Media Release

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Victoria Reichelt awarded 2026 Geelong Contemporary Art Prize

A Geelong Gallery exhibition
7 November 2026 to 28 February 2027



Victoria Reichelt
Strawberry slippage 2026
oil on linen
Winner, *2026 Geelong Contemporary Art Prize*
Courtesy of Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane

Geelong Gallery is delighted to announce **Victoria Reichelt** as the winner of the $30,000 acquisitive *2026 Geelong Contemporary Art Prize* for her work ***Strawberry slippage* 2026**.

Selected from 506 entries submitted by artists across Australia, the winning work will now form a part of the Geelong Gallery Collection, continuing the Gallery's commitment to supporting contemporary Australian artists and building a collection that reflects the breadth and diversity of painting practice today.

The *Geelong Contemporary Art Prize* celebrates excellence and innovation in contemporary Australian painting, bringing together established and emerging artists from across the country. This year's exhibition features 36 finalists, selected for the strength, ambition and diversity of their work.

The judging panel – comprising **Humphrey Clegg**, Director & CEO, Geelong Gallery; **Lisa Sullivan**, Assistant Director, Curatorial, Geelong Gallery; and **Lauren Ellis**, Curatorial Manager, Bendigo Art Gallery – selected Victoria Reichelt's *Strawberry slippage*, a vibrant, skilfully painted work in which the central object symbolises the pressures and pleasures of parenthood by alluding to the equally stressful and joyful annual task of constructing children's birthday cakes. The cake's bright colouring, ruffled piping and rainbow decorations—one of which slips from its position—conjure a maximalist, childhood aesthetic. In the background, a brimming bookshelf is blurred from view, embodying an immediately unobtainable yet hopefully reclaimable life beyond the all-consuming experience of parenthood.

The judges commented:

'*Victoria Reichelt's* Strawberry slippage *is a work that is immediately striking and appealing for its bright palette, masterful execution and commanding subject. Beyond its undeniable visual appeal, it's a work that we repeatedly returned to, with each viewing revealing new layers of meaning and interpretation.*

Reichelt skilfully crafts the composition, adeptly moving from a photo realist treatment of the cake to the blurred bookshelves in the background. This convincing shift in the composition's depth of field, acts as a metaphor for the ways in which family, personal and professional priorities come in and out of focus in busy contemporary lives. The slipping of one of the cake's decorative elements—the symbolic rainbow and clouds—adds a further level of meaning, suggesting that balance and perfection is impossible to attain. The painting successfully embodies both the joyful aspects of parenting and the, at times, thankless drudgery.'

Geelong Gallery Director & CEO Humphrey Clegg congratulated the winning artist and all finalists.

'*Selecting a winner from this group of finalists was no easy task and prompted considerable discussion among the judging panel. Victoria Reichelt's* Strawberry slippage *demonstrates a strong balance of considerable technical ability and conceptual underpinning.*

First held in 1938, the Geelong Contemporary Art Prize *has a long history of recognising and supporting Australian artists. Almost 90 years later, we remain committed to this important role, while continuing to strengthen Geelong Gallery's Collection through the acquisition of significant works. We are delighted to welcome Reichelt's painting into the Collection. It is a very worthy addition that joins a distinguished list acquired through the Prize.*

The finalists represent an extraordinary range of skill, subject matter and approaches, offering a wonderful snapshot of contemporary painting today. Reichelt's work is a particularly compelling example of this.

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Congratulations to all the finalists. The quality of the work on display is testament to the considerable time, thought and dedication each artist has brought to their practice. And, of course, a very warm congratulations and thank you to Victoria Reichelt for becoming part of Geelong Gallery's history.'

The 2026 finalists for the *Geelong Contemporary Art Prize* are: Colleen Ahern, Matthew Asling, Natasha Bieniek, Seth Birchall, Elisabeth Bodey, Mairin Briody, Kirsty Budge, Stephen Bush, Ellie Chalmers-Robinson, Samuel Rush Condon, Jonathan Crowther, Hop Dac, Anh Do, Chelsea Gustafsson, Katherine Hattam, Euan Heng, Madeline Kidd, Tony Lloyd, William Mackinnon, Tania Major, Moya McKenna, Jennifer Mills with Darcy Luker, Tully Moore, Jan Murray, Grant Nimmo, Rose Nolan, Jack Paterson, Stieg Persson, Kenny Pittock, Adam Pyett, Victoria Reichelt, Steven Rendall, Anthony Romagnano, Sally Ross, Darren Wardle, and Alice Wormald.

Victoria Reichelt has been a shortlisted artist in several of Geelong Gallery's previous painting prizes and now joins a distinguished group of artists whose work has been awarded the Geelong Contemporary Art Prize. Her winning work, *Strawberry slippage*, joins her 2014 painting *Flood* in the Gallery's Collection.

Reichelt studied Fine Art at the Queensland College of Art, graduating in 2005 having completed her Doctor of Visual Arts. She has been short-listed for a number of major art prizes including the Gold Award at the Rockhampton Art Gallery, the RBS Emerging Artist Award, and in 2013 she won the Sulman Art Prize at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. She has been awarded an Australia Council New Work Grant and the Linden Innovators Award from the Linden Centre for Contemporary Arts. Her work has been included in exhibitions at the Canberra Contemporary Art Space, Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation and at the Gallery of Modern Art (GoMA) in Brisbane. Reichelt is represented by Jan Murphy Gallery in Brisbane, Qld.

Over the past 20 years, works by Travis MacDonald (2024), Naomi Hobson (2022), Diena Georgetti (2021), Andrew Browne (2018), Kate Beynon (2016), Rob McHaffie (2014), Paul Ryan (2012), Tim McMonagle (2010), Nadine Christensen (2008), Sam Leach (2006) and Juan Ford (2004) have been acquired through this nationally significant painting prize.

The *2026 Geelong Contemporary Art Prize* exhibition is on display at Geelong Gallery until Sunday 28 February 2027.

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Exhibition partners

Dimmick Foundation