

ROBYN DAW

YOUNG VISUAL ARTIST
SCHOLARSHIP
2025

FINALISTS EXHIBITION / 23 MAY–12 JULY 2025





Foreword

Logan Art Gallery is honoured to host the 2025 *Robyn Daw Young Visual Artist Scholarship Finalists* exhibition, celebrating the late Robyn Daw's significant contributions to arts and culture in the City of Logan. This exhibition underscores the gallery's dedication to mentoring emerging young artists from the Logan region and celebrating the city's vibrant cultural diversity.

Contemporary art inspires the imagination and reflects the way we experience the world and connect to culture. As an artist-centred project, the *Robyn Daw Young Visual Artist Scholarship* has supported emerging Logan artists to develop and create new artworks for this exciting exhibition. It showcases the artists' creativity and innovative approaches to contemporary practice. As part of the development of the project, the selected artists were invited to participate in a series of mentoring workshops with nationally recognised Queensland artist, Dr Kellie O'Dempsey.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Robyn Daw's family, Ian Friend and Dexter Daw Friend, for their invaluable support of this project.

We also wish to acknowledge and thank all the finalists: Aldric Claven, Ayla Sayemuddahr, Bea Harrison, Dale Carter, Emma-Lee Boniface, Jai Phillips, Natalia Grund, and Nazila Eslami for contributing their remarkable artworks. Special thanks to former Logan Art Gallery Coordinator, Michael Wardell, for his inspiring words that honour Robyn Daw's legacy and contextualise the scholarship and exhibition.

We also extend thanks to Dr O'Dempsey for her amazing workshops that provided a launching pad for the scholarship artists' careers.

Niomi Sands

Creative Industries Program Leader, Logan City Council



Workshop

Finalists (pictured above)

Back row from left:
Nazila Eslami, Emma-Lee
Boniface, Dale Carter.

Front row seated from left:
Aldric Claven, Natalia Grund,
Bea Harrison, Jai Phillips,
Ayla Sayemuddahr.

Robyn Daw: a personal memory

(1958–2022)

In July 2012, I sat in Robyn Daw's office at Logan Art Gallery, talking about the City of Logan and its unique characteristics. I had only recently been appointed Art Gallery Coordinator and I was having one of the first of many weekly meetings with Robyn, who a few months before had been appointed Program Leader for Cultural Services (later renamed Creative Industries). We were getting to know each other at this time and quickly discovered we both shared a passion for supporting artists, and a strong wish to make art accessible to the widest possible audience. Robyn told me that what made Logan exciting for her was the extraordinary cultural diversity and the fact that it was a relatively young community. She commented that the exhibitions and public programs at that time did not truly reflect the cultural diversity of the community and challenged me to actively plan into the future more representative programs.

Over the next 10 or so years, with Robyn's encouragement and active participation, Logan Art Gallery developed a reputation for creative and innovative projects celebrating the city's cultural diversity. In 2013, on Robyn's suggestion, the gallery team developed the exhibition *Journey blong yumi: Australian South Sea Islander 150* as our contribution to the Queensland-wide celebration of 150 years of Australian South Sea Islanders' contribution to our state. The exhibition was co-curated by local Vanuatu artist Kakae Pakoa whose wife, Natalie Pakoa, was President of the Vanuatu Australian South Sea Islander Community (VASSIC) and a South Sea Islander descendant. Prior to the opening of the exhibition, the gallery's Public Programs Officer, Lesley Nicholson, visited local schools with Natalie Pakoa and Elders from

the community to tell students about 'blackbirding', the often hidden history of men and women being taken from various Pacific Islands to work in the cane fields of Queensland. After listening to the family stories from fourth generation descendants of South Sea Islander workers, the students were encouraged to make artworks in response to what they heard, and these artworks were included in the final exhibition. This project was the first of many that actively worked with specific cultural communities through extensive community consultation, encouraging local community representatives to design how they would like their culture to be presented in an exhibition.

