

Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize announces 2023 finalists

51 international and Australian artists have been named finalists for celebrated Prize presented at the Woollahra Gallery at Redleaf

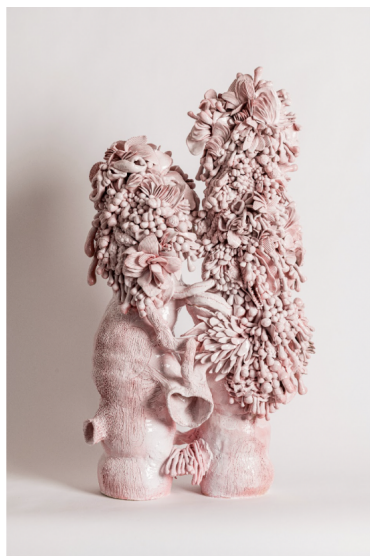


Image credit: Juz Kitson, *The mother tongue a delicate and fragrant being*, 2023. Mylyn Nguyen, *411 King Street*, 2023. Kendal Murray, *Waterway, Cut Away* 2023

Sydney, Australia: Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize, presented by **Woollahra Council**, has today announced the finalists for the 22nd edition of the esteemed annual prize. The finalist works will be presented in an exhibition at Woollahra Gallery at Redleaf, unveiled on 27 September, with the winning sculpture announced at the opening.

Established in 2001, the Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize is Australia's pre-eminent award for small sculpture and is the first national acquisitive prize for an original sculpture of up to 80cm in any dimension. The Prize's four categories include the main Acquisitive award of **\$25,000**; a Special Commendation award of **\$2,000**; the Mayor's Award of **\$1,000**; and the Viewers' Choice award of **\$1,000**.

The 51 finalists were chosen from **610 entries** through a blind selection process by a judging panel composed of **Alex Seton**, sculptor and 2009 Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize winner, **Blak Douglas**, artist and Archibald Prize winner, and **Dr Kate Harrison**, chair of the Copyright Agency.

The 51 selected works range across a variety of mediums, from soft sculpture, ceramics, weaving and assemblage, to metal work, glass and paper. The sculptures touch on a number of contemporary issues and themes such as bridging the past to the present and future; our impact within the natural and built world; and uncertainty in the face of climate change. Many finalist works also invite viewers to consider the material qualities of the sculptures themselves.

The finalists represent a mix of emerging and established artists from across Australia as well as international artists from the USA, United Kingdom, and New Zealand. Finalists include **Anna May Kirk, Francis Carmody, Jamie North, Juz Kitson, Kendal Murray, Kenny Pittock, Kyra Mancktelow, Madisyn Zabel, Maria Fernanda Cardoso, Mylyn Nguyen** and **Orson Heidrich**.

- **Anna May Kirk's** submission, *Forecasting the touch of change (breath)*, is a sensory sculpture that responds and evolves with its environment in order to bring visibility to the often imperceptible nature of environmental change.
- **Francis Carmody's** mobile structure, *Aurora Pisum Sativum*, is the first of an ongoing series of works, resulting from a body of research exploring Laschamp events in the earth's magnetic field. It draws from the pea plant - an organism thought to perceive the earth's magnetic field - which informs Carmody's sculptural decisions in exploring the past and speculating on the future.
- **Jamie North** explores the interplay between human impact and the natural world in his submission, *Remainder No.52*. Part of his 'Remainder' series of sculptural spheres, this work is an amalgam of industrial by-products presented as an eroded shape, welcoming the growth of natural flora.
- **Juz Kitson's** ceramic piece, *The mother tongue; a delicate and fragrant being*, is a sensuous sculpture that pushes the boundaries of the medium to express questions around sensation, delight, desire and connection.
- **Kendal Murray** looks at the significance of childhood play in nature through her submission *Waterway, Cut Away*. By evoking a child-like sensory wonder, her work speaks to the positive forces of childhood memories and its impact on people's value for the environment into their adulthood.
- **Kenny Pittock's** *One Size Fits Most* playfully explores the relationship between mass consumerism and the pressing climate crisis Australia is facing. Pittock's focus on seemingly mundane objects invites viewers to contemplate the consequences of our everyday collective actions and the values that underpin them.
- **Kyra Mancktelow's** works investigate the legacies of colonialism and pose questions about how we remember and acknowledge Indigenous histories. Her submission, *Gubagulabu (Y1805)*, adopts traditional Quandamooka weaving techniques that were once considered lost, and casts it in bronze to have it immortalised for First Nations generations to come.

