

John Bokor

Inner world

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27 October – 21 November 2020

King Street Gallery 
on William

10am – 6pm Tuesday – Saturday
177-185 William St Darlinghurst NSW 2010 Australia
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www.kingstreetgallery.com.au

Front Cover:
A single rose 2020 oil on board 60 x 70cm (detail)

Opposite:
John Bokor in his studio, Bulli, NSW, 2020
Photo courtesy Riste Andrievski





White flowers 2020 oil on board 70 x 60 cm



Country escape 2020 oil on board 120 x 140 cm

This year will be remembered for many things, not least the inordinate amount of time we spent indoors, unable to see friends, family members or colleagues. Yet for artist John Bokor, who works from a studio beneath his house in Bulli, south of Sydney, lockdown only sharpened his eye as to the pictorial potential of the spaces and objects we found ourselves scrutinising at all hours: bright, busy, lived-in lounge rooms, and dining tables loaded with plates, dishes, cups, flowers and books.

It's a minimalist's worst nightmare – and, Instagram aside, the way most people's interiors look most of the time. Somehow, though, Bokor's oil paintings improve on reality by transforming quotidian clutter into compositional delight, coaxing his domestic forms into being with a radiant, almost hallucinatory palette and a lively yet confident hand. As fond of a palette knife as he is of a wide, flat, Filbert brush, the artist builds up and scrapes away repeatedly, lending the surfaces of his boards and canvases an active, tactile quality. Bokor's interiors are devoid of people, which helps to account for their dazzling serenity and encourages the beholder to project themselves into the space. *Could I live here? Is that striped couch long enough to lie down on?* These rooms and tables don't belong to us, yet in recognising them as signifiers of safety, comfort and a kind of worn-down familiarity, we register a similar affective charge. They feel like 'home'.

But to whom do these homes belong? Everyone and no one. They are hybrid compositions, based on images the artist has seen in magazines or online. "I might draw one of these up and start painting," says Bokor, "then add elements of another one, so it becomes something else." He used to paint interiors that were familiar to him, parts of his own home or those belonging to friends, "but I was overly concerned

with where everything sat, because spatially it had to be a reflection of that room". He wondered what it might be like to paint a room he'd never entered. "Could I be cavalier and leave things out, or alter or move things?"

Yes, he could. The breakthrough, which occurred several years ago, has honed his powers of design while augmenting the visual impact of his style. "I make them what I want them to be, rather than what they started off being." Still, he might add a personal item – an old cup, a sugar bowl – if the composition requires it.

By contrast, the artist's high-viewpoint still lifes are based on photos and drawings of personal and household objects he's arranged himself. Again, however, he views them as jumping-off points rather than blueprints. "You particularly don't want a tight, slavish painting that adheres totally to a photograph, because a photo is static."

Around the same time, Bokor purchased an airbrush and began mixing his own oil-based spray-paint, a technique of which he has since become very fond. "I like the soft-focus, hard-focus aspect, and that you can draw with it," he says. "When you load up a brush with paint, it only lasts so long, whereas with an airbrush, you can keep going. It's also similar to drawing a line on an etching plate, in that it's slippery. You don't have great control and it comes out a bit loose. You feel like a kid again."

Notable for their vigorous, open brushwork, Bokor's paintings contain broad, buttery sweeps of pigment, alongside nervous zigzags, curves, swerves and spots (often echoed in spray-paint) and passages of gleaming impasto. Rich in pastel and jewel tones – pink and purple is a favoured combination – his carefully balanced palette can make even a brown vinyl swivel chair appear inviting.

Intriguingly, whether using brush, palette knife, airbrush or underdrawing pencil, Bokor resists the urge to finish off one area before moving on to another. "I want it always to be in a state of flux," he says. It's this free, open-ended approach that enables him to embrace ambiguity of form, one of his key objectives as an artist. "I also like to show all aspects of the work, from the early drawing stage to something that's finished. I want people to see the hand in it."

Complementing the oils is a selection of drawings in charcoal and wash with elements of collage, alongside smaller works on paper in carbon pencil, wash and oil paint. "Some are studies for paintings, and some are records of a painting mid-process. Often, I'll draw a painting if I'm stuck or can't move forward." Composed with an energetic line, the large works are striking for the contrast achieved between (thin) charcoal pencil and (thick) compressed charcoal, and for their cut-and-paste aesthetic, which hints at fracture, double vision, erasure and, of course, Cubism. Meanwhile, the small colour studies, with their indicative dabs of pigment, offer tantalising insights into the genesis of several of the oils.

