



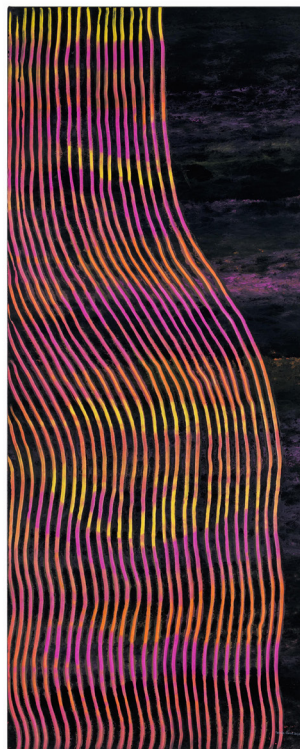
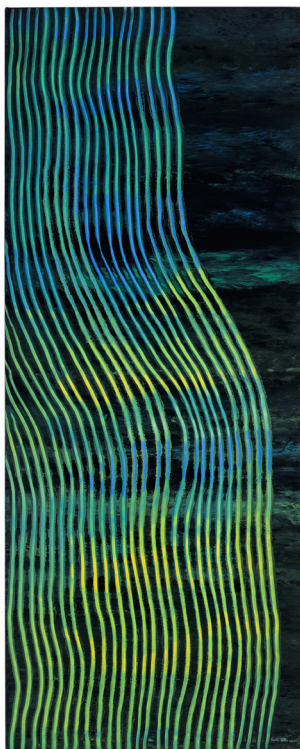
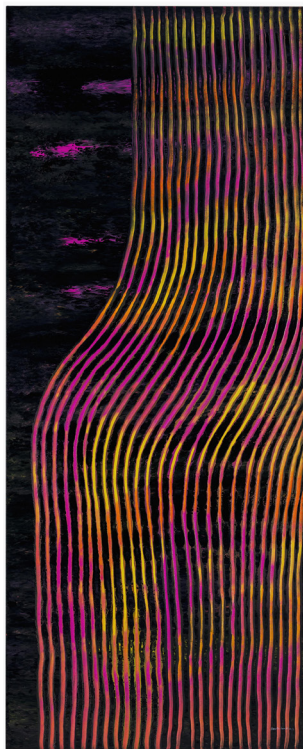
The Gold Award 2026





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Rosella Namok

Aangkum (Ungkum)
b. 1979 Lockhart River QLD
Lives Cairns QLD

***Old Gals Yarnin' I-III* 2023**

acrylic on canvas, 225 x 90 cm
Rockhampton Museum of Art Collection. Winner of the Gold Award 2024. Gift of
the Moya Gold Trust through Rockhampton Museum of Art Gift Fund 2024

Introduction

Welcome to *The Gold Award 2026* – the seventh iteration of this acquisitive, contemporary Australian painting prize at Rockhampton Museum of Art.

As celebrated in our recent exhibition in RMOA's Gallery 1 *Good As Gold*, *The Gold Award* has provided Rockhampton Museum of Art with an incredible legacy of contemporary painting by artists from across the nation. Visitors were in awe as they wandered around the room surrounded by thoughtful, provoking, personal, precious and visually striking work. It is an honour that these works can be shown and seen right here in Rockhampton.

The Gold Award at its heart is also a celebration of philanthropy, of the community contributions that have helped to shape RMOA's nationally significant collection since the beginning of collecting. The award is funded thanks to the generous bequest of Moya Gold – her insight and legacy laying the foundation years ago to ensure collecting could continue well into the future. The award is generously supported through our donor campaign, with many donors returning year upon year, allowing for the acquisition of further works. We thank all for their championing of the RMOA Collection.

In 2026 we welcome eight magnificent artists, Lydia Balbal, Betty Chimney, Wayilkpa Maymuru, Karla Marchesi, David Paulson, Lorna Quinn, Telly Tu'u and Tricky Walsh – each presenting an incredible representation of their practice. The exhibition promises to be bright and bold, alongside a celebration of the delicate and intricate. We also welcome esteemed artist Jenny Watson as the 2026 judge, tasked with the difficult decision of selecting one of the works as winner.

The Gold Award is always a highlight in the RMOA calendar, we are excited to share it with you all. We thank all artists, their galleries and supporters for the contributions and planning involved along the way and wish all best of luck.

