

TOP ARTS 2021

ARTWORK LABELS

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Ruby Soumbassis

The unguarded moment

2020

inkjet print

St Michael's Grammar School, St Kilda

Ruby Soumbassis chose to focus on the lives of people behind closed doors (or open windows) in this work. Taking lessons from Alfred Hitchcock's film *Rear Window* (1954), she learnt of the importance of framing a scene and decided to build a 'home' for each of her scenes. Our gaze is an act of observation, revealing the uncomfortable emotion that can hide behind the guise of domesticity.

Selina Guo

ASH(烬)

2020

digital moving illustration

Mount Waverley Secondary College, Mount Waverley

Throughout history, many different cultures and civilisations believed that gods cause natural phenomenon, such as earthquakes, storms and fire, and developed cultural and religious rituals for protection. Selina Guo's *ASH(烬)* is an exploration of humanities' pervasive fear of nature. Using digital media to link traditional ideas to scientific theories, the series of artworks depicts an ancient town changing from a place of peace to a place of disaster and terror. Guo investigates the transition from fearing and worshipping the environment to the contemporary understanding of it.

Arie Sawyer

People are cocoon weavers, whether they know it or not

2020

installation/performance, textiles (weaving)

Alice Miller School, Macedon

Insects, such as butterflies, inhabit cocoons during a period of metamorphosis before emerging transformed. Arie Sawyer uses the concept of a cocoon to imagine a protective layer that humans might take comfort in. *People are cocoon weavers, whether they know it or not* is both a positive and negative commentary on the comfort zones we often find ourselves hiding in: while they are a place of safety, they can also stifle growth and constrain our potential.

Bronte Green

Streets of your town

2020

gouache on paper

Santa Maria College, Northcote

Through ordinary objects in an everyday setting, *Streets of your town* conveys Bronte Green's perception of the understated beauty of Australian suburbia. She has painted this Melbourne streetscape in warm hues to evoke a sense of nostalgia and allude to the dying light of a summer afternoon. Contrasting dark, cool shadows connect fences from each property to the discarded items on the nature strip. Playful in her precision, Green creates familiarity and sentimentality from the seemingly banal aspects of everyday living.

Alena Landers

A harsh land

2020

mixed media collages – eco-dyed fibres, paper from eucalyptus, photos, ink, hand and machine stitch

Wesley College, Glen Waverley

A harsh land explores Alena Landers's heritage through a series of collages. A Djugun and Noongar woman from Western Australia, Landers navigates the complexity of schooling in Melbourne while calling Broome home. Photos of grandparents, maps of Aboriginal missions set up by churches and imagery of children from the Stolen Generations have been brought together with fabrics dyed using native bush plants. These works tell the stories of Landers's history, affirming her identity and speaking of her people and Country.

Miah Gioia Johnson

Sections one

Sections two

2020

etching on paper

Templestowe College, Lower Templestowe

Miah Gioia Johnson's love for nature and printmaking has culminated in her diptych *Sections*. Capturing a dahlia bulb in fractured and tessellated compositions, Johnson examined what it means to be physically and conceptually uprooted, investigating what lies beneath the surface. She used sugar lift, aquatint and drypoint printmaking techniques to realise the surface textures of the bulb and highlight the detail, sensitivity and elegance of nature.

Phoebe Thompson

Coexistence

2020

stoneware/earthenware, earthenware glaze, stick, stone, pebble

St Margaret's School, Berwick

Considering harmony between the human-made world and nature is the central theme of *Coexistence*, which is expressed through Phoebe Thompson's delicate interruption of the geometric design of her ceramic forms with natural objects. The installation is intended to bring hope and awe, illustrating nature's capacity to regenerate and survive despite adverse circumstances. As Thompson says, 'I believe nature can heal and adapt if we let it'.

Sarah Hare

Ocean

2020

acrylic and collage

Presbyterian Ladies' College, Burwood

Ocean is an ode to the simple three-atom molecule that breathes life into our planet: H₂O. Inspired by the vast power and unpredictability of the surging oceans, spontaneity and a lack of control was key in Hare's approach to the work. In the natural world, both chemistry and spontaneity coalesce in perfect harmony. Hare explored this relationship in a tapestry made up of hole-punched, woven paper patchwork squares. The work embodies the shifting colours of the ocean and the feeling of being immersed in light when under the water.

