



Chronology of events

1900

Jules François Archibald, then editor of the Bulletin, commissioned John Longstaff to paint a portrait of the poet Henry Lawson. Apparently Archibald was so pleased with the portrait that he decided to 'write his name across Sydney' by bequeathing money to the arts. When he died in 1919, he left one tenth of his estate of £89,061 in trust for a non-acquisitive annual art prize to be awarded by the trustees of the (then) National Art Gallery of New South Wales (now Art Gallery of New South Wales).

1921

The first Archibald Prize of £400 was awarded to WB McInnes for his portrait of Desbrowe Annear.

1922

Gother Mann, director of the National Art Gallery of New South Wales, in listing the conditions of the prize, stated that 'portraits should be as far as practicable painted from life and may be of any size. No direct copies from photographs will be considered eligible.'

1923

WB McInnes' winning Portrait of a lady was criticised as the sitter was not named and it was therefore impossible to determine if the condition of the prize – that the portrait be 'preferentially' of a man or woman 'distinguished in the Arts, Letters, Science or Politics' – was fulfilled.

1938

Nora Heysen was the first woman to win the Archibald Prize with her portrait of Madame Elink Schuurman, the wife of the Consul General for the Netherlands. Max Meldrum made the much quoted statement, 'If I were a woman, I would certainly prefer raising a healthy family to a career in art. Women are more closely attached to the physical things of life. They are not to blame. They cannot help it, and to expect them to do some things equally as well as men is sheer lunacy.'

1942

William Dargie won the prize with his portrait of Corporal Jim Gordon, VC. The work was painted when Dargie was an official war artist in Syria. The ship carrying the portrait back to Sydney sank and the painting spent some time underwater.

1943

William Dobell won the award for Joshua Smith. Raymond Lindsay, writing for the Daily Telegraph, noted, 'it is daring to the point of caricature, but its intense vitality lifts it from any such moribund definition. It has all the qualities of a good painting'. When the award was announced, two other entrants,

Mary Edwards and Joseph Wolinski, took legal action against Dobell and the trustees on the ground that the painting was not a portrait as defined by the Archibald Bequest. The case was heard in the Supreme Court of NSW before Justice Roper, who dismissed the suit and ordered the claimant to pay costs for Dobell and the trustees. This was followed by an appeal and an unsuccessful demand to the Equity Court to restrain the trustees from handing over the money.

1946

For the first time the trustees had to insist upon a pre-selection of works. More than half of the entries were eliminated.

1948

William Dobell won both the Archibald and Wynne Prizes. His winning portrait of Margaret Olley was purchased by the Gallery.

1952

William Dargie's winning portrait, Mr Essington Lewis, CH, provoked an art students' demonstration. Students, including John Olsen, marched around the Gallery, gave three cheers for Picasso and left. A woman in the demonstration tied a placard around the neck of her dachshund, which read 'Winner Archibald Prize – William Doggie'.

1953

The first show of the Archibald 'rejects' took place from 20 to 27 February at the Educational Galleries, Bridge Street.

1964

The trustees decided not to award the prize on the grounds that the entries were not of a sufficient standard.

1975

John Bloomfield's portrait of Tim Burstall, painted from a blown-up photograph, was disqualified on the grounds that the portrait had to be painted from life. The prize was rejudged and awarded to Kevin Connor.

1976

Brett Whiteley's Self portrait in the studio was a turning point as it challenged traditional tenets of likeness and realism and stretched the definition of portraiture.

1978

Brett Whiteley won the Archibald, Wynne and Sulman Prizes, becoming the first artist to win all three prizes in one year.

1980

The trustees, for the second time, decided not to award the prize on the grounds that there was no entry worthy of the award.

1981

John Bloomfield threatened to take legal action to prevent Eric Smith being awarded the prize for his painting of Rudy Komon, as he claimed Smith had not adhered to a condition of entry, that the portrait should be painted from life.

1985

The Perpetual Trustee Company, which administered Archibald's will, took the Australian Journalists Association Benevolent Fund to court. The AJA was named as first defendant in the case because it stood to inherit the money if the Archibald Prize failed to fulfil the criteria that the prize was still a 'good charitable bequest'. Justice Powell found that the Archibald Prize did fulfil this and directed that the Perpetual Trustees Company should transfer administration of the Trust to the Art Gallery of NSW.