- Shanna Muston

Acting Director, Rockhampton Museum of Art



Lydia BALBAL

Lydia Balbal is a Mangala woman. She was married to the Yulparija artist Nabiru Bullen until his death in 2009. Lydia's country is near Punmu in the Great Sandy Desert of W.A. Her people's existence was threatened by severe drought so that they had little choice but to leave their traditional country. Her family were some of the last to walk out to the coastal town of Bidyadanga (then La Grange Mission) located two hours south of Broome in the early 70s. Lydia first began painting in 2007 and has received significant attention from collectors and the media alike for her gestural form and use of colour.

Balbal explores jila (living water) located near the Percival Lakes in the Great Sandy Desert in Western Australia. It is an important gathering of the Yulparija and neighbouring groups where they would come together for rain making ceremonies. Balbal's vivid works for *The Gold Award 2026* record Martakulu, a soak out near Punmu near the Canning Stock Route. This is strong woman's Country and part of the women's law line.

"Martakulu is a soak out near Punmu near the Canning Stock Route in the Great Sandy Desert in Western Australia. It is strong womans country, it is part of the womans law line. Long time ago a law man he come up to this country, he went home and left his wife and baby. They make him a fire and sit down, cook mayi (Bush food) and then started to cry for her husband. Her tears made that soak. It is important country this one."

- Lydia Balbal

Text courtesy of the artist and
Short St Gallery, Broome WA

Lydia Balbal

Mangala people
b. 1958 Punmu WA
Lives Bidyadanga and Broome WA

Martakulu 2024

acrylic on linen, 195 x 129 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Short St Gallery, Broome



Betty CHIMNEY

Betty is a long-time artist and director of Iwantja Arts. A dedicated painter, Betty's work is inspired by her ancestral Yankunytjatjara country and a determination to maintain her strong connection to Country and culture.

"I have been working here at Iwantja Arts for many years now. My painting show the rock hole at Iwantja Creek; we would camp there and drink the nice cold water from the soakage. I paint the waterhole, the soakage and then all the roads around the place. I've been painting this way - painting all those different things, painting the story of this place, all the good stuff!"

*Ngayulu răm waakaringi nyangangka,
Iwantja Art Centre-ngkakulĭ winki.
Ngayuku walka tjuta nintini kapi tjukula
tjuta, Iwantja karungka, nganana
ngaripai palangka ka palangka kapi piĭi
kulu ngaranyi, nganana iriti tjikilpai,
kapi wari mula. Ngayulu walkatjunanyi
kapi piĭi, kapi tjukula munu iwara tjuta.
Ngayulu rawa mula walkatjunanyi
kapi tjuta - winki walkatjunanyi, Ƞapar
nyanganganguru munu ara wiru tjuta.*

"I love making paintings with my daughter Raylene. We've made many big canvases together and send our paintings to exhibitions all over the place! When we're painting, we talk about our lives and about our Country and culture. Making paintings together is very special, the paintings are always exciting and interesting to make. It makes me so happy to work with my daughter, we are teaching, the next generation about how important our culture is."

*Ngayulu mukuringanyi paintamilatjaku
Ngayuku utalpa-ngka tjungu. Ngali
tjungu-ku canvas tjuta palya-pai munu
gali-pa iyapai nura tjuta-kutu. Ngali
tjungu-ku paintamilapai kutjupa kutjupa
wiru tjuta. Ngayulu pukulpa wangerinyi.
Ngayuku utalpaka munu ngali nintini
malatja-malatja tjutangku nyakula
kulintjaku.*

- Betty Chimney

Text courtesy of the artist, Michael Reid Galleries, Sydney and Iwantja Arts, APY Lands NT

Betty Chimney

Yankunytjatjara
b. 1957 Port Augusta SA
Lives Indulkana SA

Ngayuku Ngura (My Country) 2025

acrylic on linen, 185 x 232 cm
Courtesy of the artist, Michael Reid Galleries, Sydney and Iwantja Arts, APY Lands NT



Wayilkpa MAYMURU

Wayilkpa Maymuru is a Yolŋu artist of the Mangalili clan and a member of Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre, the artist's work references the settlement of her homeland Djarrakpi by ancestral heroes, telling their story of death, rest and rebirth to the sky.

Wayilkpa's father is Banapana, Narritjin's second son. In the mid 1970's Banapana helped his father establish an outstation on Mangalili land at Djarrakpi. Like his brothers and sisters, he was urged to watch his father painting after school and, taught by this great artist, developed into a fine artist himself. In 1978 he and his father spent three months as Visiting Artists at the Australian National University, Canberra.

