



Locals feature in Archibald Prize

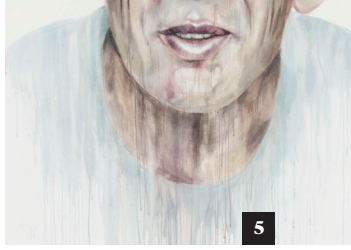


Serial finalists, Robertson artist Ben Quilty and Southern Tablelands artist Cherry Hood, have once again had their entries included in the final 39 for the Archibald Prize, 2009. Selected amongst the eclectic group of works which the judges somehow managed to distill down from a total 708 entries, each of the chosen finalists is extraordinary in its own right.

Quilty's brave portrait of rock star and long-time Highlands resident Jimmy Barnes, *There but for the grace of God no. 2*, has a raw edginess, while Hood's portrait of *David Helfgott* is a sensitive depiction of a gifted man. Guy Maestri's winning portrait of the exceptional musician *Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu* and Vincent Fantauzzo's popular *Brandon* are both well-crafted, as is Michael Zavros' witty self-portrait satirising consumerism. Hong Fu's serene depiction of *Dame Elisabeth Murdoch* at 100 years is also worth a mention, as is Leanne Crisp's stunning watercolour of restaurateur *Gay Bilson*. Likewise, Anthony Bennett's ultra glossy *Self-portrait in the bathroom et al*, to name only a few of the works hanging in this exciting exhibition.

The closest venue to see the Archibald, Wynne & Sulman Prizes in 2009 is the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Art Gallery Road, The Domain, Sydney, until May 24

1. Ben Quilty in his studio, image Highland Graphics
2. Hong Fu's *Dame Elisabeth Murdoch*
3. Leanne Crisp's *Gay Bilson*
4. Archibald winner, Guy Maestri's *Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu*
5. Cherry Hood's *David Helfgott*



Ben Quilty: painting the plight of young men

Talking with Ben Quilty and visiting his studio is a stimulating experience. Located somewhere in the shadows of Robertson's Big Potato, his studio is a large, comfortable, paint-splattered and well-used space. We talk about his success, life and the influences on his art.

At 30-something, Quilty presents as polite, perceptive and talented, committed to both his craft and family and loyal to his friends, the son every parent would love to have. By his own admission, he and his two brothers led an idyllic childhood growing up in rural Kenthurst in north-west Sydney.

"It was fabulous. It was safe and free. Now Kenthurst has a different feeling. It has become expensive and exclusive."

Looking for a similar lifestyle for their own young family, Quilty and partner screenwriter Kylie Needham moved to Robertson 18 months ago. The couple has two children, Joe, aged three, and Olivia, five months.

"Robertson is safe, it's an island. It is what Kenthurst was 25 years ago."

Quilty always loved painting at school and he learned to draw by watching his mother.

"Mum was good at drawing and I wanted to draw like she did. Our parents encouraged our cultural development and took us to films and art events, and our lawyer dad encouraged us to debate," he says. Finally grateful for his grounding in public speaking, he wryly adds, "When you win prizes, you have to make speeches."

From secondary schooling at Oakhill College, Castle Hill, Quilty went on to complete art school at Sydney College of the Arts in 1992.

Driven by a passion for paint and painting, his technique has evolved through sheer hard work and endless experimentation. His work is contemporary, masculine and raw, reflecting his ongoing angst and concern at the plight of young men in our society.

"My practice is based on this. All of my works are autobiographical. I've either been witness or participant," Quilty says.

"Unfortunately, the social change which was necessary to enable women to assume a new position within society has debased the male position and left men, particularly young men, floundering and trying to fit in. So they invent their own rites of passage. Younger men act out together in dangerous and excessive ways as a process of initiation, often in cars or with alcohol or drugs.

"Alcohol should not be sanctioned. It should be illegal, along with other drugs. I've seen too many friends' lives ruined by alcohol and binge drinking. Some haven't grown out of it. Young men also need to be

shown respect and given support by older men."