Perhaps the most significant project that Robyn initiated and coordinated was the Chester Park Water Tower Mural Project. In 2018, as part of Logan City Council's public art program, there was a public call-out for First Nations artists living in Logan to submit a design for a mural to be painted on the Chester Park Water Tower in Boronia Park. As very few First Nations artists had applied for exhibitions at Logan Art Gallery in the preceding 5 years, it was a great surprise for the selection panel to discover the extraordinary quality of the work submitted. The panel ended up selecting the design by a then unknown 24-year-old student, Kyra Mancktelow, who 3 years later was the winner of the prestigious Telstra Emerging Artist Award at the *2021 Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards* (NATSIAA).

Excited to discover the existence of so many talented local First Nations artists, Robyn suggested the gallery host a group exhibition of all 7 finalists to be curated by Amanda Hayman, a local young First Nations curator. Of

the 7 artists, only 2, Sally Terare and Sylvia Nakachi had exhibited before in the gallery. The other 4 artists were Casey Coolwell, Cara Shields, Jessica Skeen (Muralappi) and Kim Williams. The 2019 exhibition *Our stories and designs* was very favourably received and works by Kyra Mancktelow and Cara Shields were purchased for the Logan Art Collection. This exhibition gave a great boost of confidence to many of the artists who went on to receive further awards and commissions.

In 2020, inspired by the success of the Chester Park Water Tower Mural, Robyn put forward the suggestion to commission a mural for the corner facing wall of Logan Art Gallery. Again following a public call-out to First Nations artists, the commission was awarded to community Elder Aunty Peggy Tidyman. The shortlisted artists included Cara Shields, Kyra Mancktelow and runner-up Jessica Skeen whose mural design was painted on a smaller outside wall of the gallery. Cara Shields' design was acquired for the Logan Art Collection.

The same year, Jessica Skeen won the design for the Logan Gardens Water Park and more recently the design for the painting on one of the Council's fleet of vans used by the Venues and Events team, commissioned to mark National Reconciliation Week 2023. In 2022, Jessica curated a major exhibition, *The Skeen Mob: Family, Culture, Resilience* for Logan Art Gallery of works by her siblings and cousins in homage to her artist father, Uncle Joseph Skeen.

The last project Robyn worked on for Logan City Council was the planning and development of the Living Museum of Logan within the redevelopment of the Kingston Butter

Factory Cultural Precinct. As part of this major project, aimed at celebrating the history and cultural diversity of the community, Sally Terare won the commission to design a large floor painting in the park outside and Kyra Mancktelow won the commission to design the wall frieze in the dedicated First Nations space inside the building. The opening exhibition in this space featured work by Sylvia Nakachi.

