

DOBELL DRAWING PRIZE OPENING NIGHT SPEECH 30 MARCH 2023

Michelle Belgiorno-Nettis

The Dobell Foundation is delighted to present this third iteration in partnership with the National Art School of the Dobell Drawing Prize # 23.

I would like to begin by acknowledging my fellow Trustees present today; Charles Lloyd Jones, Karen Wann and Paula Latos-Valier.

As an Alumna of NAS, I know that the Prize reflects the school's strong emphasis on drawing as *fundamental* to the teaching and practice of art.

Drawing is a core subject for all students, whether of sculpture, ceramics, photography, painting, or printmaking and drawing as a *Major* is a popular post graduate subject itself.

Our partnership with NAS, as an educational institution, greatly expands the impact of the Dobell Prize.

- The exhibition is incorporated into the school's academic program exposing art students to the innovation and diversity of drawing today.
- It coincides with a Dobell Foundation-funded drawing program for year 11 students from regional public schools giving these students the opportunity to engage with works they would not otherwise be exposed to.
- Public Programs such as Saturday's drawing symposium and NAS NEO drawing workshop on tonight are open to both students of NAS and the public.
- And the DDP Touring Program means a selection of works will tour to 6 regional galleries over the next 12 months including Bathurst, Cowra, Blue Mountains and Bega regional galleries. Taking art out to the regions is another Dobell Foundation priority .

Although that which today is considered "drawing" has truly expanded since William Dobell's time, the importance of the process of drawing has not diminished.

This intensity of focus is evident in the work of the 64 finalists who were selected from more than 1000 entries from around the country. We sincerely thank all the artists who entered the prize this year. The success of the exhibition depends on the *high quality* and *immense variety* of works that came in from all over Australia.

That so many artists applied is testament to the level of artistic activity in our community. It also attests to the prestige of the Prize itself and validates the view of the Dobell Foundation Trustees that a *national, democratic drawing competition* has an important role and is a legacy worth supporting.

And as one who has entered many an art competition, *both successfully and unsuccessfully*, I encourage all artists to keep on creating and engaging with the competition going forward. Recognition requires commitment over time.

Moreover, in support of the democratic process, for the second year there will be a People's Choice Award thanks to an anonymous donor. We encourage you to vote, as the People's Choice winner gets an enormous boost to their confidence and practice.

The competitive Dobell Drawing Prize complements the Dobell Australian Drawing Biennial, a curated exhibition also supported by the Foundation, held at the Art Gallery of NSW in alternate years. These two significant drawing exhibitions create opportunities for many artists, both known and unknown, to show their work in respected galleries, for the enjoyment of the public around NSW.

Finally, having been a panel judge on the previous two Dobell Drawing Prizes I must give my *sincerest* thanks to our three judges this year: Artist Catherine O'Donnell (a previous Dobell Drawing Prize finalist); Sir William Dobell Art Foundation Trustee, Paula Latos-Valier; and NAS Gallery Manager and Senior Curator, Katrina Cashman.

To carefully review more than 1000 entries, often several times over, requires a huge commitment of time and energy and the Foundation warmly thanks each of you for your significant dedication to the task.