

NEWS ANNOUNCEMENT

EMBARGOED until 11am, 23 February 2007

En garde!

Initiative marries sport and art in \$100,000 prize

Friday 23rd February 2007, a major new initiative will be launched. Offering \$100,000 to a single outstanding work of art, the Basil Sellers Art Prize is significant not only for the substantial award amount, making it one of Australia's richest, but also for its theme – sport.

Today, art prizes are a familiar feature in our landscape, but this prize offers something exceptional. Bringing together these apparent foes (sport and art) in to an arena that will encourage bloodletting, cheers, competition and perhaps some spectacular insights, the launch is a call to artists to sharpen their brushes and enter the fray; and for audiences to prepare for something a little different - this prize is not the Archibald Prize in a footy jumper.

For many artists, sport has already been a 'happy hunting ground' within their practice. Australia's mythology, sense of identity and achievement is linked to sport and our social rituals are often structured around sporting events; from the humble game of beach cricket through to the Melbourne Cup. Our contemporary economy is inseparable from sport, and some of our lingering barriers, race, gender, sexuality, disability show up sharply in sporting culture.

Art and artists reflect on the big issues, teasing out hidden themes and bringing our emotions, beliefs and prejudices into focus, and this prize is intended to do just that, using sport as the vehicle to consider our contemporary culture, provoke sharp reflections, unsettle preconceptions and generate new ideas.

Director of the Ian Potter Museum of Art, Dr Chris McAuliffe commented; 'Basil and I both share a passion for sport, but we are also aware that artists can bring a fresh and critical eye to contemporary life. So, whether 'sport' is interpreted as two-up or tiddlywinks, or references are made more obliquely to obsession, or 'win at all costs', we are encouraging artists to ask pointed questions and to explore the murkier backwaters of sporting culture. With this in mind, I say 'let the games begin!'

The prize has been initiated and generously underwritten by Basil Seller AM. Basil, a business man and philanthropist has made his career breathing life into ailing companies. He has fittingly been described as the turnaround king. A recognised art collector, Basil divides his time between Europe and Australia (or where ever the Sydney Swans are playing that weekend).

Basil commented, "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 others loves."

The 2008 Basil Sellers Art Prize is the first step in a long term project aiming at changing Australians' perception and enjoyment of art and sport.

Entries are invited from Australian contemporary artists, with a distinguished judging panel announcing a short list of artists in September 2007. These artists will be invited to submit work for the \$100,000 Basil Sellers Art Prize and exhibition, opening at the Ian Potter Museum of Art, University of Melbourne, in July 2008. The prize is acquisitive. Further information and entry forms can be obtained from the website.

FOR FURTHER MEDIA INFORMATION

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