Saskia Medd

Scape

2020

coloured pencil on paper

Brighton Secondary College, Brighton

At first glance, the title *Scape* could reference 'cityscape' or 'landscape', but delve deeper into Saskia Medd's work and 'escape' becomes prevalent. Cans, jars, cartons and boxes convey her message about conformity and convention. These everyday objects are intended to symbolise the effect of societal expectations on different people and groups, where some desire to fit in and others try to stand out.

Sophie Yang

Imagine how much more you could be

2020

digital inkjet print

Yarra Valley Grammar, Ringwood

Through *Imagine how much more you could be*, Sophie Yang reflects on social media's careful curation of a 'perfect' life, seemingly a constant reminder of our own shortcomings and unreached potential in a culture of comparison. Yang depicts herself in two states: a shining star of magical perfection illustrated as an anime trope perched on a mound of discarded objects, and, at the base, as a figure crushed by the weight of pressure to achieve – burnt-out from her pursuit of excellence.

Natalie Biedrzycki

Iso 2.0

2020

oil on wood

Oxley Christian College, Chirnside Park

In this work, the bedroom is a highly individual space and a metaphor for an occupant's psychological state of mind. Featuring views often captured through webcams, *Iso 2.0* references the lengthy period of remote learning that the artist and her peers experienced during 2020. Biedrzycki surveyed the participants and used colour to portray their responses to the second Victorian lockdown; warmer hues indicate a more positive outlook than those with cooler tones.

Millie Fraser-Smith

Urban

2020

linocut

St Catherine's School, Toorak

The evolution of architecture is the focus of Millie Fraser-Smith's *Urban*, which considers tradition, change and modernity. She has used layering to create transition through the series with each print providing a different perspective and experience of the same buildings. Simple modern aesthetics are contrasted with detailed traditional construction to highlight the relationship between old and new.

Olivia Chubb

We are all buzzing

2020

acrylic paint on canvas

Eltham High School, Eltham

In the late sixteenth century the fly was represented in art to allude to life's transience, serving as a memento mori (a reminder of mortality). The insect's complex features create an unnerving yet captivating sight. In *We are all buzzing*, Olivia Chubb has used the motif of a fly to comment on the speed of communication in society. Through the depiction of movement she expresses the notion that society's constant restlessness leads to missed moments and opportunities. The artist encourages us to pause and acknowledge the beauty of everyday occurrences and things.

Luca Feldman

Potts County

2020

oil and aerosol on canvas

Belmont High School, Belmont

Layers of oil paint, and organic curves that clash with red angular lines, hint at a violence simmering beneath the surface of Luca Feldman's work. *Potts County* is also the name of the setting for Jim Thompson's crime novel, *Pop. 1280*, involving a wayward sheriff playing by his own rules. The work is enclosed by a dark blue border, as if it were a postcard from the troubled town. Feldman used literature as escapism throughout the COVID-19 restrictions of 2020, and took inspiration from Thompson's imagination.

Charlotte Grimes

The ineffable

2020

photography

Damascus College, Ballarat

Life is turned inside out in *The ineffable*. Restricted to home and her local area for much of 2020, Charlotte Grimes experienced a new-found connection with her neighborhood surroundings. In her work, she juxtaposes mundane familiar actions of household chores with intriguing landscapes to create her specific aesthetic. This unusual combination suggests that while we were physically separated during lockdown, shared experiences, emotions and routines brought us together.

Amilie Hsiao

Viruses

2020

polymer clay

Mount Waverley Secondary College, Mount Waverley

Amilie Hsiao's work explores the relationship that humans have with viruses. These cartoon-like characters represent COVID-19, chicken pox, Ebola and rabies. By personifying these microscopic viruses as living creatures, Hsiao manifests this 'enemy' into a form that is more easily understood. To give the viruses visual form, Hsiao referenced pop culture and sci-fi, using large graphic features to enhance the characters' individual personalities.

