



Roxanne Lillis  
Winner 2021 Inaugural National Teacher- Artist Prize

*Phoenix Rising #3*  
Acrylic on canvas  
126 x 152 x 2cm  
2021

# National Teacher-Artist Prize

## Teacher Resource



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## National Teacher-Artist Prize (NTAP)

### What is the National Teacher-Artist Prize?

The National Teacher-Artist Prize (NTAP) is an Australia contemporary two-dimensional (2D) and three-dimensional (3D) art prize sponsored by art suppliers Zart Art. It is the only dedicated art prize for art teachers across the world. The NTAP was established to reward teachers by celebrating the value and quality of their individual practice, support their

professional teaching practice and enhance their personal growth as makers. The prize recognises art teachers who foster rich learning environments within school communities and promote the fundamental importance of the arts in education.

## Who created the NTAP?

Nic Plowman is an award-winning Australian artist and educator. He was inspired to create the National Teacher-Artist Prize in 2021 in his role as Education Manager for Zart. His expertise and experience as an artist and arts educator has informed the important principles underpinning the prize and its purpose.

## What was the inspiration for the NTAP?

Nic Plowman revealed his inspiration for the NTAP came when he realised art prizes specifically for art teachers did not exist. He wanted the NTAP to celebrate the important role of art teachers, to encourage artistic practice, and art teachers' creative ability. Nic wanted the NTAP to celebrate, encourage and recognise all of the important and complex aspects of being an art teacher.

*It's not only about giving back to the teachers who support the students, it's about fulfilling something for them personally ... it's a different type of professional learning where it's a collegial kind of sharing of what energy people are putting into their own practices ... to encourage teachers to see them as makers themselves. I always think we're happiest when we are making.*

*How does the process of 'making' by art teachers impact on students?*

Nic described the importance for students to see their teachers as makers. He noted that some teachers are artists who exhibit, whereas there are others who focus on their creative practice in the classroom. The most important thing however he revealed is that students have the opportunity to experience teachers who are also 'making'.



*But just to be able to make with your students and demonstrate that being creative or being a maker isn't about being excellent at everything - its important that you demonstrate the process - including making mistakes in front of your students. Work with them, alongside them - show the process of that creativity ... do your own drawing on your own piece of paper...*

(Nic Plowman interview with Margaret Baguley, 16/7/21)

## Virtual 2021 NTAP Exhibition

Please click on the following [link](#) to experience the 2021 NTAP Finalist Exhibition at The Lennox Gallery, Victoria, in 3D (Virtual Reality experience).

## NTAP 2022 - An insight into the experience of teaching and making art in Australia

Many of the NTAP submissions point to the impacts of COVID-19, either explicitly or peripherally. The significance and prevalence of COVID-19 has necessitated extraordinary changes and unease for artists' and art teachers' practice and sense of purpose.

*“They [art teachers] have had to quickly reimagine their means for connecting and communicating with each other. Transitions, shifts and developments (often driven by setbacks, dilemmas and challenges) emerged daily across social media sites as teachers began to make, respond to and share their practice virtually”*

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(Coleman & MacDonald, 2020).

COVID-19 has shaped and reshaped approaches to art making and art teaching in myriad ways. This year's 50 finalists for Zart Art's National Teaching Artist Prize paint a complex

picture of the lingering burden of COVID-19. Its' long and pervasive tail of influence continues to reach far and deep into the Australian art making and art teaching experience.



*Isolate, Ash Bell, Oil on canvas*

*"A self portrait **exploring the contradictory energetic anxiety and static dejection** felt during the second lockdown - a security blanket of chaos and order, and overwhelming disconnection"*

- *Ash Bell, Sydney Secondary College - Leichhardt Campus, NSW*

We know that pre COVID-19, art teachers were already well accustomed to working with multi-modalities across the spectrum of visual art media. These ways of working continue to be informed by teachers' own deep engagements with art, be it through their own art making, or their responding and making meaning from artworks encountered in their classrooms and the community.



# Artist, teacher, artist-teacher, teaching artist, art teacher?

*Becoming an art teacher is a complex and idiosyncratic process informed by many variables, including personal and professional identities and experiences as a teacher and an artist; personal and pedagogic philosophy and approach, the ethos and character of their school and the stage of their career*

(Hall, 2010, p. 109).



