

# The Sydney Morning Herald

Culture Art & design [Archibald Prize](#)

## Peter Wegner wins Archibald Prize 2021 with portrait of artist Guy Warren



By [Linda Morris](#)

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Artist Guy Warren won the Archibald Prize the first time he entered in 1985 with a portrait of friend Bert Flugelman. The winning portrait captured the deep friendship that existed between the two men who had known each other since they were students.



Guy Warren at this morning's prize ceremony. STEVEN SIEWERT

Warren was a stranger to Peter Wegner, [winner of this year's \\$100,000 Archibald Prize](#), making the artist's feat of capturing the centenarian's likeness and spirit even more admirable.

"It's a bloody good painting. I don't know this guy and if he's done more than capture my likeness, well, that's better than most people can say . . . then that's the secret," Warren said.

The Archibald Prize and Warren [shared a milestone celebration this year](#) – they both turned 100.



Peter Wegner's portrait of Guy Warren has won the Archibald Prize. AGNSW, FELICITY JENKINS

Wegner's traditional portrait of Australia's oldest working artist sitting in his Greenwich studio was selected [from 52 finalists](#), with Sydney artist Jude Ray for her self-portrait *Inside Out* and Brisbane artist Pat Hoffie for her portrait of her daughter, *Visaya in a c-collar* highly commended.

It was the first time in the history of the Archibald Prize that two highly commendeds have been awarded. Art Gallery of NSW Trustee president David Gonski said the vote came down to the three but after considerable debate, the Wegner portrait stood out and was unanimously supported.



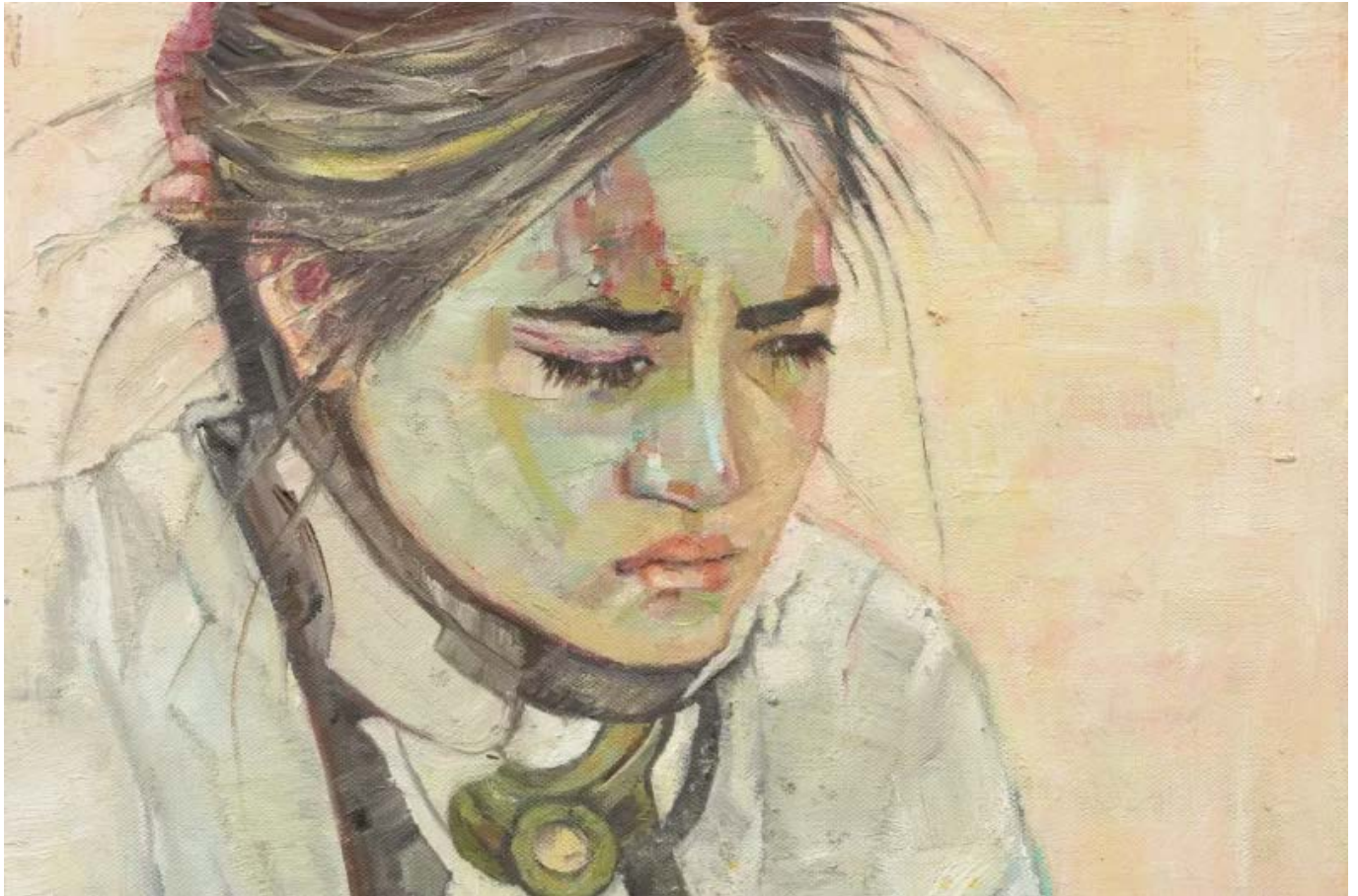
Jude Rae's self-portrait titled *Inside Out* was highly commended. FELICITY JENKINS