Sophie Tanner

Life size 2

2020

oil and charcoal on canvas

Loreto Toorak Mandeville Hall, Toorak

Sophie Tanner pays tribute to the little-observed moments of the everyday: a fleeting thought, a simple gesture, a freshly picked flower. After the constant flux of 2020, Tanner encourages us to pause and become more mindful of our surroundings. She has used charcoal to represent how quickly simple moments fade away, and oil paints for the face and hands to convey intense emotion.

Alice Jakobus

The future

2020

graphite on paper and digital drawing

Sacré Cœur, Glen Iris

John Brack's *Collins St, 5p.m.*, 1955, has been playfully recontextualised in the setting of a twenty-first-century pandemic in *The future*. Reflecting on Melbourne's history, Alice Jakobus's appropriation of Brack's work draws parallels between his depiction of the monotonous drudgery of a worker's life in the 1950s and her experiences living through the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020. The print gives play to repetition and is a reminder of the day-to-day routines sustained through this period. The portrayal of figures wearing strange improvised masks outside high-end stores with altered names may be perceived as humorous; however, Jakobus's intentions are to provide a more serious commentary on the increasing wealth inequality experienced by many as a consequence of COVID-19.

Lucy Schacher

Routine

2020

gouache on canvas, digital print

Camberwell High School, Canterbury

Routine is a response to the shift in the artist's everyday routine during the COVID-19 lockdown of 2020. Taking inspiration from Julian Germain's photographic book *For Every Minute You are Angry You Lose Sixty Seconds of Happiness*, Schacher found her happiness in the everyday, playing with whimsy and nostalgia. Each canvas amplifies small details from daily occurrences, giving them intensity, vibrance and joy.

Tahlia Reisacher

Elephantus submerged Et donc, nous entrions la Bataille

2020

sequins, glass and plastic beads, yarn and buttons

Shelford Girls' Grammar, Caulfield

Elephantus submerged and *Et donc, nous entrions la Bataille* are underpinned by the idea that positive energy and good thoughts are nourishment for the self. The embellished knitted armour explores the beauty of the natural world through organic forms and colourful, decorative details. When creating the work, Tahlia Reisacher played on gendered connotations associated with knitting and interrogated the difference between art and craft. Reisacher explained that this creative process 'helped to battle the isolation of lockdown', giving insight into the wonder that can come from times of uncertainty and boredom.

Lara Atkinson

Untitled (Clair de Lune)

2020

animation

Korowa Anglican Girls' School, Glen Iris

Lara Atkinson draws from her experience as a young person with autism and her feeling that society perceives difference as an abnormality in this work, which considers the idea of perception. Using a combination of animation, music and text, Atkinson has constructed a theatre of rich colour and movement in which a mutual understanding develops between the main character and the world around her. *Untitled (Clair de Lune)* borrows from composer Claude Debussy and poet Paul Verlaine to open a view from beyond the realm of what is considered normal.

Matthew Chan

The holy trinity of 2020 (whilst stocks last!)

2020

stoneware clay, underglaze, glaze, mixed media, badges, printed shirts

Camberwell Grammar School, Canterbury

Matthew Chan explores the consequences of commodification in *The holy trinity of 2020 (whilst stocks last!)*. Influenced by political world events, Chan created this intentionally crass and crude work to provoke a reaction. The contrast between the sculptural figure and the accompanying products speak to the re-presenting of stories when art is transformed into a consumer good.

Audrey Morgan

The power of tomorrow

2020

oil, white Copic pen on canvas

The Geelong College, Geelong

Audrey Morgan's *The power of tomorrow* is a portrait of the artist and her sisters and an ode to a future that is full of potential for these young women. When creating this work, Morgan took inspiration from artist Lucian Freud to employ an angular composition. Both the potent pink background, and the bodies that appear to emerge from it, reference their femininity, development and growth to come.