*It happens, Ross Roorda, Oil on canvas*

*“This painting came together rather quickly...It was an image I just had to paint and one that has been open to much analysis by the few that have seen it. But for me it was a reflection of what was happening at the time... **there are plenty of metaphors happening in this image that some especially in the teaching profession may relate to**”*

Ross Roorda, Casuarina School, NSW

Reeder (2007) describes how historical narratives and socio-critical commentary about art teachers often suggests teaching as what an artist does to achieve a steady income. While this is not untrue for some, it is also not necessarily the case. When artists and teachers are

portrayed in deficit terms, societal perceptions of both professions can suffer, and in turn, the morale of artists and teachers themselves.

Teachers and artists alike are subject to ongoing shifting socio-political agendas. Public commentaries and discourse about artist and teaching professions has, historically, been hyper critical. Such discourse shapes societal perceptions, which in turn can affect the recruitment and retention of people to art and teaching professions.



*Same as it ever was*, Paul Morrison, Acrylic on Yupo paper

***“Painted during lockdown in 2021 and at the time I was **thinking about the monotony and repetition of lockdown life, a feeling of entrapment and seeking solace in the natural world**”***

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Paul Morrison, St Bedes College, Mentone, VIC

Deleuze’s (1995) conceptualisation of “becoming” continues to be employed by many an artist and teacher as they navigate and negotiate connection between art making and teaching. Inna Semestsky (2010) describes this ‘becoming’ as an active and useful process for experimenting with the unknown and new coming into being, or be-coming (Semestsky, 2010).

Artists and teachers both engage deeply with fundamental questions pertaining to existence, reason, knowledge, values and mind. Teachers and artists alike contribute to and grapple with philosophies that relate to the fields of art making and teaching. Both

professions are adept at articulating and communicating understanding, concerns and curiosities about such questions.

*“... I have completely changed my life in the last seven years and **throughout the painting of this artwork I was reflecting on how cells in our bodies renew themselves; the old myth that we are an entirely different person after seven years.**”*

- Melanie Higgins (Crawford), Immanuel College, SA

Several researchers (Daichendt 2009; Hall 2010; Hickman 2010; Graham & Zwirn 2010) emphasise the great potential for synergy between artistry and pedagogy, or arts practice and teaching practice; however, in order to genuinely realise this exchange, the artist teacher must first be able to effectively facilitate reciprocity between their artist and teacher practices (MacDonald & Moss, 2015).

As indicated by the examples of practice and research into these concepts, the term artist teacher, teaching-artist (and other variations) are not by any means new in current contemporary education and arts circles. Rather, each of these terms are powerfully adopted and frequently used (sometimes interchangeably) in the fields of art, museum studies, art history, and art education (Daichendt, 2009).

Ambiguity in definition, and fuzziness of delineation between artist and teaching practice and identity is not something we need to necessarily reconcile. A number of examples from this year's NTAP exhibition speak to and from the generative qualities of ambiguity. Perhaps this ambiguity aptly mirrors the slippery nature of challenges that art teaching and making have wrestled with this past year.

## Space (making and safeguarding)

The liminal space between art making and art teaching is loaded with tension and potential. The edges of artist and teacher identity and practice is its own space, in that it occupies and exists just as much as the space on either side of it.

***“I am most alive when immersed in the creative process and I delight in the poetry of life. I painted Seven Years as an offering of a space for a moment of connection, a liminal place...”***

- Melanie Higgins (Crawford), Immanuel College, SA





*Seven Years*, Melanie Higgins (Crawford), Acrylic on Canvas

*“This process builds the story of a complex life lived...I’m always contemplating the cyclic nature of experience and reflection, celebrating the discarded remnants that have been part of the story along the way. Seven Years expresses my optimism, my passion for humanity, my understanding of renewal and my continual desire to communicate on a deeper, universal level.”*

- Melanie Higgins (Crawford), Immanuel College, SA

*“...it is **an in-between, a space of transition, a liminal space**. It is often a place of disproportionate importance – the line may be as thin as a ribbon of ink on a map, but as vast as the gap between worlds for those who would seek to cross it”.*

- MacDonald & Moss, (2015), p. 452.