Bokor's pictures of living spaces bedecked with pictures on every available wall will, in some cases, end up on the walls of similar rooms. Which begs the very 'meta' question: Does he paint versions of his own paintings on the walls of the rooms he's painting? "Occasionally," he laughs. "Often I'll draw something I've seen somewhere, but from memory. One painting-within-a-painting was meant to be a man serving drinks in a bar, but it looks like a monkey – I'm happy with that. You can have a lot of fun with what's on the walls. I have a lot of fun with what's in the room, too, but I really like what's on the walls."

Tony Magnusson
September 2020



Colour study with pepper mill



Colour study with water jug



Colour study, after the rain

2020 carbon pencil, wash and oil on paper 21 x 27 cm



After the rain 2020 oil on board 100 x 120 cm



Afternoon rose 2020 oil on board 60 x 70 cm



Afternoon tea study 2020 oil on board 28 x 25 cm



Yellow still life 2020 oil on board 28 x 25 cm



Afternoon tea 2020 oil on board 70 x 60 cm



Poppies 2020 oil on board 28 x 25 cm



Chocolate bar and silver pot 2020 oil on board 28 x 25 cm



Blue interior 2020 oil on board 120 x 140 cm



Breakfast table 2020
oil on linen 137 x 92 cm



Brandy and tea 2020 oil on canvas 50 x 60 cm



A single rose 2020 charcoal, wash and collage on paper 56 x 76cm



Water jug and books 2020 oil on board 25 x 28 cm



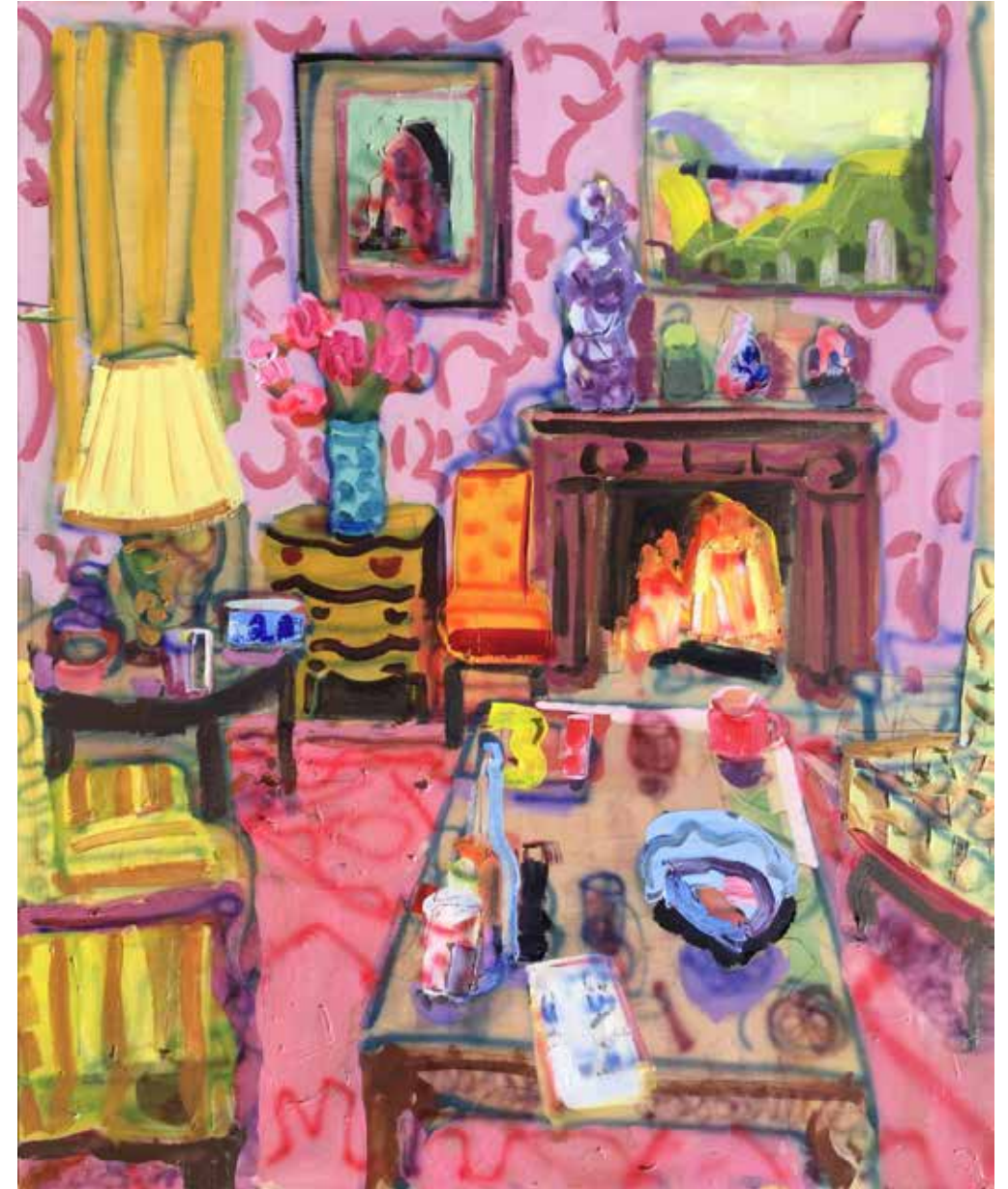
Afternoon rose study 2020 oil on board 25 x 28 cm



