

The Ian Potter Museum of Art The University of Melbourne



Media Release

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August 2, 2012

BASIL
SELLERS _____
ART _____
PRIZE _____

Exhibition runs 3 August to 4 November 2012, Free Admission

Art Prize Winner Announced

The prestigious \$100,000 Basil Sellers Art Prize has been awarded to Irish-born Melbourne artist Jon Campbell for his work, “*Dream team*”, depicting the nicknames of famous AFL players, past and present.

The work consists of 22 enamel paintings on board featuring names such as “Captain Blood”, “Cowboy”, “Dipper”, “Daisy” and “Buddy Love”.

Director of the Ian Potter Museum of Art at the University of Melbourne, Dr Chris McAuliffe, commended all finalists for the depth of their engagement with the theme of sport and the quality of their art.

“The judges were impressed by the breadth of artists’ themes, which encompass the emotions and spectacle of sport, as well as challenging historical and moral issues. The ambitious new works by the finalists present a rich engagement with the idea and experience of sport.

“The overall impact of the work as an exhibition is particularly impressive, reflective of the different ways in which the Australian spirit can be articulated; whether in the desire for fair play, the quirky behaviour of the fan, or the role of sport in everyday life.

“The winning work, Jon Campbell’s compendium of nicknames of AFL legends old and new, epitomises a quintessentially Australian approach to sporting heroes: colloquial, knockabout nicknames, showing a combination of admiration and mischievous wit. Hard core fans will recognise the players’ nicknames, but all will recognise the Australian habit of casting heroes as the bloke next door.

“Judges commended Campbell’s blending of a Pop art style with the colloquial language of the suburbs. The deceptively simple panels in *Dream team* combine the colour palette of the suburban home, the typography of the shopping strip and the passions of the public bar,” Dr McAuliffe said

The Basil Sellers Art Prize provides a range of awards for artists. In addition to the \$100,000 prize, the finalists are in the running for the 2013 National Sports Museum Basil Sellers Creative Arts Fellowship (valued at \$50,000) to be announced during the Exhibition, and the \$5,000 Yarra Trams People’s Choice Award, voted on by visitors to the Exhibition.

The other 2012 finalists are: Brook Andrew, Richard Bell, Lauren Brincat, Pat Macan, Louise Hearman, Greg Creek, Eugene Carchesio, Gabriella Mangano and Silvana Mangano, Simon Perry, Kerrie Poliness, Patrick Pound, Christian Thompson, Sangeeta Sandrasegar.

This year's judging panel comprised businessman and former rugby legend Nick Farr-Jones, Erica Green, Director of the Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art at the University of South Australia, Lisa Havilah, CEO of Carriageworks, Sydney, Dr Chris McAuliffe, Director, the Ian Potter Museum of Art and award patron Basil Sellers AM.

Some of the biggest names in Australian sport are supporting the 2012 prestigious Basil Sellers Art Prize. Cricket heroes Glenn McGrath and Steve Waugh AM and AFL football legends Brett Kirk and Paul Roos have been appointed as 2012 Ambassadors to the third biennial Basil Sellers Art Prize joining with existing Ambassador, sports media personality Samantha Lane to promote the Prize's unique link between sport and art.

ENDS

FOR IMAGES OF THE WINNING WORK, PLEASE CONTACT:

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Hours: Tuesday to Friday 10am - 5pm: Saturday and Sunday 12 - 5pm [free admission]

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Catalogue Essay on the Winning Artist's Work

In his original entry for the Basil Sellers Art Prize, Jon Campbell states: 'there are two great Aussie pastimes, watching sport and looking at Jon Campbell paintings'. Equating his own popularity in the hearts of Australians with that of sport is a classic tongue-in-cheek Campbell gesture.

For close to three decades, Jon Campbell has produced works of art that celebrate the particular character of his 'leftie, westie, working class' view of Australia. His work centres on Australian suburban life and culture; drawing on rock music, car culture, and local references such as neighbourhood signs and motifs. Campbell is sincere and honest in his approach, and viewers find a comforting humour in his paintings of suburban backyards, neon signs, and placard-like text works that cite phrases such as 'schnitz & tits', 'maaate', 'pure bewdy' and 'bowled shaane'. His use of the common vernacular isn't designed to mock or deride; rather, it speaks of a genuine desire to articulate and share the character of a community.

Since the mid-1990s, Campbell has regularly used typography in his work for its capacity to succinctly, if sometimes obliquely, convey the complexity of the relationships between art, design, advertising, and localised culture. In Dream team, Campbell reflects on the agency of language to define the heavily fetishized threshold that distinguishes a true fan (or initiate) from a mere spectator.