1988

The People's Choice Award was established.

1994

The entry fee for artists was increased to \$25, and there were 174 fewer entries than the previous year.

1995

The Archibald Prize application form was amended to read: 'For the purpose of this prize the trustees apply the definition of a portrait as determined in the judgment of 1983: "a picture of a person painted from life".' This refers to John Bloomfield's unsuccessful attempt in 1983 to sue for the return of the 1975 Archibald Prize.

1996

To coincide with the 75th anniversary of the prize, a mini-retrospective of selected past winners was mounted.

1997

The eligibility of a painting of Bananas in pyjamas television characters B1 and B2 was questioned by the trustees, as it was not a portrait of a 'man or woman'. Artist Evert Ploeg pointed out that his subjects were distinguished in the arts and that the portrait was painted from life, the only difference being that the subjects were in costume. The now-annual Salon des Refusés exhibition of works that were not hung in the Archibald Prize was organised at an external venue to protest against the predominance of established regulars in the Archibald exhibition.

1999

Euan Macleod's winning work, Self portrait/head like a hole, received widespread acclaim as a strong, imaginative painting. It was described by the Daily Telegraph (20 March 1999) as 'arguably the most abstract painting

ever to win the prize'. The trustees' announcement was greeted with raucous whooping and cheering.

2000

Rendered in Dulux house paints, because they were 'rich, inexpensive and bright', Adam Cullen's winning work, Portrait of David Wenham, drew praise for the trustees from the Sydney Morning Herald (25 March 2000) for their imaginative choice, commenting that 'the daggiest award in Australian art is beginning to look serious'.

2001

A record increase in the number of entries may have been stimulated by awards to more adventurous works during the previous two years. Public attendance at the Archibald, Wynne and Sulman exhibitions reached its highest ever daily average, at 1725 visitors per day (compared with 1388 per day in 2000).

2003

A size limitation was introduced. Entries could be no larger than 90,000 square centimetres (for example, 3 metres by 3 metres, or 4.5 metres by 2 metres). This was a decision made after the 2002 exhibition, with excessively large works creating handling, judging and storing difficulties, as well as restricting the number that could fit in the exhibition. Another restriction introduced for the 2003 Archibald Prize was the limit of one work per artist. The inaugural Citigroup Private Bank Australian Photographic Portraiture Prize was held in conjunction with the Archibald, Wynne and Sulman Prizes, with the aim of promoting outstanding works of both professional and aspiring Australian photographers. This prize was discontinued in 2007.

2004

Craig Ruddy's portrait David Gulpilil – two worlds won the 2004 Archibald Prize and the People's Choice Award. It was only the second time in 16 years the public agreed with the judges' decision.

2010

Sam Leach won both the Archibald and the Wynne Prizes. It was only the second time an artist had won both prizes: the first being William Dobell in 1948. Brett Whiteley won all three prizes – Archibald, Wynne and Sulman – in 1978.

Controversy and Debate



The Archibald Prize, from its outset, has aroused controversy, while chronicling the changing face of Australian society. Numerous legal battles and much debate have focused on the evolving definitions of portraiture.



WB McInnes *Desbrowe Annear*, Art Gallery of NSW, winner of the Archibald Prize 1921

First awarded in 1921, the Archibald quickly became a prize eagerly sought by artists, not only because of the money it offered and the publicity and public exposure it generated, but because it also gave portrait artists an opportunity to have their work shown in a major gallery. Previously, portraitists had been largely restricted to public or private commissions. These Archibald exhibitions allowed their artwork to be viewed as a serious art form.

A conservative start



Early in its history the Archibald Prize attracted conservative artists who were not involved in the modernist movement that characterised the Sydney art scene in the 1920s. Academic and tonal realism dominated the Archibald in its first decade, with WB McInnes winning the prize five times between 1921 and 1926. As a result, through the 1920s and 1930s many artists seeking the prestigious Archibald Prize painted 'prize' paintings, adapting their own styles to conform with the prize-winning aesthetic.

With the Archibald terms stipulating a portrait of a 'distinguished' man or woman, the award mostly attracted celebratory portraits of notable Australians. Many of the Archibald contenders turned to the traditions of public portraiture of the 17th and 18th centuries, which focused on the social role of the sitter – for example, as a monarch, bishop, landowner or merchant – rather

than an individual with a unique personality and psychological make-up.