Water jug and pencils 2020 oil on board 25 x 28 cm



Drawing at the table 2020 oil on board 25 x 28 cm



Fireplace 1965 2020 oil on board 120 x 100 cm



Autumn interior 2020 charcoal, wash and collage on paper 56 x 76 cm



Pencils and oranges 2020 oil on board 60 x 70 cm



Gin and tonic 2020 oil on board 60 x 70 cm



Memories of Spain 2020 oil on board 120 x 140 cm

Studio, 2020
Photo courtesy Riste Andrievski





Biscuit tin study 2020 oil on linen on board 27 x 30 cm



Gypsy plate 2020 oil on board 27 x 30 cm



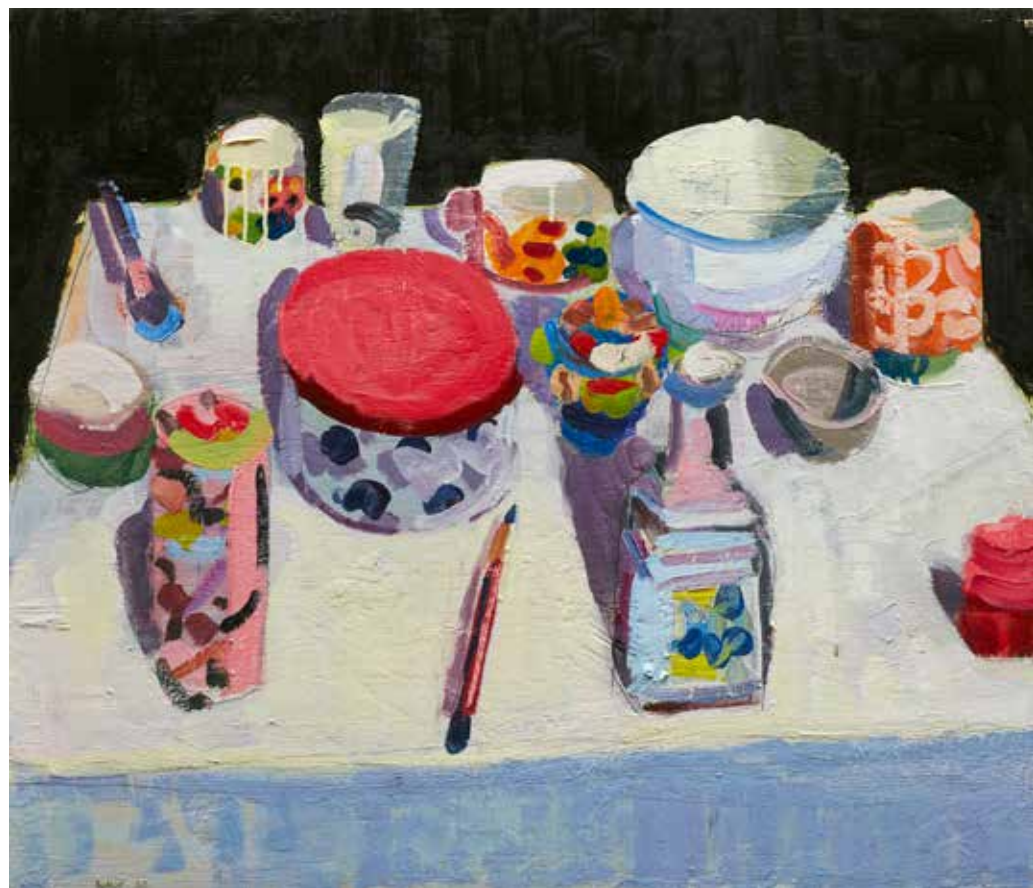
Patterned plate 2020 oil on board 25 x 28 cm