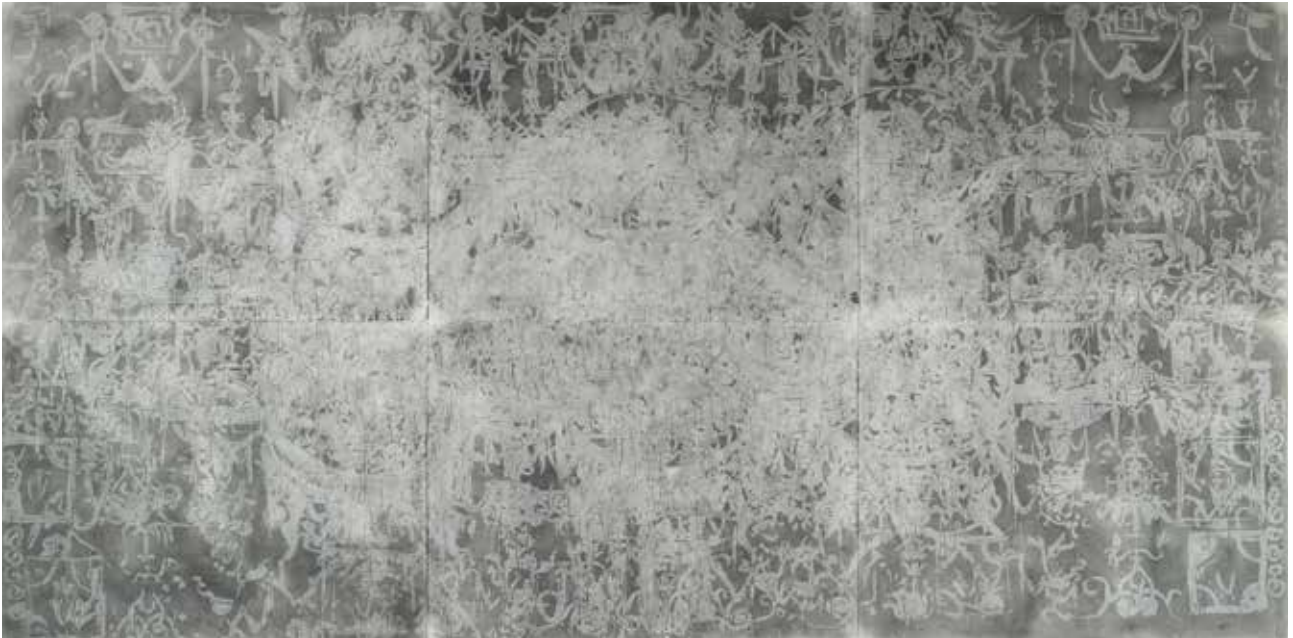
While all these projects and commissions stemmed from one initial mural project, they are only a few of the many examples of ways that Robyn's creative planning helped and encouraged a great many local artists. Working so closely with Robyn for almost a decade, I know she took enormous pleasure in helping these young artists and watching their art practices develop and flourish. This scholarship, so generously supported by Robyn's family Ian Friend and Dexter Daw Friend with Logan City Council, beautifully reflects Robyn's passions and interests and enables, over the 5 years, significant help and support for a great many more up and coming young artists. I congratulate this year's finalists and wish them all success into the future.

Michael Wardell

Independent Art Curator/Consultant
Logan Art Gallery Coordinator 2012–2024



Robyn Daw at Logan Art Gallery, 2017



Robyn Daw, *Flore*, c. 1997–2000, graphite and latex rubbing on paper. Logan Art Collection, Gift of Dexter Daw Friend and Ian Friend in memory of Robyn Daw, 2023



Aldric Claven

As a genderqueer artist based in the City of Logan and currently studying a Bachelor of Design (Visual Communication, QUT), my practice combines poetry, mixed media, photography, and sculpture. I weave queer histories with personal and cultural reflections, embodying exuberant textural styles. My work was exhibited at Logan Art Gallery in 2019.

Ascension is a collage of painting, fabric, sculpture, photography and poetry, exploring the layered realities of queer experience. Through textures, scenes, and language, it expresses intimate known and unknown worlds — internal and external.

The different materials parallel a complex, interwoven identity — enabling space for profound authenticity amid discrimination and inherited narratives towards building a community of love and understanding.

Stories are essential in navigating this eclectic and transcendent array, honouring the importance of spaces where diverse people can see themselves and others. Unfolding genderqueer identity as a fantastical mapping, the placement of varied wall-hangings, poetry, and a suspended sculpture speaks to the crossing of binaries, where colourful, playful perspectives invite deeper reflection into psychological and tangible realms.



Ascension, 2025, mixed media installation. Image courtesy of the artist and Mikalah H.



Ayla Sayemuddahr

I'm a painter based in the City of Logan, originally a refugee from Aleppo, Syria, I am educated in architecture and I work in interior design. I make 2D works using acrylic, watercolour and ink on Arches paper, canvas or wood. My work mostly takes on a dark sombre tone with political and figurative themes. I exhibited work in the United Arab Emirates at Dubai Design Week in July 2021.