For the practitioners seeking to make and teach art, perceptions and management of opportunity, time and energy are recognised as a critical influencing factor upon capacity to become teachers concurrent to maintaining a pre-existing level of art practice. Artist practice is recognised as significant to enhancing the quality of learning the art teacher can offer (Bolanos, 1986; Graham & Zwirn, 2010; Hatfield, Montana & Deffenbaugh, 2006) however, the becoming teacher experience indicates a need for us to be pragmatic, strategic and feasible about when, where, why and how we perform the duties of each role (MacDonald, 2017).

**Place (and practice)**



*"My work explores the early moments of social interaction and leisure after the four-month-long lockdown period in Sydney 2021... My work aims to reference the untroubled sensuality of the early impressionists such as Renoir in a contemporary context, the dappled light is heavily saturated with warm yellows presenting **a romanticised scene of momentary bliss during a period of state-wide anxiety.**"*

- Christopher Logemann, Christian Brothers High School Lewisham, NSW
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*Home, Nicole Wassell, Oil on canvas and mixed media*

*Over the past few years "home" has been a complex journey for me, then stay at home orders challenged us to have **a whole new relationship** with home. This work is about the **layers built on top of the other to create a detailed tapestry** of what it means to be at or make a home or find your way home.*

- Nicole Wassell, Daylesford Primary School, VIC

Booth (2010) describes how a teaching artist entwines practices and proclivities of a professional artist with complementary skills, curiosities and sensibilities of an educator. This entwinement is applied in educative exchange settings to engage a wide range of people in learning experiences in, through, and about the arts.

However, in order to genuinely realise this exchange, the artist teacher must first be able to effectively facilitate reciprocity between their artist and teacher practices (MacDonald & Moss, 2013). This is where arts-based pedagogies such as Studio Thinking (Winner et al., 2020), Visual Thinking (Yenawine, 2013) and Design Thinking (Ejsing-Duun & Skovbjerg, 2019) can be used as a navigational device for art teachers of all career stages in the classroom alongside their students.



*Gumleaves*, Mal Webster, Coloured pencil on paper

Booth (2015) describes a teaching artist as “a practicing artist who **develops the skills, curiosities, and habits** of mind of an educator in order to achieve a wide variety of learning goals in, through, and about the arts, with a wide variety of learners” (p.152).

As art teachers engage in and with practice, understandings of each individual practice and the connections between practices continue to evolve. As they do so, practice changes, becoming something else.