- **Madisyn Zabel's** glass work, *Duo (Orange)*, is inspired by the Necker Cube optical illusion and how it plays with human perception. *Duo (Orange)* builds on this and uses the deceptive quality of glass to embrace ambiguity and further play with the viewer's perception and imagination.
- **Maria Fernanda Cardoso** blends nature and art in her piece, *Fierce Maternity*, to celebrate maternal love and the powerful resilience mothers employ to protect their children.
- **Mylyn Nguyen** replicates the history of a physical building through *411 King Street*, and in doing so, examines her own past and sense of belonging to a particular place.
- **Orson Heidrich's** *Multispec* is an aesthetic interpretation of an accidental by-product of the internet. Cast in aluminium, *Multispec* is a playful imagining of the rotting information and data debris created in the vast expanses of the internet.

Woollahra Gallery at Redleaf opened its doors for the first time in **2021**, hosting the Small Sculpture Prize as its first exhibition. The **historic 126-year-old St Brigid's building**, owned by Woollahra Council, was restored and reinvented into a new Gallery space by **Tanner Kibble Denton Architects**, overlooking Sydney Harbour in Double Bay and spanning two levels.

Curator and cultural producer **Pippa Mott** was appointed **Director of Woollahra Gallery** in May 2023. Pippa has extensive experience in the arts and cultural sector, most recently as curator at the Museum of Old and New Art (Mona). Her expertise includes curation, production, collections management, acquisitions, arts writing and public programming. Leveraging an academic background in archaeology and a track record of art-science exhibitions, material sensibility, interdisciplinarity and accessibility are at the core of her practice.

Woollahra Gallery at Redleaf Director, Pippa Mott, said: "This year's prize has unveiled a remarkable panorama of contemporary sculpture. Spanning glass, paper, stone, precious metals, soft sculpture, found objects and more, these artists are delving into subjects as varied as kin and cultural inheritance; market-driven excess; deception and perception; climate discourse; deep time; and social justice. Alongside cultural practice and craft, we're seeing the strategies and aesthetics of minimalism, assemblage, and readymade sculpture come to the fore. Throughout, pathos, whimsy and humour are abundant and affirming in equal measure. I cannot wait to place these works at the Gallery and welcome our audience."

Woollahra Mayor, Councillor Susan Wynne said: "This year's exhibition confirms the Prize's status as a home for the world's most innovative artists working in the small sculpture medium. I'm always so impressed with their ability to convey so much through their diminutive works, whether biting social commentary or a telling statement on the climate crisis, and look forward to welcoming you to Woollahra Gallery at Redleaf to experience their creativity."

Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize 2023 judge, Blak Douglas said: "Commendations to all entrants this year and with such an entertaining variety of media, form and verbal commentary. The honour of perusing all works has reinforced great faith in the contemporary sculptural landscape here today."

Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize 2023 judge, Alex Seton said: “I was very impressed with how much the works were a cross-section of contemporary issues. There were many entries that reflected serious concerns about the environment, from the recent bushfires to the health and respect for flora and fauna in the face of environmental pollution and climate crisis. Other surprisingly popular themes centred around housing and the built environment. All the entries were materially inventive in form and substance, and many demonstrated an impressive awareness and engagement with the ethics of materials”

Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize 2023 judge, Dr Kate Harrison said: “Selecting the final entries was difficult. So many of the sculptures were striking in their originality and creativity, their strength of concept, or their materials and design.”

Previous winners of the prestigious Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize include Bruce Reynolds (*Animal Kraters*), Rhonda Sharpe (*Desert Woman with Mustache, Coolamon and Pretty Clothes*), Sanne Mestrom (*Self Portrait, Sleeping Muse*) and Mikala Dwyer (*Empty Sculpture*).

For more information, see: <https://www.woollahragallery.com.au/whats-on/prizes>

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IMAGES: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Um2pAqLSjctUIMMQ8-d_SrLBmQpW19p-?usp=sharing

ABOUT WOOLLAHRA SMALL SCULPTURE PRIZE

Established in 2001, the Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize is Australia’s pre-eminent award for small sculpture presented by Woollahra Council. The Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize attracts strong support from artists, collectors and critics and is the first national acquisitive prize for an original sculpture of up to 80cm in any dimension.

Each year the winning work is acquired by Council and forms part of the permanent public collection which is on permanent display for the community to enjoy for free. Visitors can discover some of the world’s most exciting contemporary sculptures and be introduced to the most innovative artists working in the medium.

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