Part of this esteemed Yirrkala-based Maymuru family of artists, Wayilkpa's artistic practice emerges from rich cultural and intellectual traditions. Continuing her family's strong artistic legacy through her refined and meditative mark marking, the artist navigates the space between what is revealed and what is concealed in her contemporary interpretations of ancient Mangalili Clan narratives.

Wayilkpa's latest works echo the Buwayak movement; a word that translates to 'invisibility'. This movement, which emerged in the early 2000s, marked a move away from the figurative imagery dictated by earlier conventions and instead employs subtle, layered surfaces and restrained iconography. Crafting works that embody the unseen, rather than illustrate it.

"Her paintings have a complex symbolism, they represent ancestral stories in symbolic narratives, often composed in bands. Similar elements occur across the paintings, with different but related meanings. Similarly to her father and grandfather, her art is a means to communicate ideas and knowledge to an external audience and a means of ensuring the continuity of ancestral law."

- Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre

Text courtesy of the artist, Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre and Sullivan+Strumpf, Melbourne

Wayilkpa Maymuru

Mangalili, Moiety: Yirritja
b. Djarrakpi NT
Lives Yirrkala, North East Arnhem Land NT

Hidden in the Stars 2026

bark painting, 168 x 98 cm
Courtesy of the artist, Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre, Yirrkala NT, and
Sullivan+Strumpf, Melbourne



Karla MARCHESI

In a spirited Baroque-punk adaptation of Romanticism, my work refracts the socio-cultural anxieties of our age, critiquing what it means to be human in this present moment under the conditions of late capitalism and Anthropocentrism. My practice entwines autobiographical narrative with broader ideological critique, drawing on bathos, pathos, and the deliberate absence of the human figure to address both intimate and existential concerns. My visual language utilises density, ornament, irreverence, and chaos to subvert the sublime. The absence of the figure positions the botanical as an anthropomorphic stand-in for the human: a silent witness reflecting ourselves back to ourselves.

With an air of affirmative nihilism and tragicomic melodrama, my paintings stage heightened emotional landscapes, often featuring complex entanglements of multi-genus flora and fauna in hyper-natural, post-humanist scenes. A Lacanian understanding of desire—*too much is never enough*—is expressed pictorially through an overabundance of forms and painterly details, proliferating species, excessive ornamentation, and sensory overload.

Through an art-historical lens and maximalist compositional tropes, the work becomes a decadent visual feast that, if consumed in one sitting, may induce a kind of dizzying nausea.

Positioned between seduction and repulsion, my botanical subjects function as potent allegories—sensuous yet critical—underscoring the complexities, contradictions, violence, and vulnerability of our modern age. They sit in delicate tension between surface and substance, desire and decay, delight and disillusionment, while touching on the enduring human longing for hope and connection.

For over a decade, my practice has drawn from and reimaged the “Impossible Bouquet” genre of 17th-century Dutch still life painting. I present non-human subjects as heroic, embodied with agency and generative possibility, subverting traditions of the genre and highlighting human folly, especially my own. Resistant, adaptive, and at times indifferent, these non-human ontologies invite viewers to consider our shifting relationship to the world.

- Karla Marchesi

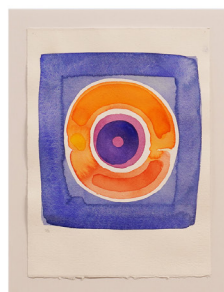
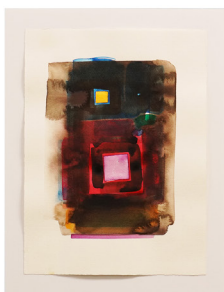
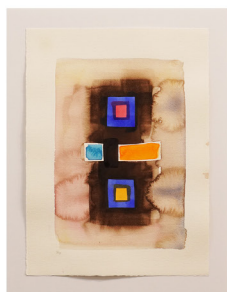
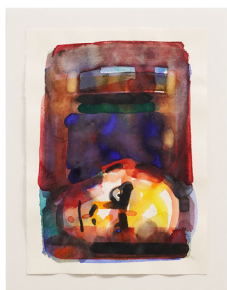
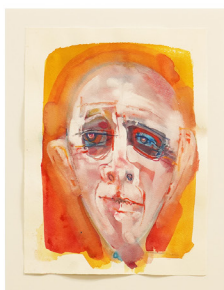
Text courtesy of the artist

Karla Marchesi

b. 1984 Brisbane QLD
Lives Berlin, Germany

Playpen 2025

oil on linen, 165 x 140 cm
Courtesy of the artist, Jan Manton Gallery, Brisbane and Nicholas Thompson Gallery, Melbourne



David PAULSON

The works produced for Rockhampton's Gold Award extend David Paulson's *Everyman* series, begun in 2023, and further developed in the context of his diagnosis of Parkinson's disease. As the condition increasingly affects the steadiness of his hand, the act of drawing—long central to his practice—becomes both subject and test.