Kyparisia (Paris) Karahalios

Adopt an embryo

2020

wood, test tubes, petri dishes, polymer clay, resin,
interactive PDF

Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School, Southbank

Adopt an embryo is both a physical artwork and psychological experiment. It presents a range of hypothetical children (embryos) to prospective parents. Inspired by genetic alteration technologies such as those that led to the trend for 'designer babies', Kyparisia (Paris) Karahalios provides a shopping list of superficial traits that the 'future child' will have. The work holds a mirror to our own values: personal preferences together with perceived societal ideals. Each embryo has a paired organ system with a genetic or autoimmune complication. When the complication is revealed, through scanning the QR code, an ethical dilemma and the question arises: are you satisfied or would you change your initial decision?

Madeleine Colt

Self-portrait

2020

oil on canvas

The Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School, Southbank

The alluring gaze, enigmatic smile and warm darkness that cloaks Madeleine Colt's *Self-portrait*, is designed to draw us in and transport us back in time. Colt is fascinated with art history and appropriating artist practices from centuries ago. Her use of chiaroscuro (light and shade) and a traditional triangular composition, as seen in many Renaissance pieces, demonstrates this influence. By highlighting the hands and face, Colt acknowledges her love for the physical act of painting.

Sarah Jajou

Bilnqul 'arabuk 'and 'iinjlsh kuradas

2020

inkjet print

The Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School, Southbank

Sarah Jajou tackled the tension between her Middle Eastern heritage and Western perspective in search of a composite identity. The resulting work explores the role of linguistics in constructing and deconstructing cultural barriers. Using Google Translate, Jajou focused on the potential for misinformation and misunderstanding to spread between cultures as a result of nuances in written and spoken language. *Bilnqul 'arabuk 'and 'iinjlsh kuradas* features children's playing cards that draw upon transliterated Arabic and English script, teasing audiences into engaging with the sound and meaning of words.

Angelina Innocent

Unsubscribed

soft sculpture, embroidery, fine liner, felt, ribbon, chain, acrylic on canvas

RMIT Urban School, Melbourne

Angelina Innocent critically reflects on societal expectations placed on women's bodies and explores the forces that shape gender, feminine identity, attraction, repulsion and acceptance. The suspended soft sculpture has been constructed using traditionally feminine practices of embroidery and stitching. It presents private and public identities with a two-sided face, while hand-stitched organs allude to the vulnerability of self-expression. Innocent wants to evoke a paradoxical response to the piece: an appreciation of its beauty, but also repulsion at its vulgarity.

Mirriyindi-May Watkinson

Weaving through time

2020

burning on animal pelts

Santa Maria College, Northcote

Tradition meets the contemporary in Mirriyindi-May Watkinson's *Weaving through time*, an Aboriginal possum skin cloak. Watkinson connects with her identity as a young Aboriginal woman, using traditional techniques of sewn pelts and burnt designs. The Mimi spirits help humanity live well on earth. Here, they are shown drawing on the knowledge and resilience of ancestors to assist in the understanding of COVID-19. The swirl at the womb of the large Mimi spirit in the centre represents an unbroken connection to Mother Earth. The smaller surrounding Mimis represent the rebirthing of future, modernity and hope.

Porscha Marshall

The fool's journey

2020

watercolour, fine liner, glitter paint, pencil, posca paint marker, paper, canvas

Thornbury High School, Thornbury

Porscha Marshall traverses her own self-growth and relationships in *The fool's journey*. The inspiration for the characters came from friends and family, which she has portrayed using bright, saturated colours and simple line work. Reminiscent of a scroll, the elongated, unstretched canvas is designed to draw us in close for an intimate reading of each scene.

Rohan Panjwani

Reunion

2020

colour pencil on cardboard

Alphington Grammar School, Alphington

Rohan Panjwani tells a story about an auto-rickshaw driver discovering his long-lost son in *Reunion*. Inspired by manga and comics, which use specific visual details to build a narrative, Panjwani breadcrumbs clues in his work to set a scene and tell a story. The boy in the photo has a mole above his eyebrow just like the passenger's, suggesting they are the same person. Strong directional lines guide us through an Indian street, full of details that reveal aspects of the driver's life and how the two characters were separated and then reunited.