Windows is a triptych of acrylic paintings on shaped wooden panels designed as arched windows, with intricate wooden lattices inspired by traditional Syrian architecture. The artwork layers figurative and architectural elements to tell the story of the Syrian revolution from a refugee's perspective. The panels work together in telling the story, capturing the bravery, sacrifice, and resilience of the Syrian people.

Drawing from my background in architecture, I carefully plan each piece, cutting and shaping the wood, layering warm and cool tones, and composing scenes into a unified vision. The panels' shape serves as a symbolic device, literal windows on the wall, offering a glimpse into a lived history often misrepresented in the media.

My goal is to honour the true spirit of my people — hospitable, courageous, and united — while challenging the distorted narratives that overshadow their struggle. This work is an invitation to see the revolution through the eyes of those who lived it, not through the lens of sensationalism.



Windows (detail), 2025, acrylic on MDF board. Image courtesy of the artist.



Bea Harrison

An Aotearoa-born fashion designer from the iwi Ngāti Kahungunu and Ngāti Raukawa; graduating with a Bachelor of Design (Fashion) from QUT in 2023. I specialise in conceptual garment construction creating wearable art through poetic use of cultural and natural references.

Bay of Plenty explores the symbiotic foundations of Māori and whenua (land) through a bicultural lens. To gaze in retrospect, the history of Māori addresses modern existence within a socio-political context. The use of childhood memory expands material and construction choices to address a dormant cultural primitivity, assuring my lived experience has been culturally authentic. This is due to being biracial and migrating to Australia at an early age.

Māori once traded seafood for cloth with European settlers. Now, I reclaim this cloth, using hand-sewn techniques to craft bold garments. The first silhouette mimics the shape of the paua shell — a vital resource for our people — as is the Treaty of Waitangi which has been printed onto fabric, stripped and restrengthened as a cloak through the art of raranga (hand-weaving).



Bay of Plenty (detail), 2025, fabric, mixed media and mannequins. Image courtesy of the artist.



Dale Carter

I'm Dale Carter, a Narrunga fella born in South Australia but raised in the City of Logan from a young age. I work with a variety of mediums but currently I am painting using acrylic on canvas.

Bare foot dreams is a series of acrylic paintings of varying sizes on canvas. I use imagery that reflects my culture to explore the gap I experience between the known and the unknown. The paintings depict suburban landscapes during the shroud of night and explore Aboriginal folklore and Dreamtime stories. My interest in science fiction and the paranormal has inspired me to include alien-like creatures or spirits in these landscapes. I see these beings as representing my own feelings of self-alienation in the everyday world. The mystery and wonder they experience is reflective of my continual navigation of the everchanging conditions of my culture's past.



Bare foot dreams, 2025, acrylic on canvas. Image courtesy of the artist.