In the *Everyman* series, the fully evident graphic skills of David Paulson are wielded to make pithy statements about his subjects. Rather than appearing as portraits of specific personalities these images are amalgams of 'everyman' - where the details and features are composed from remembered and imaginary face-parts. As such, they are almost identi-kits of faces recalled from glimpses-in-passing; personages put together with details rendered through unflinching scrutiny.

Fellow artist Pat Hoffie observes, "Paulson's considerable skills as a designer combine with a wicked sense of visual play to produce a cast of characters. While none of them are identifiable as particular individuals, they each possess an almost uncanny familiarity. Caught in emotional half-

states of being between jubilation and revulsion, envy and pride, recognition and confusion, they are bit-players in a pantheon of personalities born from the artist's prodigious imagination (2023)."

In these new works, this outward-looking process turns inward. The instability introduced by Parkinson's becomes both constraint and generative force, as Paulson interrogates not only his capacity to render a line, but the very foundations of his artistic identity. The figures, once assembled from fragments of others, begin to fold back onto the self. They hover ambiguously between archetype and self-portrait—faces that seem at once invented and intimately known. In this sense, the *Everyman* becomes inseparable from the artist himself: a shifting register of presence, doubt, and recognition.

"We are all trying hard to identify ourselves—and often we are disappointed."

- David Paulson

Text courtesy of FireWorks Gallery, Brisbane

David Paulson

b. 1944 Leeds, UK
Lives Brisbane QLD

Aqua Moments (detail) 2026

watercolour on paper, 38 x 28.5cm each, 185 x 334.5 cm (overall)
Courtesy of the artist and FireWorks Gallery, Brisbane



Lorna QUINN

Lorna Quinn's delicate paintings are like intimate portals into the natural realm. Their small scale is personable, inviting the viewer up close to inspect the carefully rendered surface and intricate brushstrokes. Quinn has adopted a warm palette, bathing the land in light, an Australian kind of light. This interest in light is similar to that of the Heidelberg School painters of Melbourne in the late 19th century. The painters shared the European impressionist's study of light, and desire to capture and share a feeling over direct representation. The artists often worked en plein air – outside, directly in the very landscape that was being painted. Likewise, Quinn also spends time in the landscape, hiking and being in nature – a slow and mindful activity that encourages, or perhaps forces one to observe the change of light over the course of a day.

Historical art references could also be drawn in Quinn's work to etching, an artform often utilised by many of the of the European master painters. Cross hatched brush strokes build layers and create an interesting texture, alluding to the roughness of nature and layering of time.

"I'm interested in the illusory nature of desire and the fantasies that house it. Responding to the ambiguities of the present, I crave a more legible order. I imagine a dwelling place, a vessel, in which everything is visible and truth is absolute. By making pictures of literal contexts, containers I can orient myself in, I aim to exteriorize and then subsume a fantasy of wholeness"¹

- Lorna Quinn

¹ Courtesy of the artist 2026

Lorna Quinn

b. 1995 Melbourne VIC
Lives London, UK

Untitled 2024

oil on panel, 28.6 x 35 cm
Courtesy of the artist



Telly TU'U

Telly Tu'u was born in Wellington, New Zealand, and now lives and works in Sydney. Tu'u likes his paintings to be a slow burn, to hold attention, to be interesting. The works encourage audiences to stop, to look carefully, and to allow time for the painting to reveal itself to the viewer. This slow reveal is made possible through the complex layers and delicate visual balance achieved, illustrating the artists mastery of the atmospheric paired with restraint.

Tu'u starts a new painting using what is left on the palette from the previous, "I just start and then that first initial mark determines the next and so on, and even that first mark that I put down could determine the last mark"¹. Each new painting is born to a larger family of works with these remnant beginnings spinning a common thread to each other.

In Tu'u's works for *The Gold Award 2026* areas of softness and space with vivid movement are interrupted by bold, sharp edges nestled amongst the scenes. These hard-edge areas are what Tu'u refers to as a pause, "they kind of serve as anchors or pauses because there's so much movement in the painting and I like the idea of this implied form, either it falling apart or coming together."²

Abstraction is used as a method to make viewers work, as well as a response to other artists and historical art movements Tu'u is inspired by. Alongside this, the artists Chinese, Samoan, Tokelaun and Tuvaluan culture also directly inform his painting practice.