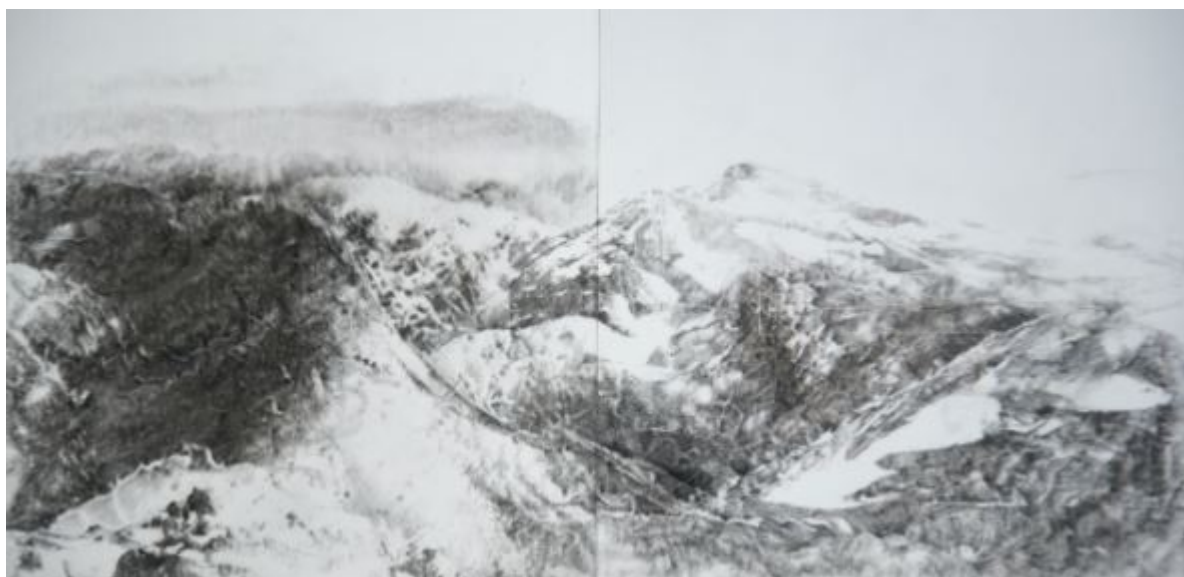


*“When students leave for each term break I always make a point of **encouraging them to continue drawing from observation to keep their mind active and skills fresh**. At the beginning of a recent term break **I also did this** and collected a selection of gumleaves to sketch. I created this detailed triptych in coloured pencil, **capturing change and impermanence** through their minute details and intricate layers of colour.”*

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Mal Webster, Galen College, VIC

The act of ‘becoming’ is an important and curious one for anyone seeking to make meaningful connections between art making and art teaching identify and practice. As indicated by the extensive examples of research into these concepts, the term artist teacher is not by any means new in current contemporary education and arts circles, rather “artist teacher is a powerful and frequently used term in the fields of art, museum studies, art history, and art education” (Daichendt, 2009, p. 33).



*Beyond where we are, Claire Shepherd, Graphite on gesso board*

In 2010, Eric Booth proposed a working definition of artist teacher as “a practicing professional artist with the complementary skills, curiosities and sensibilities of an educator, who can effectively engage a wide range of people in learning experiences in, through, and about the arts” (p. 2).

*My practice recreates surfaces, textures and colours evocative of particular places; **each work attempts to re-collect layers of the ‘place’** at once of and from memory melded with specific gatherings, a culmination of many different images, spaces, experiences, and material.*

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Claire Shepherd, Caroline Chisholm School - Primary Campus, ACT

Teaching artists have the capacity to enliven classrooms to the benefit of both teaching and learning. According to Graham and Zwirn (2010), teaching artists can change the traditional educational dynamic of the classroom in ways that “invigorate both the content and practice of teaching and learning” (p. 4).



*Beach Circles, Scott Bugbird, Image of raked sand on beach*

*...Heading down the beach, early morning, low tide is my way of expressing myself. Raking marks in the sand **is meditative and life affirming**. It brings me peace.*

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*Scott Bugbird, Nemarluk School, NT*

## Balance

Artist practice can be perceived as significant to enhancing the quality of learning the art teacher can offer; however, research indicates and examples of NTAP narratives affirm that achieving and sustaining balance and reciprocity between art making and teaching is deeply complex.

Achieving a sense of competence and satisfaction in holding balance between making and teaching art is very slippery. Our ability to recognise and embrace this slipperiness can be useful for our longevity and reconciling frustration in either/both practices.





*The Fighter*, Lana Mansfield, Oil on Canvas

*His struggle, like my own, is often with the self - **Pushing boundaries and expectations**, sometimes to ones' own detriment.*

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Lana Mansfield, Merewether High School, NSW

Art practice, similar to teaching practice, evolves in and through the art of practice itself. This art of practice, or artistry emerges from an interrelationship between making and responding, education and art. Negotiating this interrelationship can be a struggle, a battle, a revelation. Part of this negotiation is reconciling the inference that an inability to sustain themselves entirely through their artist practice might be perceived by some as reflecting failure as artists, or that “those who can, do; those that cannot, teach” (Bernard-Shaw, 1903, as cited in Booth 2010, p. 1).

Artists and teachers alike reflect upon and make meaning from experiences of encountering and embodying practice. Becoming an art teacher - particularly when an artist identity and practice pre-exists - is a complex process, within which personal and professional identities and practices intertwine (MacDonald, 2017).

Artist practice evolves in relation to historical, social and cultural contexts. Similar to teachers, artists' practices and identities change and evolve in relation to the world

unfolding around them. The ways in artists share and make meaning of their work resonates powerfully with social constructivist approaches to teaching and learning (Malin, 2012), relational pedagogies (Hickey & Riddle, 2021) and the importance of encounter (Lingard, Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2013).