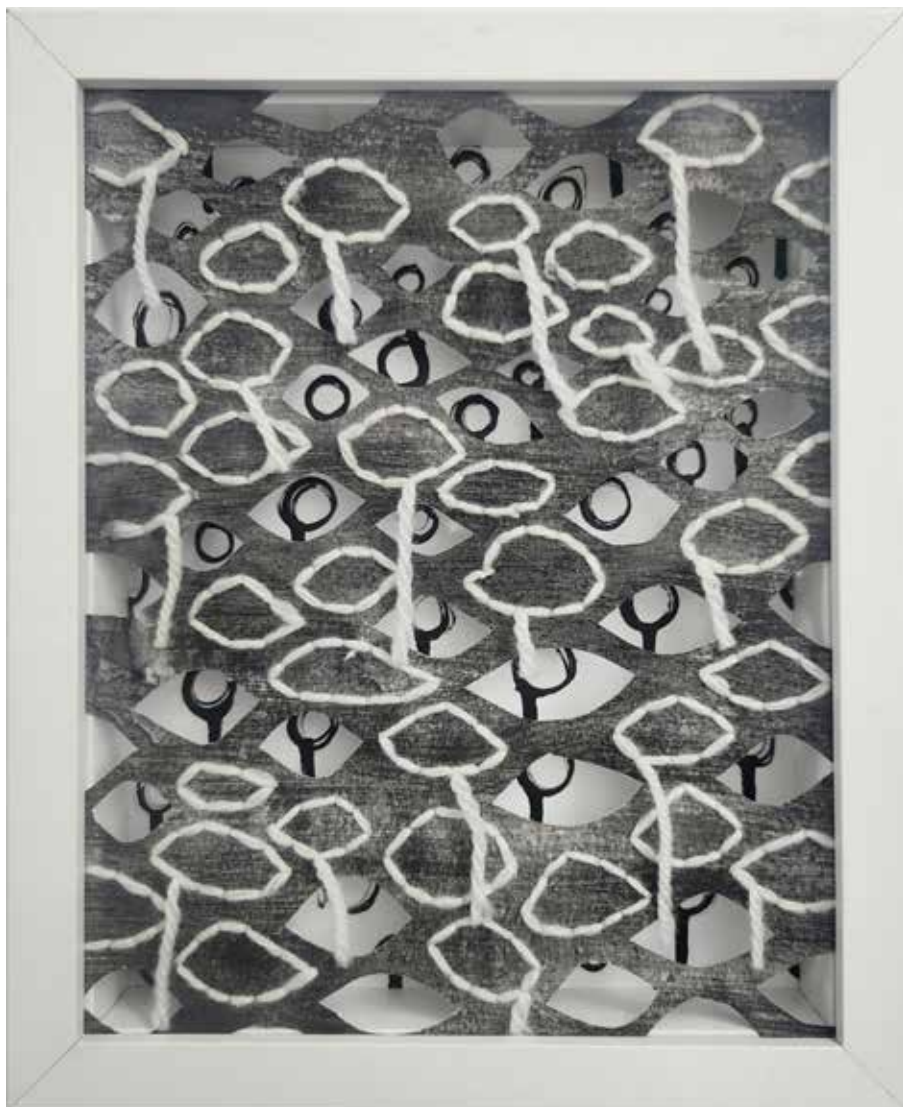


Emma-Lee Boniface

I'm a non-binary artist, originally from Cairns, but now based in the City of Logan. I work in drawing and mixed media and my surreal, graphic practice uses organic forms to explore dark and confronting themes around social perception and perspective.

The seeing & the seen is a large-scale, floor-to-ceiling, paper installation that uses ink, thread, negative space and light to explore vision, perception, and presence. The layered, eye-like forms reflect ideas of awareness and how people are often judged without being fully seen. Through diluted ink drips, active mark-making and delicate embroidery, I aim to illustrate the fragmented self and challenge harmful stereotypes, particularly around invisible disability. The work can't be viewed all at once, reinforcing the idea that understanding is always partial, while the immersive scale makes the weight of these issues physically felt.

My work has been presented at several Cairns exhibitions, including *Flame 2022*, *Energy 2021* and *2022* and *VPG 2022*.



The seeing & the seen (marquette), 2025, ink and wool on paper. Image courtesy of the artist.



Jai Phillips

I am a young artist living with autism. I was born, educated and raised in the City of Logan. I am of Anglo-Indian heritage, and I am very proud of this heritage.

My art journey began as a way for me to communicate. I was virtually non-verbal until about the age of 5. Art is my way of expressing how I am feeling, and it is a huge release and a place of escape when the world in which I live gets too overwhelming.

My artwork consists of 4 different pieces. Three of them are created by hand on a digital platform (*Focus on ability*, *Two faces of autism*, and *The horrific house*). The fourth artwork titled *Hidden disability* uses mixed media and is a self-portrait pushing myself out of my comfort zone.

Through my art, I hope to develop an understanding and acceptance of people living with a disability. The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower is an international symbol and is used as a visual cue to recognise, acknowledge, or understand the daily barriers faced by people living with an invisible disability.



The horrific house, 2025, video, 4' 37". Image courtesy of the artist.



