

Making their mark

In September, a young artist will be awarded the annual Brett Whiteley Travelling Art Scholarship. Here, five past winners reflect on the life-changing experience.



In 1959, unknown and aged just 20, Brett Whiteley won an arts scholarship from the Italian government to travel and study in Italy. From there, Whiteley went on to London where the Tate Gallery purchased his *Untitled red painting* 1960, and his career as a painter skyrocketed. To honour the impact the scholarship had on Whiteley's career, his mother Beryl founded the Brett Whiteley Travelling Art Scholarship in 1999 to inspire and foster other young painters. On 19 September, this year's winner will receive \$40,000 and a three-month residency at Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris, marking 21 years since the scholarship was first awarded.

Sally Anderson, 2017

Spending time in Paris enabled me to delve into a history of painting I'd only ever read about in books or seen on screens, and to experience these works first hand, in their European context, was invaluable. My time in Paris was enriching and constructive, yet at times challenging. I started to get a sense of myself in a new context, as an Australian artist, and unexpectedly found myself questioning my Australian identity and my responsibility as an artist. This kind of questioning is significant for any artist, and has since made its way into my work in the form of uniquely Australian landscape and still-life elements. After Paris, I spent time in the UK, which reinforced this questioning of 'Australian identity', but also introduced me to many contemporary commercial art galleries and artists. I look forward to seeing how this experience plays out in my work in the years to come.



Belem Lett, 2010

I was 23 and it was a huge ego boost to have someone give you a pile of cash and tell you that you had to go live in Paris. It gave me confidence to continue to explore what I wanted art to be. Never having been to Europe before, I travelled through several countries prior to arriving in Paris. Art and experience became encompassing. I was, and continue to be, very interested in colour and movement. I spent a lot of time going on long walks through the city, and these became the basis for a series of abstract gestural drawings. I remember going to a Gerhard Richter opening and he was there, which was cool. The award led to gallery offers and I became represented by local and interstate galleries, and have since had solo shows in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. Thanks [2010 scholarship judge] Angus Nivison, Beryl Whiteley, Brett, Wendy and the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

Nicole Kelly, 2009

I was 21 and in my Honours year at NAS [National Art School] – a crucial time for growth as a painter. I took very quickly to the idea of trailing the streets and chancing upon the meaningful and significant at hand. I poured over art in museums daily and specifically remember a searing pain when I saw my first Rembrandt. I drew obsessively from Cézanne, Matisse, Giacometti, van Gogh and Soutine. Not to make copies, but to access a knowledge within the pictures – to get at that ‘other’ quality and use it as a critique for my own work. When I returned home, my relationship with my work was fraught. Painting was full of frustration and few of these works still exist. Eventually, a deeply emotional response to ‘place’ emerged in my practice. The scholarship played a particularly formative role in challenging the way I looked at the land in Australia and my relationship to it. A relationship to Australia and France has continued as a dual focus in my work. I am interested in cultural and philosophical difference, otherness and exploring what can be spoken, remembered and reactivated – all of which determine what may be painted of a place.





Karlee Rawkins, 2003

I was living and painting in the hills behind Byron Bay at the time, out in the country and quite isolated. The scholarship provided a whole new sense of potential for what I could do with my life and my practice. It was very exciting. It gave me a timely and incredible confidence

boost as a young artist. My time in Paris was exhilarating and a big culture shock, as I had previously only lived in the country. Seeing the art and artefacts in the museums had a profound influence on my work and steered me towards the subjects and themes that still hold my focus today, particularly ancient, religious

and mythological imagery. Meeting other artists from around the world at the Cité studios and being able to share time and learn about their practices and cultures was very rewarding. I gained an appreciation of my practice within a global context and my identity as an Australian artist - something that I still appreciate.



Wayde Owen, 2005

When I won, I was splitting my time between painting and framing. Over the years my reputation as a framer has grown and my client base has expanded to the point where I'm framing full time to satisfy the demand. My studio time now exists only after the daily frames have been made. I had a lot of interest in my art practice after winning and I remember thinking 'This is it; I'm going to be a full-time artist'. But as soon as artists, collectors or dealers found out that I framed they would book a job in! I've also gained collectors and held many solo exhibitions, all of which I'm truly grateful for. I still face the same daily struggles as everyone else, but I'm not at the beginning anymore.

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BRETT WHITELEY TRAVELLING ART SCHOLARSHIP 2019

20 September-20 October

Brett Whiteley Studio, Surry Hills.
Finalists and winner announced 19 September.