Susan Robson, Making the world, digital drawing

*“This artwork is based on a photo of me as a four year old, absorbed in painting at kindergarten in the 70s. I remember the photo being taken and **the feeling of being fully, wonderfully alive that art making gave me. I still have that feeling when making art and always hope to share this feeling with students.** The drawing itself has a tension to it from combining quite different imagery of a young child and the heavy coiled rope-like form she morphs into.”*

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Susan Robson, Narre Warren South P-12 College, VIC

Reeder’s (2007) research involved interviewing practitioners across several countries who identity as teaching artists. In interviewing these practitioners, Reeder was able to identify and articulate the following described benefits of entwining artistry in teaching:

- We have stronger sense of our origins and life experience.
- We are more frank and inquisitive about the process of discovery.
- We fine-tune our expertise and develop fluency and dynamics in our media.
- We understand the role of our art in the world of other artists.

- We are driven to sustain art in a global community.
- We use our artistry to reflect on, and transform our culture.

*I find exploring this push-pull effect fascinating, an elegant balancing act of exploring ambiguity. The drawing also explores ideas of identity and transience.*

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Susan Robson, Narre Warren South P-12 College, VIC

## Radical optimism

Somewhere in the messy middle of being artists and teachers, art teachers find and make ways to make sense and meaning of the complex interrelated problems they encounter. This year's suite of NTAP finalists indicate the importance of practice for how art teachers make sense and meaning of conflated personal and professional challenges. The ways in which art teachers move in, through and between practices to mediate people, place, dilemmas, opportunities and identities is profound.



*The other side, Corina Jasmin, Oil on Canvas*

*This piece captures the sense of deep longing for what's on the other side of suffering and trials. It speaks of the journey to experience peace and contentment in the midst of injustice. The other side is a place that's unknown but a place that offers hope and light. **During the past two years the world has gone through rapid change and the sense of uncertainty hangs heavy.** I am often confronted with the longing to experience a hope-filled future as fear, hopelessness and pain battle for my soul. This piece is a portrait of my son Ezra. With*

*childlike faith he continues to hold onto hope and joy in a world that holds no certainty. Through his eyes I'm learning to reach out for what's on the other side - experiencing the peace that comes when letting go of the fear and holding onto hope.*

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Corina Jasmin, Fremantle Christian College, WA

These 50 artworks reveal complex and converging experiences of art teachers negotiating past, immediate and ongoing uncertainty created by COVID-19 in Australia. Artists who enter into teaching grapple with a number of challenges. One of these challenges is to understand the various ways their practices as artists can and will inform their practices as teachers (Hatfield, Montana & Deffenbaugh, 2006). These artworks collectively illustrate a myriad of ways artist and teaching practice and identity reciprocally shape one another. We can also see how art teachers turn and lean into making as means to foster and nurture their sense of hope.



*Daughter on the front line, Stephanie Wright, 0.1 black fine liner*

*Paramedics have been and remain at the front line of the community struggle with COVID-19. My daughter Bridget is one of these people. **It both worries me and amazes me that she and her colleagues continually have their feet on the ground (in every sense of that saying) and just get on with the job during these difficult times.** In my drawing, I wanted to depict the strength, stamina and presence of these front line workers, symbolised by my daughter, and that they are always standing by those needing support. Many 0.1*



*black line markers were used to complete this drawing. **For me, drawing is a form of relaxation and stress relief.** The focus on attention to detail required in this fine drawing, I find therapeutic.*

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Stephanie Wright, Prospect North Primary School, SA

The suite of NTAP 2022 finalists gift us a complex picture of the questions, ideas, concerns, practices and processes art teachers across Australia are grappling with. Overarching these 50 examples of art teachers' art making are narratives of artist and teaching agility, resilience, practicality, empathy, creativity and versatility.



*Colour Healing, Acrylic, oil paint, oil pastel, and paint marker on canvas*

***Colour is hope, it triggers memories and evokes emotions. Colour is powerful** - just as powerful as my grief. I will be forever connected to Jayne and Carmelo, for having known them, has been a true gift. All who knew them remain connected by their love, wisdom, stories and colourful living memory.*

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Carmen Mazzarotta, Aitken College, VIC



The artworks and accompanying statements point to a deep sense of the relationship between art making and art teaching. NTAP 2022 allows us to look into distinctive ways in which practices and identities collide and conflate for art teachers across Australia.

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