"My culture has been critical in how I see my work; the Samoan Pe'a (tattoo) or Tapa cloth for example, each consists of patterns that are abstracted from nature, so abstraction has always been something I am comfortable with. My latest paintings have become a lot more atmospheric and some of the gestural marks are less obvious."³

- Telly Tu'u

1 www.youtube.com/watch?v=g2he_h0wahE, Telly Tu'u's exhibition "Mingle" January 2021, Richard Morecroft, accessed 09.06.26

2 www.youtube.com/watch?v=8dnB2DFZiuQ, Telly Tu'u talks with Maria Stoljar about his recent work, Talking with Painters – the videos, 30 March 2021, accessed 09.06.26

3 bowengalleries.nz/telly-tuu, Artist Biography, Telly Tu'u, accessed 09.06.2

Telly Tu'u

b. 1976 Wellington NZ
Lives Sydney NSW

Spin Off 2026

oil on linen, 112 x 122 cm
Courtesy of the artist



Tricky WALSH

Stealth Mode is unmistakably a work of this time, the kaleidoscopic patterns present a revolt to the rise of artificial intelligence while simultaneously treasuring the imperfection-ness of humans. Made in a world where new skills are essential to constantly analyse and verify – is this real? Tricky Walsh grapples with the consequences of rapid technological changes and living in a time and/or place that can feel precarious or unsafe.

“I have long learned to encourage inconvenience. My practice is laboursome at every turn. I like working, I like using my mind and hands to confer meaning to material. It’s a human thing, perhaps perversely in this timeline, to want to create something which is flawed, but I feel myself drawn to imperfection more and more at every turn. These paintings, whether through omission, deconstruction, in-completion, visual noise, tone or intentional mess, root themselves in the mire of our human-ness, while narrating a tale of what it means to lose that.

There are many instances throughout the history of making which have also encouraged the conscious use of imperfection – in Navajo blankets, escape paths are woven into the pattern to allow the spirit of the weaver to escape upon its completion. In Japanese crafts, the embracing of the innate and subtle flaws of the handmade elevate them far above their machine cast counterparts. Islamic art is famous for its breaks in symmetries and subtle dislocations with its ornate patterning as a way to maintaining humility, as perfection is reserved for the realm of gods. In this time it feels more ever more important to celebrate the abilities of humans, to honour the things we reach for even when we fall short of accomplishment.”¹

- Tricky Walsh

Curiously, the technology of augmented reality unlocks stealthy messages within the works from the artists science fiction story draft *A-Eye*. Tricky Walsh encourages viewers to consider “hiding has not been possible for some. Perhaps it is time to loudly stand our ground.”²

1 *Stealth Mode* Artist Statement, Tricky Walsh 2026

2 *ibid*

Tricky Walsh

b. 1974 Moe VIC
Lives Richmond VA, USA

Stealth Mode (Panel 3 of 7: Human Capital) 2026

gouache on 640gsm fabriano watercolour paper, 152 x 56 cm (each)
Courtesy of the artist and MARS Gallery, Melbourne

The Gold Award Donors 2026

Gold Donors generously support Rockhampton Museum of Art and enable the RMOA Collection to continue to grow through the acquisition of additional works from *The Gold Award*. Funded solely through the generosity of individual benefactors, this vital contribution of the Gold Donors provides the opportunity for RMOA to acquire work in addition to the winning artwork. A generous thanks to our Gold Donors who have shown significant support and ensured the continued growth of the RMOA Collection and a lasting legacy for generations to come.

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Dr Leonie Gray and Bill Legg

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The Anderson Family

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The Gold Award 2026

4 July – 6 September 2026

Rockhampton Museum of Art

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Rockhampton Museum of Art is owned and operated by Rockhampton Regional Council.

Front Cover Image: **Karla Marchesi** *Waisted Waiting* (detail) 2025, oil on linen, 165 x 165 cm.

Image courtesy of the artist, Jan Manton Gallery, Brisbane and Nicholas Thompson Gallery, Melbourne

Back Cover Image: **Tricky Walsh** *Stealth Mode* (Panel 7 of 7: *Image after image after image*)

(detail) 2026, gouache on 640gsm fabriano watercolour paper, 152 x 56 cm (each). Image courtesy of the artist, MARS Gallery, Melbourne



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