

9 March 2015

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Australia Council announces 2015 award recipients

Artistic excellence, diversity and exceptional leadership are the consistent themes across the distinguished recipients of the 2015 Australia Council Awards being presented at an inaugural event next week.

Bringing the individual art form awards together for the first time, the 2015 Australia Council Awards ceremony will pay tribute to the remarkable contributions made by 10 Australians to our arts and cultural landscape. Presented in Sydney on Thursday 19 March, these prestigious national awards combine long-standing lifetime and significant achievement awards in music, literature, community partnerships and visual arts, with new awards in theatre, dance, and emerging and experimental arts.

Australia Council Chief Executive Officer Tony Grybowski said the awards were the highest accolade the Council could bestow, and that the 2015 recipients had a depth and richness to the contributions made in their respective art forms, which embodied the kind of artistic and cultural ambition the Council is committed to supporting.

"The awards are an acknowledgement of the significant achievements and contribution an artist has made to the vibrancy of Australian arts. The 10 recipients are widely respected by their peers nationally and internationally, and these awards give us the opportunity to reflect on their considerable body of work and the impact they have had on the arts in Australia and overseas," Mr Grybowski said.

Australia Council Chair Rupert Myer AM congratulated the recipients on this recognition.

"Previous recipients include some of Australia's most esteemed artists and I am delighted that the 2015 awards continue that tradition, celebrating individuals who capture our imagination, push boundaries and inspire new ideas." Mr Myer said.

The 2015 Australia Council Award recipients are:

- Thomas Keneally (NSW) – Australia Council Award for Lifetime Achievement in Literature
- Archie Roach (Vic) – Australia Council Don Banks Music Award
- Judy Watson (Qld) – Australia Council Visual Arts Award (Artist)
- Will Stubbs (NT) – Australia Council Visual Arts Award (Advocate)
- Stelarc (WA) – Australia Council Award for Outstanding Achievement in Emerging & Experimental Arts
- Garry Stewart (SA) – Australia Council Award for Outstanding Achievement in Dance
- Bruce Gladwin (Vic) – Australia Council Award for Outstanding Achievement in Theatre
- Tony Doyle (SA) – Ros Bower Award (Community Arts and Cultural Development)
- Alyson Evans (NSW) – Kirk Robson Award (Community Arts and Cultural Development)
- Alysha Herrmann (SA) – Kirk Robson Award (Community Arts and Cultural Development)

Thomas Keneally is an internationally acclaimed author of bestsellers such as *Schindler's Ark*, made into the Oscar-winning film *Schindler's List* by Hollywood's Steven Spielberg, *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* and *Australians*. His many accolades include the Miles Franklin Award and the Booker Prize. About to turn 80 and having just celebrated 50 years as a professional writer, this year he's working on his fourth volume of *Australians*.

Archie Roach is a celebrated Aboriginal singer/songwriter with a career spanning three decades and 10 albums. As a member of the stolen generations - famed for his iconic song, *Took the Children Away* - Archie has become a powerful voice for indigenous Australians and one of this country's greatest storytellers. He's shared the stage with the likes of Leonard Cohen, Bob Dylan, Tracy Chapman, Billy Bragg, Paul Simon and Joan Armatrading.

Judy Watson is an internationally recognised Indigenous contemporary visual artist with work in collections around the world, including the National Gallery of Australia, the Library of Congress, Washington DC, and the Musee du Quai Branly, Paris. She has represented Australia at the Venice Biennale and won the Moet & Chandon Fellowship and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Award. This year she is exhibiting at the British Museum and completing public arts project in Adelaide and Canberra, where her acclaimed installation *fire and water* is sited at Reconciliation Place.

Will Stubbs is coordinator at the Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre in Yirrkala, NT, and a passionate advocate of Indigenous arts and Australia's unique arts centres. A former criminal lawyer, Will in 1995 began working with Yolŋu elders and artists, such as Djambawa Marawili AM, Gawirrin Gumana AO and Wanyubi Marika. The Yirrkala artists have since won 30 major art prizes and exhibited widely and internationally, including Musee du Quai Branly.

Stelarc is an internationally recognised performance artist. He is well-known for his visual probes and acoustic amplifications within his body, using medical instruments, prosthetics, robotics, virtual reality systems, the internet and biotechnology. Awarded the Prix Ars Electronica Hybrid Arts Prize, Stelarc is a Distinguished Research Fellow and Director of the Alternate

Anatomies Lab, School of Design & Art, Curtin University, Perth. This year he will be performing and exhibiting in Toronto, Auckland, Seoul and Perth.