Natalia Grund

Based in the City of Logan, I work in mixed media. Previous exhibitions include *Artwaves 2024* at Logan Art Gallery and Gold Coast Creative Generation. My work evokes an emotive response addressing concepts of feminism, connection and time. *Woven words* is a mixed media textile installation featuring 4 canvases and an intricately layered suspended sculpture.

As an emerging female artist, my work represents the pursuit of gender equality and its relevance in today's landscape. *Woven words* employs a form of 'gentle protest' — craftivism. Decorative and beautiful, this collection of earth-toned materials, intricate but chaotic threads, glass beads, and fabrics overlap and converge to connote active complexity.

Focusing on a positive feminist future, my work builds on connection with my community using traditional textile techniques such as embroidery, crochet and sewing. The composition of the piece and the way the fabrics flow are key to successfully creating an immersive work that rises towards a positive feminist future.



Woven words (detail), 2025, mixed fabrics, wools, beads, paper and acrylic paint.
Image courtesy of the artist.



Nazila Eslami

Nazila Eslami, also known as The Black Dahlia.

Born in Afghanistan, I immigrated to Australia in 2023 and I live at Loganlea in the City of Logan. As a painter and drawer, I work in oil on canvas, paper, board, pencils, and acrylic.

Titled *Self destruction*, my work is oil and sculpture on board. This work is dark, melancholic, and eerie, combining naturalistic and surrealist figures to illustrate the destruction of animals and how that harms not only the earth, but ourselves as well.

The imagery used is of human hands and a cow skull, with the continuation of the hands forming the bodies of 2 people who are eating each other. There is a sculptural skeleton of a cow as a coffin with a human skeleton resting inside it. Made from air-dry clay and placed on a table, it resembles a sacrificial altar. The work is placed in a red room as evidence of the devastation, pain and neglect of the world's animals. The work addresses my passion for animal rights.

By making this work, I highlight the importance of animals' existence and the threat of their extinction. I pose the question — 'Do you not think that by destroying what is around us, we are contributing to our own destruction?'



Self destruction (detail), 2025, oil paint and air-dry clay sculpture on board. Image courtesy of the artist.

Panel members



Jessica Skeen

Jessica Skeen, also known as Muralappi, is a contemporary Aboriginal artist of Biri and Kuku Thaypan heritage, whose practice deeply reflects her cultural lineage and storytelling traditions. As the daughter of respected Elder Joseph Skeen, Jessica's work is rooted in authenticity, connection, and community.

Her artistic journey spans painting, public art, and product design, with murals and commissions featured across Queensland. She has collaborated with institutions such as Logan Hospital, Princess Alexandra Hospital, and Ronald McDonald House, creating works that embody healing and reconciliation. Through her family's fourth-generation Indigenous artefact business, she continues to preserve and celebrate traditional craftsmanship. As a selected panel member for the 2025 *Robyn Daw Young Visual Artist Scholarship*, Jessica brings her deep knowledge of cultural arts, mentorship, and emerging creative practices. Passionate about supporting young artists, she offers valuable insights into storytelling, cultural integrity, and artistic innovation.



Jun Chen

Born in Guangzhou, China, Jun Chen took up oil painting at age 16 but switched to traditional Chinese brush painting while studying for his arts degree at the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts.

Relocating to Australia in 1990, Chen moved to Brisbane 3 years later, where he completed a Master of Fine Arts (Visual Arts) at QUT in 1996.

Chen has had 20 solo exhibitions in Australia to date. He has been a finalist in the Archibald Prize 9 times (Highly Commended in 2017 for his portrait of the late gallerist Ray Hughes), and a finalist in the Wynne and Sulman Prizes 5 times apiece.

Chen's work can be found in numerous public collections including the Art Gallery of New South Wales; Parliament House and the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra, which commissioned him to paint Chinese-Australian former ballet dancer Li Cunxin AO, and artistic director of the Queensland Ballet from 2012–2023.

