

MEDIA RELEASE

Send Date: 24th November 2020

Release date: For immediate distribution



Autism in the arts celebrated in new partnership

The Autism Association of Western Australia, the Art Gallery of Western Australia (AGWA), and AGWA's Voluntary Gallery Guides have launched a new partnership supporting members of the community with Autism.

The partnership aims to bring the disability and community sectors' expertise together to create more opportunities for inclusion in the arts and contribute to a more inclusive future for people with Autism and their families.

The partnership is the first program through AGWA's Quiet Tuesday initiative. This initiative is designed to provide access opportunities to community groups on Tuesdays, a day when the Gallery is closed to the general public. The closure allows the Gallery to offer a quiet, desensitised experience for individuals who may require a different environment to appreciate and access the State Art Collection.

The foundation of the partnership was established through the Voluntary Gallery Guides seeking guidance from the Autism Association on how to make public tours more accessible for members of the community with Autism.

Launched by the Honourable Stephen Dawson MLC, Minister for Disability Services, the partnership will see three family days held across school holidays in 2021. Activated by the AGWA Learning team, Autism Association staff and AGWA's Voluntary Gallery Guides, these days will feature multigenerational art activities, guided tours, and low sensory spaces. The Autism Association will also provide ongoing training for Gallery staff and guides.

The Autism Association of Western Australia CEO, Joan McKenna Kerr said, *“Public spaces belong to everyone and everyone should feel comfortable in them. For this reason, we are thrilled to be part of this partnership to make public spaces inclusive and welcoming to everyone, in particular, people with Autism.”*

The launch of the partnership also celebrated the winners of the Arts and Autism art competition run by the Autism Association and the Art Gallery of Western Australia. Sixteen winners were announced as well as the People’s Choice Award winner determined via community voting.

Colin Walker, AGWA Director said, *“Ensuring the Gallery is an accessible and enjoyable place for everyone is at the core of the Gallery’s forward strategic plan. We are delighted to be partnering with the Autism Association of Western Australia to ensure that the space is inclusive, safe and welcoming for the Autism community.”*

The Arts for Autism competition winners were *Spring Garden* - Mandy White, *Untitled* - Declan White, *Peaceful Horizons* - Michele Bourgault, *Frozen Lake* - Rory Chapman, *Self Portrait* - Zac Vasilou, *A Solemn Moment* - Yazmine Anderson, *Animals in the Forrest* - Tim Maley, *Perfect Imperfections* - Sarah Starr, *Dingoes in Long Grass* - Melissa Robinson, *Graffiti In Argentina* - Christopher Hummel, *Mr. Bingles School* - Chad Sawyer, *Hummingbird in the Sun* - Aimee Dickson, *Perth Reflections of Colours* - Michelle, *Vegetable Chef with Very Large Carrots* - Suzie Endersbee, *Self Portrait - Deep Eyes* - Joshua Marmootil, *Crystal Forrest* - Katelin Elias.

One of the winners, Michele Bourgault said, *“Art is an activity in which I can freely express myself. I enjoy creating art because it’s peaceful and it makes me happy to know I am making something that other people can enjoy. My favourite part about the event was meeting new people in a safe and autism friendly environment and I enjoyed seeing other people’s creations.”*

The People’s Choice Award recipient was Lolida Parise for the work *Lolapalooza*. The winning artworks can be [viewed here](#).

Community groups interested in the Quiet Tuesday program can contact:

+61 8 9492 6600 | admin@artgallery.wa.gov.au

Community groups interested in the Autism Association's programs can contact:

+61 8 9489 8900 | autismwa@autism.org.au

- ENDS -

ARTWORK CREDITS

Joanne McLeod, AGWA Voluntary Gallery Guides President; **Joan McKenna Kerr**, Autism Association WA CEO; **Hon Stephen Dawson MLC**, Minister for Disability Services; **Hon Michael Mischin**, Shadow Minister for Heritage, Culture and the Arts and **Colin Walker**, AGWA Director.

MEDIA CONTACT

For more information, interviews and imagery please contact:

Tara Mulholland | tara@jlca.com | 0408 933 803