



Ravenswood School for Girls connecting and fostering female artists

Up to 70 percent of Australian art school graduates are female, yet women exhibit in galleries and receive art prizes at less than half the rate of men*

The Ravenswood Australian Women's Art Prize was conceived to inspire, promote and connect the country's female visual artists and help redress the gender imbalance in the Australian art world.

"As an all-girls' school, our aim is also to strengthen the profile and legitimacy of careers in art for current and future generations of women," says Ravenswood Principal, Mrs Anne Johnstone.

The prize also provides significant and ongoing educational benefits. Throughout February the school staged an exhibition of works by the 2017 Ravenswood-Australian Women's Art Prize Professional Artist Prize winner, Joan Ross and Emerging Artist Prize winner, Katrina Collins. Both artists visited Ravenswood's senior art classes in February to discuss their inspirations and process, and take questions on broader artistic themes.

Joan Ross won the respected Sulman Prize in 2017 for her piece *Oh History, You Lied to Me*, which was last year hung in the Art Gallery of NSW and forms part of the current Ravenswood exhibition. She works predominantly in digital video, using colonial painter John Glover's landscapes as a backdrop for complex and layered pieces filled with double meanings and "personal secrets". Her themes include the impact of colonialism and concepts around the naming and ownership of things. Joan's advice to the students working in an artistic space or any domain is "to persevere with intention and be dogged."

Katrina Collins' richly-coloured and joyful abstract works are inspired by the everyday beauty in nature and manmade constructs. In an afternoon tutorial, she advised the girls to be open to the unexpected and emphasised the fulfilment of working as an artist alongside a more traditional career.

"It was really interesting to hear how different parts of her life came together in the expression of her work," says Year 11 student, Taylor Ayres. Another student, 16-year-old Ava Masters, adds, "I had seen her paintings on the walls in the Ravenswood gallery and thought they were beautiful, but it has been really inspiring to discover the story behind them."

The Ravenswood Australian Women's Art Prize is also working towards developing a curriculum with a range of artists each year - creating resources for everyone across Australia.

It is hoped such resources will be accessed for free online, "to encourage more women artists into the classroom and provide an additional way for female artists to be supported," says Ravenswood's Head of Visual Arts, Edwina Palmer.

Entries for the 2018 Ravenswood Women's Art Prize are now open, with entrants asked to incorporate this year's theme: *Resilience*. The announcement of the winners and the exhibition Opening Night is on June 15.



*The Countess Report 2016, Elvis Richardson Cruthers Art Foundation, NAVA.