Chen's work is also held in the collections of Shen Zhen Guan Shan-yue Art Museum, Shenzhen, China; Guangzhou Art Gallery, China; Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts, China; Art College of Sweden and in private collections in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Australia.



Christina Lowry

Christina Lowry is an award-winning fine artist, recognised for her photography and installations with central themes of nature, memento mori, and cabinets of curiosity. She has been a practicing artist for more than 2 decades and has a studio in the City of Logan.

She studied at Griffith University's Queensland College of Art (1999–2002) and graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts/Visual Arts majoring in Intermedia. Christina returned to study in 2023 and is currently working towards her Master of Visual Arts.

Christina has been featured in solo exhibitions at Logan Art Gallery, Tuggeranong Art Space, Redland Art Gallery and Woolloongabba Art Gallery. Her work has been included in several group exhibitions, most recently at Side Gallery, Woolloongabba Art Gallery and Grey Street Gallery.

Christina hosts the weekly podcast, *The Art of Making Art*, where she discusses studio practice and conceptual development with contemporary exhibiting artists.

She is a passionate advocate for artists and mentorship and has been involved on artist panels for high school students, scholarship and prize panels and delivered workshops on photography, drawing and installation at galleries, libraries, and high schools.

Photography credit: Jade Ferguson.



Dr Christopher Bennie

Chris Bennie graduated from Griffith University's Queensland College of Art with a Doctor of Visual Arts in 2009 for research titled *Video art, authenticity, and the spectacle of contemporary existence*. His work has been exhibited in major contemporary art exhibitions including: *Revolutions: forms that turn*, The Biennale of Sydney (2008); *+Plus factors*, Australian Centre of Contemporary Art, Melbourne (2006); *Ecstasy: baroque and beyond*, University of Queensland Art Museum, Brisbane (2018); *SafARI*, Alaska Projects, Sydney (2012); *Contemporary Australia: optimism*, Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane (2008); *Sculpture at Scenic World*, Blue Mountains (2017); and *Control rooms*, Youkobo Art Space, Tokyo (2014).

He has won the Clayton Utz Art Prize, Brisbane (2014); the Gold Coast Art Award (2012); Swell Sculpture Festival (2013 + 2019); and was awarded highly commended at the inaugural John Fires Art Award, Sydney (2013). Chris currently works at Logan Art Gallery as Acting Gallery Coordinator.

Photography credit: Louis Lim.



Mentor

Dr Kellie O'Dempsey

Dr Kellie O'Dempsey creates site-generated installations and performances that integrate projection, video, collage, architectural space, gestural line, performance and digital drawing. Creating in both solo and collaborative formats with sound artists and contemporary dance practitioners, O'Dempsey's diverse practice explores, deconstructs and heightens the concept of public space as shared experience. O'Dempsey manipulates space and alters perception to transform and reinvigorate the familiar, and to create a sense of brilliance. Using performance, play, line and colour, O'Dempsey's public productions enable an inclusive form of cultural interaction. The immersive site installation and the performance-drawing artworks invite the audience to engage directly with the visceral process of making.

Kellie's past performances include Art after Dark; Pier 2/3; 18th Biennale of Sydney; MONA FOMA, Hobart; White Night Melbourne; and the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

Photography credit: Heather Faulkner.

Acknowledgements

Logan Art Gallery would like to thank a number of people who have helped make this exhibition possible, including Robyn Daw's family, Ian Friend and Dexter Daw Friend. Their generous contribution of funding enables the scholarship program to be delivered. We would also like to thank Dr Kellie O'Dempsey for facilitating the mentorship program and providing each artist with invaluable critique and guidance. Logan Art Gallery also thanks the panel members Christina Lowry, Jun Chen, Jessica Skeen and Christopher Bennie for their leadership and decision making and Michael Wardell for his inspirational words. Lastly, we would like to thank all artists for their participation in the program and look forward to seeing their work emerge and develop into professional practice.

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