

MEDIA RELEASE

28 June 2022

The Best of Regional Art in Western Australia

One of the most geographically isolated towns in Australia, Port Hedland is known as home of the iron ore industry and employing the best technology to operate the largest port in the southern hemisphere. Regional arts organisation [The Junction Co.](#) has sought to shift the narrative that innovation is only connected to industry, and provide a dynamic platform for the exceptional creative talents that continue to grow and thrive in regional and remote WA.

Western Australia's most innovative regional art prize showing the best regional artists, *The Jury Art Prize*, opened to a live news crew at the Port Hedland Courthouse Gallery+Studio, beaming the winners to audiences across the globe.

Providing a critical platform for regional Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists to tell their authentic stories of their regional WA communities, The Junction Co's Gallery+Studio Manager Valeria Scoponi notes,

“Our team has sought to make sure Hedland's annual art prize uses inclusive entry methods, accessible and innovative technology and curate the best artwork from the State, for audiences to engage with the exhibition, so someone sitting in their lounge room in Brunswick feels connected and understands the stories of the West.”

Renowned industry experts, artist and disability advocate [Bruno Booth](#), arts and cultural management consultant [Belinda Cook](#), and Indigenous arts consultant and curator [Tui Raven](#) had the challenge to select winners from the 49 finalists. Booth said of his experience,

“The [Jury Art Prize] is a high point in the regional arts calendar, and the calibre of work from the artists involved is breathtaking. As an artist based in the city, I am reminded that the regions truly represent some of Australia's best artists.”

Aboriginal artists from Pilbara and Kimberley art centres were dominant in the Prize, with Roebourne Aboriginal artist Wendy Warrie of [Cheeditha Art Group](#) claiming the top prize with her artwork *After The Hightide*. Tui Raven explains,

“The work is by an artist who has really pushed their practice in almost a new direction. They are very, normally quite bold line works and it's gone into a very subtle direction. You really are drawn into the work. You feel like you've actually stepped into this particular part of the landscape in WA.”

Warrie was modest in accepting the \$10,000 prize,

“[I am] bit speechless... I just want to say thank you.”

The Patron Prize was awarded to [Spinifex Hill Studios](#) artist Illyampi Victor Burton for his artwork *Untitled*. Burton's artwork displayed a flamboyant and bold painting that displays a range of techniques that should not really work together, blurry brush strokes battling with scratchy lines and contrasting

colours. However, Burton's skill as a painter brings the elements together to form a cohesive whole.

Burton is one to watch, having also recently been part of the groundbreaking contemporary art exhibition, *Tracks We Share*, at the Art Gallery of WA.

Shifting mediums, the Kathy Donnelly Award, an encouragement award for an emerging Western Australian regional artist, was presented to Karren MacClure for her work *Liquid Twilight*. A ceramics artist based in Port Hedland, who began her journey in ceramics 18 months ago through a sculpture class hosted by the Courthouse Gallery+Studio, provided a unique insight into the value of *The Jury Art Prize* for regional artists,

"I only started (my art) in ceramics less than 18 months ago here at the gallery. I took up a ceramics course and started making plates and mugs and then did a class in sculpture and did not want to make anything but sculptures. It has been a great journey and I really enjoyed it."

Following The Junction Co's mission to provide inclusive and accessible ways for the audience to connect and engage with regional art, audio descriptions for finalists' works have been incorporated into this year's exhibition. Acting Executive Officer Patrycja Rosinska remarks,

"This innovation is an important addition to this year's exhibition, encouraging visitors who are visually impaired connect and interact with the works. Breaking down barriers within a traditional space and utilising unique ways to connect audiences with the finalist works where geography knows no bounds, *The Jury Art Prize* utilises innovation to further the engagement of regional art.

Following the 24-hour exhibition opening in 2021, this year, the opening of the art prize featured a live news crew, reporting and capturing the excitement of the night. This footage was live streamed, providing a way for all finalists to celebrate their achievements and winners regardless of location. The night was also recorded with colourful illustrations, capturing the celebration in an imaginative manner.

The Jury Art Prize is fully accessible online where visitors can experience the exhibition through a custom-made replica of the Courthouse Gallery. Exhibition Coordinator Joo Tan encourages audiences from across the country to engage with the exhibition,

"Anyone who wants to experience the spectacular exhibition is welcome to view the virtual gallery on the website as it takes you through an adventure of exploring the best of regional art. To see the finalists works on a larger screen, the exhibition is being projected on the Yagan Square tower in Boorloo Perth."

Join The Junction Co in celebrating the best of regional art in Western Australia; this exhibition tells the authentic stories and reflects the diversity and creativity of the regions. The exhibition reflects the exceptional creative talents that continue to grow and thrive in regional and remote WA.

Voting for the Jury Prize (people's choice) is open until 29 July. To vote and assist in award \$10,000 to the winner of the Jury Prize, visit <https://thejunctionco.com.au/the-jury-art-prize-contest/>

The Jury Art Prize is made possible thanks to valued sponsors The Town of Port Hedland, BHP, Roy Hill, Pilbara Development Commission, Gateway Village.

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