For Australian rules football fans, the concept behind Campbell's new multi-panel painting Dream team (2012) hardly needs explanation. Selecting his subjects from across generations and teams, Campbell

has chosen his top twenty-two players' nicknames and rendered them on small-scale boards with the skill of a master signwriter. The hand-held scale is important, recalling the signs fans hold up at live games, as is the choice of colours and font for each name. Playing with anticipated associations is part of the fun: Campbell has given Captain Blood (Jack Dyer) a comical amusement park vibe; and the tough swagger one might expect of a player named Cowboy (Kevin Neale) dissolves into plump bubble-gum sweetness. The overall soft, pastel palette further dilutes the inherent masculinity of the subject matter.

In sport (as in life) a nickname indicates that a player has captured the hearts of fans; even a less-than-heroic moniker like Flea (Dale Weightman) or Spud (Danny Frawley), equates to legend status. Nicknames are for mates, and the use of colloquial names in sport brings players and fans closer, transposing a legend from the pedestal to the bar stool. **Joanna Bosse, Curator, Potter Museum of Art, University of Melbourne**

Jon Campbell's Bio

Jon Campbell was born in Northern Ireland in 1961 and arrived in Australia in 1964. He lives in Melbourne. Campbell studied painting at RMIT before completing a Graduate Diploma at the VCA in 1985. He was a studio artist at 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne, from 1986 to 1987. Solo exhibitions include *Pure bewdy*, Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney (2011); *Folk songs*, Uplands Gallery, Melbourne (2010); *Up shit creek*, Darren Knight Gallery (2009); *I'm stranded*, Uplands Gallery (2004); *It's a world*, Rm 103, Auckland (2003); and the survey exhibition *Jon Campbell's greatest hits vol. 1*, Glen Eira City Gallery, Melbourne (1999). Group exhibitions include *Imaging the apple*, AC Institute, New York (2010); *TWMA contemporary 2010*, TarraWarra Museum of Art, Healesville, Vic. (2010); *Game on!: sport and contemporary art*, the Ian Potter Museum of Art, the University of Melbourne (2006); *So you wanna be a rock 'n' roll star: portraits and rock music in Australia*, National Portrait Gallery, Canberra, and tour (2004–05); *ARTissima*, Turin, Italy (2003); *Fieldwork: Australian art 1968–2002*, the Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia (2002); *Art>music: rock, pop, techno*, MCA, Sydney (2002); and *On the road: the car in Australian art*, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne (1999). Campbell has been a lecturer in painting at the VCA since 1999.

Jon Campbell is represented by Kalimanrawlins, Melbourne; and Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney.

Further reading:

- Barkley, Glenn (ed.), *Making it new: focus on contemporary Australian art*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2009.
- McAuliffe, Chris, *Game on!: sport and contemporary art*, the Ian Potter Museum of Art, the University of Melbourne, Parkville, Vic., 2006.
- O'Halloran, David, *Jon Campbell's greatest hits vol. 1*, Glen Eira Council, Caulfield, Vic., 1999.
- Radford, Lisa & Jarrod Rawlins, *Jon Campbell*, Uplands Publishing, Prahran, Vic., 2010.
- Wolifson, Chloe, 'On text and texture', *Heat*, no. 21, 2009.

Basil Sellers Art Prize:

"My hope is that this prize will take lovers of sport and art into what may be uncharted, but ultimately rewarding, territory, leading to an engagement that will enhance their enjoyment of each other's loves." **Basil Sellers AM**

Background on the Prize

The Basil Sellers Art Prize is a contemporary art prize and exhibition which focuses on the theme of 'art and sport' and is staged at the Ian Potter Museum of Art, the University of Melbourne every second year since the inaugural in 2008.

Not the Archibald in a footy jumper, the prize is a fresh take on the theme, encouraging artists to boldly ask the questions, rattle our preconceptions and explore sporting culture—perhaps luring art and sports supporters from their strongly held positions on opposite sides of the ring.

From a national field of over 300 entrants, the work of 15 shortlisted finalists comprise the 2012 exhibition with a prize of \$100,000 awarded to the winner, making the Basil Sellers Art Prize one of the richest in Australia.

The prize has met with national media attention, critical acclaim and strong endorsement from artists. In a crowded field, the Basil Sellers Art Prize has established a strong reputation for professionalism, attention to artists' needs and interests, and quality of presentation.

The prize has been initiated and generously supported by Basil Sellers AM. Basil, a businessman and philanthropist, has made his career breathing life into ailing companies. A recognised art collector, Basil divides his time between Europe and Australia (or wherever the Sydney Swans are playing that weekend).

The Basil Sellers Art Prize is a long-term project, involving 5 biennial awards from 2008 to 2016 staged at The Ian Potter Museum of Art, University of Melbourne, aimed at changing Australians' perception and enjoyment of art and sport.

The prize is acquisitive.