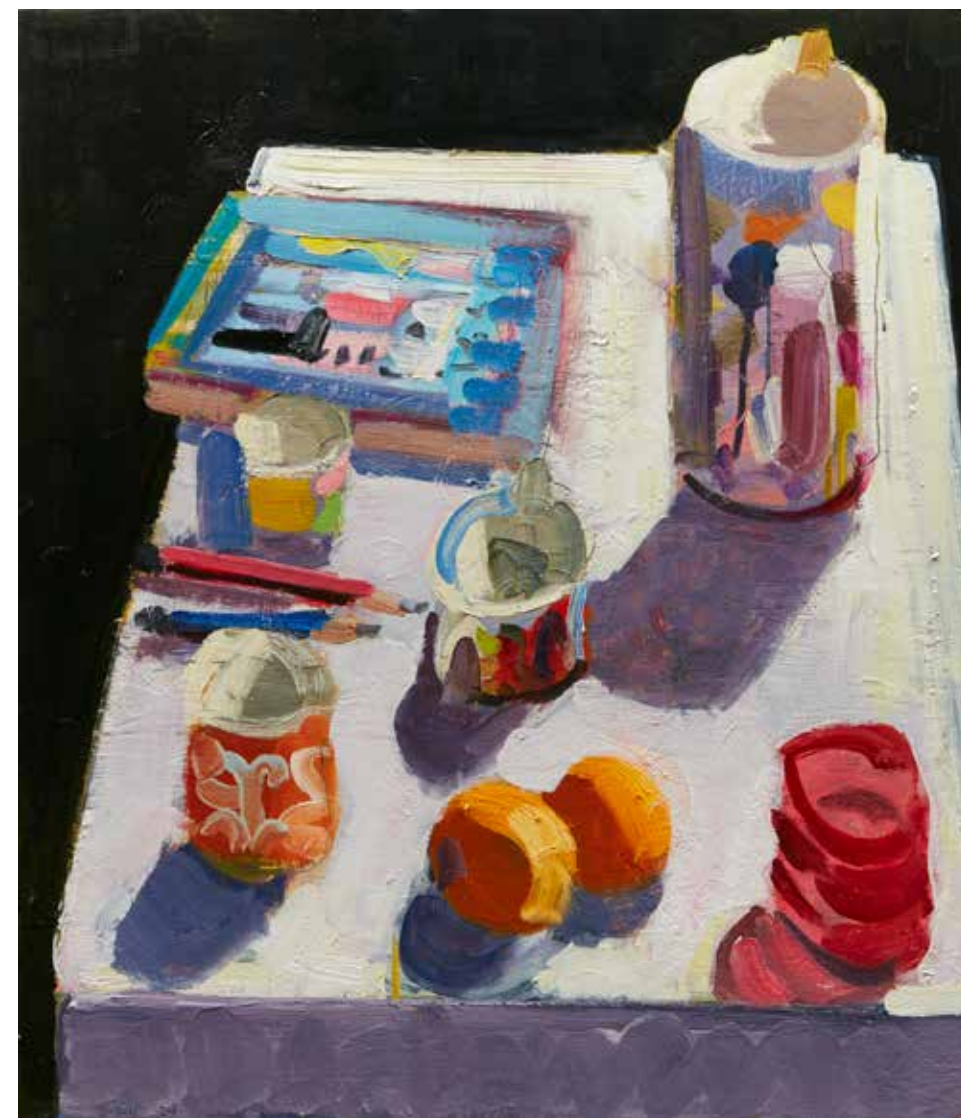
Knife and blue plate 2020 oil on board 25 x 28 cm