Erin Kim

Belonging and acceptance

2020

gouache on cold press watercolour paper

Templestowe College, Lower Templestowe

Growing up as a Korean-Australian, Erin Kim was conflicted about her cultural identity, concerned with questions such as: What is a home? A physical address or the place where you can be yourself? In *Belonging and acceptance*, she has placed herself in scenes that depict her journey of growth and acceptance of her dual nationality, acknowledging the role that her heritage played in the formation of her identity. The koi fish is an East Asian symbol, which traditionally signifies strength and perseverance. Kim has used it to represent the emotions and experiences she navigated on her journey to self-acceptance.

Greta Linehan

1 in 5 Australian women over the age of 15 are victims of sexual assault

2020

ballpoint, sticky notes, ink, embroidery thread, pins, Copic marker, gouache, gauze, bandage, staples and double-sided tape on Foamex board

St Aloysius College, North Melbourne

1 in 5 Australian women over the age of 15 are victims of sexual assault confronts the disturbing prevalence of sexual assault within modern Australia. Greta Linehan used yellow sticky notes and ballpoint pen to create this 100-portrait composition – mirroring the view that in the eyes of a perpetrator of assault, women are replaceable, fragile and insignificant. Each of the eighty non-victims depicted are Linehan's family and friends – encapsulating the harrowing fear women have of their loved ones becoming statistics. Each of the twenty victims or victim-survivors are embellished with threads, inks and metals to visually portray the trauma caused by such a heinous yet ubiquitous crime.

Angus Stewart

Know your worth

2020

digitally sculptured and then 3D printed in polyethylene, propylene and glycerine

Kew High School, Kew

Reflecting authenticity and vulnerability, *Know your worth* is a homage to the human form and psyche. Angus Stewart challenges societal norms of gender, sexuality and the pressure to conform. Triggered by messages and images on social media, as well as personal experiences, the work mirrors Stewart's journey of self-reflection and self-acceptance. He explains, '*Know your worth* is a love letter to myself'.

Haiyue (JoJo) Zheng

Going home

2020

inkjet print

St Margaret's School, Berwick

Going home considers and celebrates migration at the heart of Australian culture and history. Inspired by her own immigration story and childhood in the vibrant Vietnamese community of Richmond, Haiyue (JoJo) Zheng wished to explore the ever-changing meaning of home. The work pays homage to the courage and determination of immigrants, including those displaced from Vietnam during the 1970s refugee crisis. The 'red thread of fate' guides viewers to follow a perilous journey to Australia and intends to spark dialogue around ongoing issues affecting refugees and displaced people.

Irene Le

Mindset of an escapist

2020

graphite on paper

Sacred Heart Girls' College, Oakleigh

Irene Le's *Mindset of an escapist* ponders the concept of escapism by presenting a surreal scene set inside the mind of an individual who is attempting to withdraw from the harrowing monotony of daily routine. She has included budgerigars to symbolically represent freedom and liberation.

Margaret Handolias

For he's a jolly good fellow

2020

oil and gold leaf on canvas

St Catherine's School, Toorak

Exploring the human need for connection, Margaret Handolias makes visual the pains of solitude. When creating *For he's a jolly good fellow*, Handolias looked at the common struggle to form and maintain relationships during the 2020 lockdown, as online interactions and social media usurped meaningful contact. The sole cupcake, a serve for one, with wisps of smoke hinting at a lonely birthday wish, drive home the impact of isolation on many.

Isabella Razmovski

Fault of innocence

2020

oil on canvas

Overnewton Anglican Community College, Keilor

Fault of innocence is a study of youth mental health. Children's emotional expressions are usually free and honest, unburdened by the weight of anxiety and responsibility that often comes with adulthood. But, as Isabella Razmovski captures in her portrait, mental health issues affect children too as she reflects on the emotions experienced by the youngest members of our society during lockdown: the highs, the lows and the resilience to get through. Here, pursed lips and dull eyes convey this fading state of childhood innocence.

Georgia Ballingall

The youth – a visual journal

2020

watercolour, graphite, alcohol based markers, fine liner
on mixed media paper

Beaconhills College, Berwick

Created as a work of rebellion and activism, the twenty-one pages of *The youth – a visual journal* present wide-ranging insight into the experiences of today's youth. Themes such as mental health and the struggles faced by vulnerable young people are represented with cooler tones, blunt phrases and pensive facial expressions. In contrast, brighter colours and warmer tones appear throughout the journal in defiant celebration of empowerment and strength.