William Dargie's winning paintings from the 1940s very much reflected this ideal of the social role of the sitter, but his seventh portrait in 1952, Mr Essington Lewis, CH, a technically conservative and predictable portrait, sparked art students' demonstrations and the first exhibition of rejected Archibald entries.

Nevertheless, even in its first two decades, there were occasional diversions from the social role of the sitter, such as Henry Hanks' self portrait in 1934, in which he depicted himself as an unemployed painter and tattily dressed. He was criticised for apparently ignoring the award's terms specifying the portrayal of a 'distinguished' man or woman.



Dobell breaks with conventions

It was William Dobell's prize-winning portrait of fellow artist Joshua Smith in 1943 that finally broke with the conventions that had been established with the Archibald.

Opposition to the win was intense and two Royal Art Society members, Joseph Wolinski and Mary Edwards, took legal action against Dobell and the Gallery's trustees, alleging that Joshua Smith was 'a distorted and caricatured form' and therefore not a portrait. In contrast, the supporters of Dobell described the portrait as both 'a likeness or resemblance of the sitter and a work of art', which allowed for distortion for the purpose of art.

In response to critics, Dobell said that when he painted a portrait he was '... trying to create something, instead of copying something. To me, a sincere artist is not one who makes a faithful attempt to put on canvas what is in front of him, but one who tries to create something which is living in itself, regardless of its subject. So long as people expect paintings to be simply coloured photographs they get no individuality and in the case of portraits, no characterisation. The real artist is striving to depict his subject's character and to stress the caricature, but at least it is art which is alive.'

The case stimulated massive press coverage and public comment – by those both familiar and totally unfamiliar with art. Ultimately, the Dobell case became a lively debate about modernism. The question of whether the painting was portraiture or caricature equally asked the questions of what constituted a portrait and what was the relationship of realism to art in general. Justice Roper



upheld Dobell's award on the grounds that the painting, 'although characterised by some startling exaggeration and distortion... nevertheless bore a strong degree of likeness to the subject and undoubtedly was a pictorial representation of him.'



Whiteley's win marks a turning point

While the Archibald Prize never failed to stimulate debate, controversy yet again loomed when, in 1976, Brett Whiteley won, with his painting *Self portrait in the studio*, marking a turning point for the prize. The self portrait is seemingly reduced to the artist's face reflected in a hand-mirror within the vast expanse of the blue of his studio and its collection of objects.

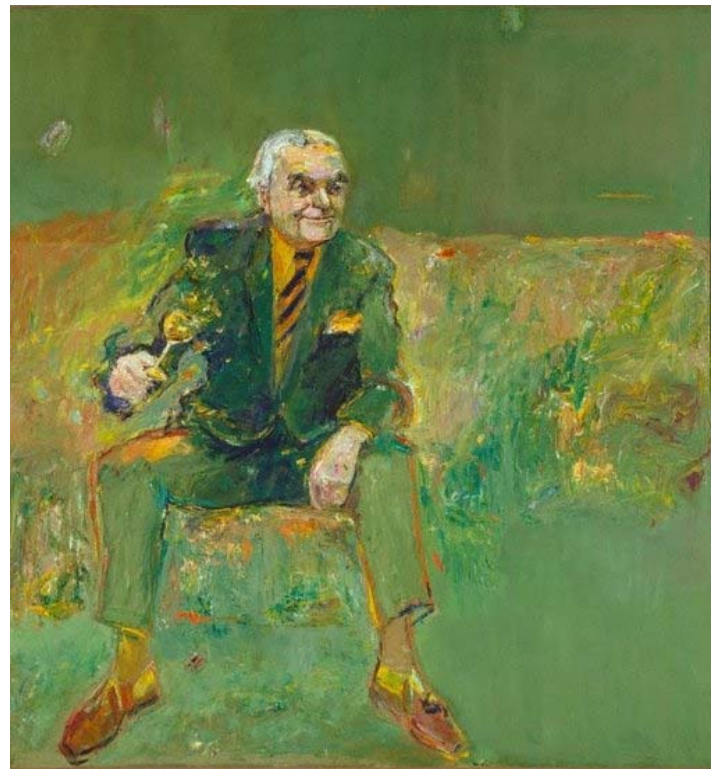


Whiteley followed this win with an even more expressive work in 1978: *Art, life and the other thing*, a triptych that explored three issues – the status of photographic representation in portraiture, the Dobell controversy and the representation of Whiteley's own battle with heroin addiction.