The sitting room 2020 charcoal, wash and collage on paper 56 x 76 cm



Biscuit tin 2020 oil on board 60 x 70 cm



Red glass 2020 oil on board 70 x 60 cm



Glass table top 2020 oil on board 80 x 60 cm



Rose and lemons 2020 oil on linen on board 27 x 30 cm



Spoonful of sugar 2020 oil on board 27 x 30 cm



Spotted napkin 2020 oil on board 27 x 30 cm



Two blue plates 2020 oil on board 27 x 30 cm



The newspaper 2020 oil on canvas 122 x 100 cm

John Bokor

Born

1973 Sydney, NSW, Australia

Education

1991-93 Diploma in Painting, National Art School, Sydney
2000 Bachelor of Fine Art [conversion course], National Art School

Solo exhibitions

2020 *Inner wolrd* King Street Gallery on William, Sydney
2019 *Between the Walls* Nicholas Thompson Gallery, Melbourne
At My Table Edwina Corlette Gallery, Brisbane
2018 *Interiors* King Street Gallery on William
2017 *The Source* Wollongong Art Gallery, NSW
2016 *Everyday World* King Street Gallery on William
Artist in residence exhibition Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery, NSW
2015 *Close to Home* King Street Gallery on William
2014 *John Bokor* Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery
2013 *The Still Life* King Street Gallery on William
Union Club, Sydney [Courtesy of King Street Gallery]
2011 *Black Diamond District* King Street Gallery on William
2009 *Inside* King Street Gallery on William
2007 *Small World Paintings* King Street Gallery on William
2005 *Paintings* king street gallery on burton, Sydney
2004 Mary Place Gallery, Sydney
2002 Mary Place Gallery
1999 ABC Gallery, Sydney
1998 Crawford Gallery, Sydney
1997 Crawford Gallery
1996 Crawford Gallery
1995 Mary Place Gallery

Group exhibitions [selected]

2020 *Muswellbrook Art Prize* Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre, NSW
2019 *National Still Life Award* Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery
Muswellbrook Art Prize Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre
Inside/Outside King Street Gallery on William, Sydney
Sir John Sulman Prize Art Gallery of New South Wales
2018 *Adelaide Perry Prize for Drawing* PLC, Sydney
2017 *Adelaide Perry Prize for Drawing* PLC

Tattersall's Landscape Prize Brisbane
Mosman Art Prize Mosman Art Gallery, Sydney
Paddington Art Prize Sydney
GLFC travelling works on paper exhibition - Chart Art Fair, Copenhagen, Denmark; The Hole, NYC;
Rod Bianco Gallery, Oslo, Norway; 0-0 Gallery, Los Angeles, California
2016 *Bokor, Ferguson & McKenzie* Muswellbrook Regional Art Gallery, NSW
Planting Dreams State Library of NSW, Sydney
Baked Goods University City Arts League Gallery, Philadelphia, USA
Paddington Art Prize Sydney
The Rick Amor Drawing Prize Melbourne, Vic
Just Draw [travelling drawing exhibition] Newcastle Art Gallery and Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, NSW
Planting Dreams: Shaping Australian Gardens State Library NSW
Kedumba Drawing Award Orange Regional Art Gallery, NSW
2015 *Drawings from Artist in Residence Amaze* The Michael Crouch Gallery, Mitchell Library State Library, NSW
Kings School Art Prize [winner] Kings School, Sydney
Mosman Art Prize Mosman Art Gallery
Adelaide Perry Prize for Drawing PLC
Muswellbrook Art Prize [winner] Muswellbrook Regional Art Gallery
Just Paper Maitland Regional Art Gallery, NSW
2014 *Paddington Art Prize* Sydney
Kedumba Drawing Award Wild Valley Art Gallery, NSW
Eutick Memorial Still Life Award Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery
Rick Amor Drawing Prize Ballarat Regional Gallery, Vic
Adelaide Perry Drawing Prize Methodist Ladies College, Sydney
Fishers Ghost Art Award Campbelltown Arts Centre, NSW
A Landscape of Place and Name King Street Gallery on William
En Plein Air Painting Prize NSW Parliament House, Sydney
2013 *Calleen Art Prize* Cowra Regional Gallery, NSW
Last but not Least King Street Gallery on William
Fishers Ghost Art Award Campbelltown Arts Centre, NSW
Eutick Memorial Still Life Award Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery
Mosman Art Prize Mosman Art Gallery
Looking Forward King Street Gallery on William
Wilson Art Prize Trinity Catholic College, Lismore NSW
Still Life AGNSW, Sydney
Fleurieu Landscape Prize SA
2012 *Calleen Art Award* Cowra Regional Gallery, NSW
Recent Acquisitions Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, NSW
Local Current Wollongong City Gallery, NSW
City of Albany Art Prize Albany Town Hall, Albany, WA
Adelaide Perry Prize for Drawing Adelaide Perry Gallery, Sydney