Nyapanyapa Yunupingu's *Garak - Night Sky* was named winner of the Wynne Prize for landscape painting and Georgia Spain's *Getting Down or Falling Up* winner of the Sulman Prize for subject painting, genre painting or mural project.

Wegner's *Portrait of Guy Warren at 100*, was a sentimental choice among the artist community.

Wegner said his wife Jenny burst into tears and he was left speechless when he was notified Friday morning. “This is just an unbelievable moment in my life. I’ve been exhibiting in Sydney and Melbourne for more than 25 years and it’s just a wonderful validation of my work,” he said. “A friend of ours has just dropped in a bottle of Moet and we might open it up and reflect on this extraordinary moment tonight.”

Wegner, in lockdown in Diamond Creek outside of Melbourne, has been drawing centenarians as part of a personal project started when his aunt Rita turned 100 seven years ago.



Pat Hoffie’s was highly commended for her portrait of her daughter Visaya in a c-collar. MIM STIRLING

He’s gone on to draw more than 90. Wegner is now interested in documenting supercentenarians, those reaching 110 years. “The chances are two in 1 million of someone reaching that age,” he said. Given Warren’s curiosity and sense of purpose, Wegner said he would not be surprised to paint him again. Wegner said the Archibald Prize money would buy him more time and “the ability to get into my studio and paint”.



Wynne Prize winner Nyapanyapa Yunupingu's Garak – Night Sky. ART GALLERY OF NSW

Warren, who made a surprise appearance at the announcement on Friday wearing the same pink pullover as in the winning portrait, said he had been painted at least four times for the Archibald Prize this year and had never met Wegner before he was asked to sit for him too.

Warren was in bed having a cup of tea when Art Gallery of NSW director Michael Brand called to inform him of the prize. "I was not surprised, I thought it was the best painting in the show but I might have been a bit biased," he said.

The Wegner portrait was "in the full tradition of portrait painting and that tradition goes back a hell of a long way. Secondly, it's a very good likeness, and thirdly, I'm told, it says something of my character."



Georgia Spain's *Getting Down or Falling Up* won the Sulman Prize. AGNSW, MIM STIRLING

Warren says his hunger to paint is driven by a “curiosity as to what’s around the next corner”. He began his working life as a proofreading assistant for *The Bulletin* and had ambitions to become a journalist.

“I need another 10, 20, 50 years to keep on painting if I can. There is a better painting around the corner, I know there is.”

Life, Warren said, was “full of doubt and wonder and surprise that I’m as old as I am. One hundred years is a hell of a lot of experience. I’ve survived the Great Depression, a war, I’ve survived serious medical difficulties and I’ve survived COVID – touch wood. After a while, you realise just how extraordinarily lucky you are to be alive.”

In an interview with art critic John McDonald earlier this year, Warren said the secret to living a long life was: “you just have to keep living.”

“I suppose I’ve never had any illusions about my work or my position in the universe, or even in the small world of the Sydney art scene. I don’t think it matters at all. I’ve never thought of

myself as Australia's greatest painter or as someone destined to make a fortune out of art," he said.

"I've never worried about the money because I've always managed to get a job when I needed one. I don't know if this was a matter of self-confidence or ability, I think I was just lucky. To be an artist is such a privilege I can't believe I've been so lucky."

*Archie 100*, an exhibition celebrating the prize's first 100 years and the controversies and characters that unite and polarise public opinion, will open on Friday evening.



Packing Room Prize winner Kathrin Longhurst's portrait of Kate Ceberano JENNI CARTER

Art Gallery of NSW Trustees considered works, including by Joan Ross, Tsering Hannaford, Thea Anamara Perkins, and Julia Ciccarone, depicting a range of subjects including actors Rachel Griffiths and Eryn Jean Norvill, former Archibald Prize winners Wendy Sharpe and Guy Warren, [Australian of the Year Grace Tame](#), and NSW Governor Margaret Beazley. The ethos of the Archibald Prize to represent the changing face of Australia saw women artists equally represented among the finalists for the first time in the history of the prize.

German-born [Kathrin Longhurst won the Packing Room Prize](#) for a steely portrait of singer Kate Ceberano, bearing some elements of a style of propaganda art the artist had been exposed to behind the Berlin Wall.

Last year, [Vincent Namatjira made history](#) when he became the first Indigenous artist to win the \$100,000 prize with a portrait of himself and Adam Goodes titled *Stand Strong for Who You Are*.

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**Linda Morris**



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