Whiteley's reference to photographic representation presumably dealt with yet another Archibald controversy: portraits painted from photographs. In 1975, John Bloomfield's large photo-realist portrait of Tim Burstall, the filmmaker, was disqualified as it was painted from a photograph and because Bloomfield had never met Burstall. In this case the debated point was the justification of portraiture as revealing the inner self of the sitter rather than being simply a faithful rendering of facial features.

Bloomfield struck back in 1981 when he threatened legal action over that year's winning portrait of Rudy Komon by Eric Smith, which strongly resembled a 1974 photograph of Komon. Komon defended the award, saying he had been sitting for Smith for 21 years. These two cases highlight the debate about the nature of portraiture: is it about getting a good likeness or is it about character revelation?

Whiteley's reference to





Who was JF Archibald?

JF Archibald (1856-1919) was a journalist and founder of the Bulletin magazine, who also served as a trustee of the Art Gallery of NSW. He is the man behind one of Australia's oldest and best known art prizes for portraiture. Yet Archibald had no desire to become famous and, during his lifetime, shunned publicity and remained evasive and enigmatic. A portrait of him, commissioned by the Art Gallery of NSW trustees, was made after his death and remains as one of the pictorial records of a man who avoided having his photograph taken.

Florence Rodway Jules François Archibald 1921, Art Gallery of New South Wales

The journalist

Archibald was born in Victoria and christened with the name John Feltham. When he was 15, he started his career in journalism on a country newspaper in Warrnambool, Victoria. His passion for newspapers led him to Melbourne, searching for work in 'the big smoke'. He lived a bohemian life, frequenting Melbourne's city boarding houses, streets, theatres and cafes – a life he imagined to be quite European, which led him to change his name to Jules François and later to leave money in his will for a large fountain to be built in the middle of Sydney's Hyde Park to commemorate the association of France and Australia in World War I.

Realising the power of print, in 1880 he and a friend founded the Bulletin magazine, a radical journal for its time, addressing issues of nationhood, culture and identity. This journal was influential in shaping opinions and raising issues in the public's consciousness. He also employed the best young artists to be its illustrators.

The art supporter

Archibald's interest in art led him in his later years to serve as a trustee for the Art Gallery of NSW, keen to promote the work of younger artists and writers. In 1900, he commissioned Melbourne portrait artist John Longstaff to paint a portrait of poet Henry Lawson for 50 guineas. Apparently he was so pleased with this portrait that he left money in his will for an annual portrait prize, which was first awarded in 1921. His primary aim was to foster portraiture, as well as support artists and perpetuate the memory of great Australians.

Controversy and debate

1. In what year did the first Archibald prize get awarded?
2. What are two reasons why the Archibald prize was 'eagerly sought' by artists?
3. Describe the style of a conservative artist.
4. Who won the Archibald prize five times? What years did it occur within (within which years did the same artist win the Archibald prize).
5. What did other artists do in the 1920's and 1930's in order to gain acceptance into the Archibald prize?
6. What was the term for entering the Archibald prize? (who was painted) Give an example of who would be painted. What were the centuries the artists followed the traditions of?
7. What were the types of portraits reflected in William Dargie's artworks?
8. Describe the controversy surrounding the 1934 self portrait of Henry Hanks.

Dobell breaks with conventions

9. Who did Dobell paint in 1943?
10. Who took legal action against Dobell?
11. Why was the portrait criticised?
12. What did Dobell's supporters say about the portrait?
13. Make a take and list the reasons for and against William Dobell's portrait.

FOR	AGAINST
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create something to capture the spirit of the sitter	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coloured photographs (painting exact replicas)

14. What happened with Dobell's case?
15. Ultimately the Dobell case became a debate about _____?
16. What was the outcome of the case?
17. On what grounds was this decision made?

Who was JF Archibald?

18. What magazine did Archibald start?
19. Which trust was Archibald a trustee of?
20. What was Archibald like as a person?
21. Where was Archibald born?
22. What type of life did Archibald lead in Melbourne?
23. Why did Archibald change his name to Jules Francois?
24. What did Archibald do in 1880?
25. Why was the Bulletin magazine influential?
26. Who did Longstaff paint a portrait of in 1900?
27. Why did Archibald leave money for a prize?