So, when a friendship with Jimmy Barnes developed several years ago, it was only a matter of time before the legendary rock star became the subject of a Quilty portrait.

In transcribing Barnes' well-documented journey through drug and alcohol addiction, Quilty applied a technique based on early 20th century Swiss psychiatrist Rorschach's inkblot theory of analysis to create two separate highly textured mirror-imaged canvases.

He has left thickly-coated paint on both sides of his Archibald entry, but takes his Moran portrait prize-winning entry to another level by scraping off the thick layer of paint from one side, leaving a perfect pigment-stained copy of the original image to unmask his subject. Both are bold, intelligent and emotional works.

Always busy with his practice, Quilty doesn't see himself painting landscapes in the future. He has a host of exhibitions in Brisbane, Hong Kong and Sydney in the pipeline and has also included some paintings of his beloved "muscle cars, land and environmental bandits" in an upcoming exhibition at Goulburn Regional Gallery. Expressing concern that there is no regional gallery for artists of the Southern Highlands, Quilty says he would love to be able to open up a gallery here sometime soon.

Finalists in the Doug Moran National Portrait Prize can be viewed @ the State Library of New South Wales, Macquarie Street Sydney until May 3, Hot Rods as Art, Tattoo Parlour/Body Art, Show Us Your Tatts and Ben Quilty - New Works @ Goulburn Regional Art Gallery, Civic Centre, corner of Bourke & Church Sts, Goulburn, April 7 to 13

Moran art prize goes to local artist

This painting depicting Jimmy Barnes' battle with his excesses won the Doug Moran National Portrait Prize of \$150,000 last month. It was one in a series of four by Robertson's Ben Quilty. Another in the series reportedly almost took out this year's prestigious Archibald Prize in what was considered a very tight finish. Of the remaining two paintings, Quilty says he sold one "to a firm in the States" and destroyed the other.



FutureArts upcoming arts for the diary

- **Babe Reunion and Screening.** The first in the Meet the Film Maker series is a special screening of *Babe*, with behind-the-scenes revelations by assistant director and associate producer Philip Hearnshaw at CTC Robertson, 58-60 Hoddle Street, Robertson, April 4, 7pm
- **ADFAS Bowral Lecture, Sculpture in Landscape and Garden** by Ken Scarlett OAM at Annesley, Westwood Drive, Bowral, April 8, 10.30am and 6.15pm, phone 4872 3400
- **BDAS 2009 Wingecarribee Art Prize** at BDAS, Short Street, Bowral, until April 13
- **Miirral - Sacred Country**, a series of recent contemporary and vibrant works by Chris (Wirriambi) Edwards and Fabri Blacklock representing "the land sacred to Koori people" at the Milk Factory Gallery, Station Street, Bowral, April 10 to 23, www.wirriimbidesigns.com
- **2009 Reg Rowe Art Scholarship** (\$5000). Applications from artists aged 20 to 35 close on April 30, phone 4862 1466, email: info@wingecarribeecommunity.org.au
- **Cherry Hood - New Works** in pursuit of the 2002 Archibald Prize winner's chosen genre, the contemporary portrait and *On The Streets*, architectural drawings by Kathryn Orton at Goulburn Regional Art Gallery, Civic Centre, corner Bourke & Church Streets, Goulburn, April 14 to May 5. Opening April 18, 2pm, floor talk by both artists on April 23, 12.30pm
- **Tree Change**, an exhibition of works by Kay McMenomy and Judy Davis at BDAS, Short Street, Bowral, April 30 to May 5
- **Make A Move**, works by young local artists aged between 12 and 24 years at the Foyer Gallery in The Civic Centre, Moss Vale, April 24 to May 24
- **BDAS Young Artists' Prize** open to young artists 12-14, 15-17, 18-21 years. Closing date for entries May 7. Judged by Denise Sumner. Exhibition at BDAS, Short Street, Bowral, May 9 to 17, opening May 8, 5.30pm, phone gallery on 4861 4093 or www.bdasgallery.com