2011

Eutick Memorial Still Life Award Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery
Rick Amor Drawing Prize Art Gallery of Ballarat, Vic
NSW Parliament Plein Air Painting Prize NSW Parliament House
Whyalla Art Prize Middleback Theatre, Whyalla
NSW Parliament Plein Air Painting Prize NSW Parliament House
Nora Heyesen Centenary Art Prize Hahndorf, SA

2010

Mosman Art Prize Mosman Art Gallery
Stanthorpe Regional Gallery Art Prize Qld
En Plein Air Painting Prize NSW Parliament House

2009

Mosman Art Prize Mosman Art Gallery
ANL Maritime Art Prize Melbourne
Coffs Harbour Art Prize Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery
Kenilworth Art Prize Kenilworth, Qld
Paddington Art Prize Menzies Art Brands, Sydney
Last Show of the Year king street gallery on burton
Sustainable Living NG Gallery, Sydney
No Place Like Home NG Gallery

2006

Agri / culture Hawkesbury Regional Gallery, NSW
Bon A Tirer-Prints from the Studio Mosman Art Gallery
Dog Trumpet Michael Nagy Gallery, Sydney

2005

Project Parkinsons Prince of Wales Medical Research Institute

2004

Hazelhurst Works On Paper Exhibition Hazelhurst Regional Gallery, Sydney

2003

Mosman Art Prize Mosman Art Gallery
Waverly Art Prize Exhibition Sydney

2002

Brett Whitley Travelling Art Scholarship Exhibition Sydney

2001

Young Australian Artists Bartley Drey Gallery, London

2000

Jackman Gallery, Melbourne
Mary Place Gallery
Lloyd Rees Memorial Art Award Exhibition ABC Gallery, Sydney
Waverley Art Prize Exhibition Sydney

1999

Brett Whitley Travelling Art Scholarship Exhibition
Cityscapes Level Gallery, Sydney

1997

Glebe Art Show Sydney

1994

Fishers Ghost Exhibition Campbelltown Bicentennial City Art Gallery, NSW

Awards & residencies

2016

Sawtell Artist in Residence, Coffs Harbour, NSW

2015

NSW State Library Artist in Residence [2 weeks], Sydney
Kings School Art Prize The Kings School [winner]
Muswellbrook Art Prize Drawing Section, Muswellbrook Regional Art Gallery [winner]

2014

South Hill Yellow House Residency Goulburn NSW

2013

Eutick Still Life Memorial Art Award [winner-first prize]
Wilson Art Award Trinity Catholic College, Lismore [winner-first prize]

2012

NSW Parliament en Plein Air Prize Sydney [winner]
Eutick Memorial Still Life Award Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery, NSW [sponsor's prize]

2006

Loquat Valley Anglican School Art Prize Sydney

2004

Waverley Woollahra Art Prize Sydney
Allan Gamble Art Prize Sydney

2003

Waverley Art Prize [local subject] Sydney

1997

Glebe Art Show Sydney [Peoples Choice Award]

Collections

Art Gallery of Ballarat, Victoria

Art Gallery of New South Wales

Australian Catholic University

Charles Sturt University Art Collection, New South Wales

Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery, New South Wales

Kings School Art Collection, Sydney

Macquarie Bank, Australia

Maitland Regional Gallery, New South Wales

Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre, New South Wales

New South Wales Parliament Art Collection

State Library, New South Wales

The Australia Club, New South Wales

Trinity Catholic College, Lismore, New South Wales

UBS Warburg, Australia

University of Sydney, New South Wales

University of Wollongong, New South Wales

Waverley/Woollahra Council, Sydney

Wollongong Art Gallery, New South Wales



Studio, 2020
Photos courtesy Riste Andrievski

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