



MEDIA RELEASE

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FINALISTS ANNOUNCED FOR THE LESTER PRIZE'S 2025 SEASON

WA's home-grown art prize - and Australia's richest portraiture prize - The Lester Prize has announced the forty Australian artists chosen as finalists for the 2025 Main Awards. More than 1,000 submissions were made this year – the largest number of submissions since the organisation was founded in 2007.

In keeping with The Lester Prize ethos of 'art accessible for all', an independent judging panel selected work from both established and emerging Australian artists, with this year's pool including 17 returning finalists, 13 from Victoria, and 12 from WA. Among the returning finalists is Tom Price-based artist Jenna Pickering whose tiny, meticulously painted submission *Together as one* picked up two prizes at the 2024 Lester Prize Main Awards; and Sid Pattni, also a finalist in the 2025 Archibald Prize.

Executive Director Shannon Yujnovich is expecting a record crowd at the 2025 exhibition.

"More than 26,000 visited The Lester Prize's 2024 exhibition at WA Museum Boola Bardip, and we hope to see more attending this year," Ms Yujnovich said.

"The Lester Prize is proud to put its artists and community at the forefront – rather than those sitting for portraits – and we're seeing exciting new submissions from artists from all over the country, as well as previous entrants."

Recent additions to its Main Awards prize pool mean the Lester Prize is now not only one of Australia's most prestigious art prizes but also its most lucrative, offering a total of more than \$130,000 in prize money to winners.

The team receives a vast array of entries each year – notably, 2025 finalist Ross Potter's self-portrait '*Cost of Living*' is delicately drawn on an eggshell using watercolour and oil pencil.

"The artwork expresses the idea that during the current cost of living crisis, a once humble staple could now be an extravagant canvas to create upon," the Fremantle artist said. "Juggling a family and an arts career in the midst of this unpredictable era, I'm now faced with the looming decision whether to keep pursuing my dreams or get a 'real job'.

"I even had to consider if I could afford to use this egg."

South Australian finalist Amy Hamilton combined knitting, collage and oil paint to create her eight-part portrait '*Open Door*', portraying a group of academics working to improve well-being of veterans

and public safety personnel and their families, with the subjects of her artwork providing some of the materials she used in her pieces.

“I am part of the group because my husband is a veteran, and I admire the work they do to support those who have served,” Ms Hamilton said.

“I chose knitting as a medium because knitting is a traditional way to support soldiers.”

Director Russell Lester says the team is committed to the stewardship of Australian talent and creativity, and is keen to build on the success of the 2024 season.

“The Lester Prize enjoyed great exposure and success at its new home of Boola Bardip. The breadth and depth of Australian creativity from artists old and emerging is stunning to see and we are grateful to be able to provide a platform,” Mr Lester said.

“We value the artists’ insight and will continue to focus on The Lester Prize’s commitment of art that is accessible to all.”

The Lester Prize Main Awards entries are open to all artists with Australian residency aged 18 or older. There are seven awards including the Richard Lester Prize for Portraiture, the Tony Fini Foundation Artist Prize, the Minderoo Foundation Spirit Prize and the Ashurst Emerging Artist Prize.

The exhibition will be held at WA Museum Boola Bardip, 19 September to 16 November 2025.

For more information see www.lesterprize.com

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