Garry Stewart has been since 1999 the Artistic Director of Australian Dance Theatre in Adelaide, which this year celebrates its 50th anniversary. He has studied and collaborated with artists working in robotics, photography, architecture, animation and 3D technology. A prolific choreographer here and overseas - particularly acclaimed for his reworking of ballet language into contemporary forms - his award-winning work includes *Birdbrain*, *The Age of Unbeauty*, *Nothing*, *HELD*, *Devolution*, *G*, *Be Your Self*, *Worldhood*, *Proximity* and *Honour Bound* about the incarceration of David Hicks.

Bruce Gladwin has been the Artistic Director of Back To Back Theatre since 1999. Under his stewardship, this Geelong-based ensemble of performers perceived to have intellectual disabilities has presented shows in more than 70 cities across 20 countries. Shows include *Small Metal Objects*, at the Vienna Festival in June, and the multi-award-winning hit, *Ganesh Versus The Third Reich*, touring Europe in May.

Tony Doyle is an award-winning director and musician skilled at producing community programs, disability arts projects and events and festivals. His work in disability arts and advocacy over the past 25 years has had a positive impact locally, nationally and globally. Born with a sight impairment and now totally blind, Tony this year continues in Adelaide a busy community timetable of music workshops, dances, cabarets and performances.

Alyson Evans has worked around the world as a performer, theatre-maker and community artist, with a particular focus on cultural development and social change. In the Northern Territory Alyson has made theatre with remote Indigenous communities, young people, people with disabilities and mental illness, prisoners and former refugees, as well as in Cambodia, the United Kingdom and New York. Alyson is a Teaching Artist for Sydney Theatre Company's School Drama program and manages Rozelle Neighbourhood Centre's accessible arts programs.

Alysha Herrmann is a writer, theatre maker, cultural producer and advocate who uses performance and civic action to inspire individuals and communities to reclaim and reinterpret their personal stories as art. A self-confessed teenage mum, high school drop-out and busy blogger, Alysha's recent awards include the 2014 Channel 9 Young Achiever Arts Award and SA Life naming her one of South Australia's fastest rising stars under 30.

An exhibition celebrating the winners will be at the Australia Council office in Surry Hills from 11 March until 8 May.

For more information on the award winners: www.australiacouncil.gov.au

ABOUT THE AWARDS

The Australia Council Award for Lifetime Achievement in Literature, formerly the Writers' Emeritus Award, acknowledges the achievements of eminent literary writers over the age of 60 who have made an outstanding and lifelong contribution to Australian literature. Past winners include Bruce Dawe (2000), the late Christopher Koch (2007), Herb Wharton (2012) and Frank Moorhouse AM (2013).

The Australia Council Don Banks Music Award honours a distinguished artist aged over 50 who has made an outstanding and sustained contribution to music in Australia. Its name honours Don Banks, an Australian composer, performer and the first Chair of the Music Board. Past winners include Mike Nock (2014) Kev Carmody (2013), Jon Rose (2012) Belinda Webster (2011) and Warren Fahey (2010).

The Australia Council Visual Arts Awards acknowledges the exceptional achievements of an Australian artist and an arts professional who have made an outstanding contribution to the development of Australian art. Past winners include Fiona Foley and Julie Ewington in 2014, Tracey Moffatt and Juliana Enberg in 2012, and Fiona Hall and Ron Radford in 2011.

The Ros Bower Award is given to artists with a proven record of high achievement in community arts and cultural development, driven by the principles of equality, respect, and diversity. Its name honours Ros Bower, a journalist, television producer, community arts pioneer and founding Director of Council's first Community Arts Board.

The Kirk Robson Award recognises outstanding leadership from young people working in community arts and cultural development, particularly in reconciliation and social justice. It was established to honour Kirk Robson who tragically died in a car crash in 2005. He received the Council's Young and Emerging Artists Initiative and was the Artistic Director of The Torch Project. Past winners of the Ros Bower and Kirk Robson awards include Lockie McDonald, Steve Payne, Alissar Chidiac, Shakthi Shakthidharan, Jade Lillie and Alexandra Kelly.

The Australia Council Awards for Emerging & Experimental Arts, Dance and Theatre are new awards which recognise the outstanding achievements and considerable contribution of artists in those artforms. The recipients' potential to continue to contribute significantly to the Australian arts sector was also considered.

Media contacts

Karen Smith

02 9215 9030 | 0498 123 541

k.smith@australiacouncil.gov.au

Martin Portus | 0401 360 806



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