Francesca Di Paolo

Mother(land) – a poem about immigration

2020

digital media/video

Mornington Secondary College, Mornington

The voice of a resentful but loving immigrant mother watching her children reject their home culture to assimilate into a new environment echoes throughout *Mother(land) – a poem about immigration*. Francesca Di Paolo highlights issues of discrimination, erasure of culture, adaptation, religion, tradition and socioeconomic struggles in her video work. Among a rich tapestry of audio and visuals, repetition of the time-honoured phrase ‘mother isn’t mad, she is just disappointed’ drives home the conflict and challenges of migration.

Olivia Jonasz

My sister's paralysis

2020

plaster, fine liner on pillowcase

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College, Bentleigh

Unable to move or speak, panic and fear set in. Sleep paralysis may not be visible to the observer, but for the sufferer it is a visceral experience. Olivia Jonasz captures this state in her installation: the facade of a calm peaceful sleep in conflict with internal emotions of immense anxiety. She used plaster to create body casts and then covered them with bedsheets; the graphic portraits of her sister were hand-drawn on the pillowcase.

Pearl Butler

Ambiguity

2020

mixed media – paint, fine liner, gel pen on plywood

Templestowe College, Lower Templestowe

Floating, falling or flying? Pearl Butler's work captures the unique shape and form of the female figure in motion. Avoiding the distraction of colour, she has used a monochromatic palette and dot rendering to create the ethereal forms. *Ambiguity* may be viewed the right way up, upside down or even sideways – intensifying the mystery and intrigue.

Milly O'Donnell

Untitled

2020

digital print

Keysborough Secondary College, Banksia campus

Milly O'Donnell has firsthand experience of living with a mental health issue, having been diagnosed with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). Often finding her condition to be oversimplified and misrepresented, O'Donnell craved understanding and acceptance. Her untitled artwork was created to elicit empathy and encourage self-reflection for both the sufferer and community. She uses symbolism to portray the stigma around mental health issues with the hope that recognition will bring about change.

Molly Morris-McGinty

Untitled

2020

oil on canvas

Eltham High School, Eltham

The psychological unravelling of our minds at night is explored by Molly Morris-McGinty in her untitled portrait, in which she asserts that our facade of composure can dissolve when alone. Surrounded by darkness, this figure appears on the brink of tears and full of uncertainty. The distorted face provides a canvas for others to reflect on their own emotions.

Tomas Ording-Jespersen

Finding balance

2020

oil paint on wood

Sandringham College, Sandringham

Ancient Greek philosopher Socrates said, 'An unexamined life is not worth living'. In a year of disarray, Tomas Ording-Jespersen examined his own identity through his self-portrait *Finding balance*, which provides insight into his emotional state and experiences. The central face creates a feeling of balance among the chaos of emoji-like symbols. The scale of the work has been created to encourage others to examine the chiseled texture of punctured wood. As Ording-Jespersen explains, 'The title *Finding balance*, functions as an accurate reflection of mine and other year 12 students' personal experiences during this period of isolation and absence of control, aligning with a major turning point in adolescence and the discovery of identity'.

Annabelle Marshall

An ode to myself

2020

inkjet print

Star of the Sea College, Brighton

An ode to myself is a visual representation of Annabelle Marshall's inner thoughts utilising flag semaphore, a signalling system created by French inventor Claude Chappe and used by the British navy to communicate to ships during the 1805 Battle of Trafalgar. Marshall reflects on her own battle with feelings of abandonment during isolation, metaphorically waving a white flag in surrender to social change.

Caleb Dickson

Rust

2020

digital artwork

Box Hill High School, Box Hill

Time, nature, life. Everything endlessly progresses as embodied in Caleb Dickson's *Rust*. Dickson created the work by photographing mechanical objects and digitally manipulating them. This eerie run-down cityscape sinking into the fog, with a lone floating figure dwarfed by the towers above, invites us to craft our own narrative.