the current exhibition? If so, what is being parodied? Can an artwork based on parody still be taken seriously?
• Are any artists in the current exhibition using portraiture to comment on other issues such as feminism, racism, stereotypes or clichés of representation? Can a stereotype be considered a portrait?
Visual arts
Draw a series of quick drawings using brush and ink. Start with five minutes for the first and then quicken your pace to create a one-minute drawing.
Make three drawings of yourself using three different perspectives. Outline your shadow in three different positions. Photograph your shadow in the environment. Overlay the images and use patterning and colour to complete the work.
Create a powerpoint presentation based on a portrait of your future self. Consider how you will look, what you will wear, the objects around you, and your profession.
Collect natural and made objects that represent you and place them in a shoebox. Decorate and personalise the outside of the box using collage and papier-mâché. In the classroom, display these ‘identity boxes’ and see if you can guess who owns which.

English
What is a portrait? Why do we have portraits? What does a portrait reveal about a person? Discuss.
Find an image of a person in a photograph, painting or drawing. Describe that person to the class in detail. Consider all distinguishing features such as eye colour, shape of lips, hair style, weight, height, clothing and facial expression. Ask your classmates to paint an image of this person from your description. Display works alongside the original portrait.
Write a poem titled ‘It’s fun to be me’. Mime different expressions and have your classmates guess them; build a word bank based on this exercise.

Drama
Set up a costume box and dress up as a character. Use props, stage and lighting to develop an atmosphere. Think of historical as well as futuristic costumes, such as pirates, astronauts, doctors, kings or queens, dancers.
Choose a portrait from the AGNSW collection.
Create a hat to go on the person portrayed in the work.
Put on a blindfold and then try to guess the identity of a classmate by feeling their facial features. Can you guess who it is? Watch the video Brushes with fame on the Archibald Prize. Make a video of your own classroom portrait prize with interviews from artists and their models.

Mathematics
Measure time through shadows in the playground. Work in pairs and draw each other’s shadow on large sheets of paper – in the morning and the afternoon.
Make a pie chart based on the time you spend at school and at home. Consider recording the time spent on subjects, playtime, watching television, sleeping etc. Divide the day, week and year into work, leisure and sleep.
Draw a map of your local area. Highlight the location of your school and home. Consider scale and include a key with your map. You may wish to collect and look at a variety of maps first.
Photocopy your map and draw a self-portrait over it.

HSIE
Describe and make a list of what makes people the same or different?
Collect examples of portraits (past and present) and examine the fashions through these images. Before the invention of photography, who had their portraits made? How were these portraits created?

Music
Select a portrait from art history and research the time that it was made. Listen to music from this period. Consider the dances, costumes and musical instruments from this period. Create a powerpoint presentation using images and music to describe the portrait.

Science and technology
How do we communicate? How has this changed over time? What impact has technology had on the way we communicate? Research three forms of communication technology from the past. Present your research to the class.
Vocabulary: portraiture

artist and sitter, allegory, body language, caricature, character, counterfeiting, commemoration, commission, convention, countenance, distortion, effigy, emotive, exaggeration, expression, expressive, fashion, gestural, life-like, likeness, idealism, identity, tradition, patron, personality, portrait, pose, posture, profile, prestige, psychological, realism, reflection, simulacrum, status, tonal modeling, vanity, visage

Artists: portraiture

European artists:
Sandro Botticelli
Angelo Bronzino
Albrecht Dürer
Artemisia Gentileschi
Francisco Goya
Hans Holbein
Käthe Kollwitz
Edvard Munch
Rembrandt van Rijn
Diego Velasquez
Roger van der Weyden

Modernist artists:
Frida Kahlo
Henri Matisse
Amedeo Modigliani
Pablo Picasso
Chaim Soutine
Vincent Van Gogh

English artists:
Francis Bacon
Gilbert & George
Lucian Freud
William Hogarth
Joshua Reynolds

American artists:
Chuck Close
David Hockney
Edward Hopper
Andy Warhol

Australian artists:
William Dobell
Joy Hester
Trevor Nickols
Mike Parr
Tom Roberts
Julie Rrap
Susan Valadon
Brett Whiteley

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National Portrait Gallery, Canberra, Australia www.portrait.gov.au
Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, Washington DC, USA www.npg.si.edu
The National Gallery, London, United Kingdom www.nationalgallery.org.uk