

MEDIA RELEASE
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Michelle Nikou announced as 2024 Guildhouse Fellow

Adelaide, Australia: Guildhouse, the Art Gallery of South Australia and the James & Diana Ramsay Foundation are delighted to announce South Australian contemporary artist Michelle Nikou as the 2024 Guildhouse Fellow – a twelve-month fellowship valued at over \$50,000.

The Guildhouse Fellowship was inaugurated in 2019 with the generous support of the James & Diana Ramsay Foundation to recognise and elevate South Australian artistic ambition. The annual fellowship offers a transformative opportunity for one mid-career South Australian visual artist, craftsperson or designer, awarding funding to support research and development, travel, the creation of new work, and a presentation outcome at AGSA.

This year's Guildhouse Fellow, Michelle Nikou, is a South Australian-based sculptor, who experiments with a diverse range of materials and draws on surrealist techniques to transform everyday domestic objects into sculptures of humour, poignancy and marvel.

Using strategies such as chance, psychological metaphor, deadpan wit, and juxtaposition, Nikou inventively blurs and extends the boundaries between fine art and craft. Her work, often formed in lead, bronze, resin, latex, and ceramics, invests unremarkable or overlooked facets of daily existence with new and unexpected significance. Nikou's work has been featured in exhibitions nationally and

internationally and is held in private and public collections, including AGSA, the National Gallery of Australia; Museum of Contemporary Art; Artbank; University of South Australia Art Museum; as well as the Clo Fleiss Collection, Paris and Gigi and Josef Fainas Collection, Geneva.

Michelle Nikou says, 'I am deeply honoured to be awarded the Guildhouse Fellowship, and for the support from the James & Diana Ramsay Foundation and Art Gallery of South Australia. This opportunity represents a pivotal moment in my practice, enabling me to explore new directions, undertake extensive research, and create work that pushes the boundaries of my artistic expression.'

This fellowship recognises the importance of consistent creative exploration and the powerful role art plays in our culture. I look forward to sharing my new work at AGSA and contributing to the diversity of South Australia's visual art landscape.'

The Guildhouse Fellowship's 2024 selection panel comprised AGSA Acting Director Emma Fey, Guildhouse Board Member, Christian Hall, and guest judge Dr Rebecca Coates, Director of the Monash University Museum of Art.

The panellists commended Nikou for her fellowship proposal, which deeply explores the poetic and psychoanalytic dimensions of her practice. In a joint statement, the panel was impressed by Nikou's 'quiet and sustained commitment to practice and the continued rigour of her self-reflective inquiry, coupled with a bold confidence to venture into uncharted territory and fully embrace the opportunities presented by the fellowship.'

James & Diana Ramsay Foundation Executive Director, Kerry de Lorme says, 'A hearty congratulations to Michelle, we recognise how important and unique opportunities such as this are, particularly with a presentation outcome at AGSA. The Guildhouse Fellowship makes a unique contribution to the development of South Australian artists' careers and the state's cultural economy more broadly. It has been inspiring to witness the tangible impact the fellowship has had on past recipients and the ongoing ripple effects it continues to create for their professional careers.'

Merinda Edwards, Guildhouse Interim CEO says, 'The Guildhouse Fellowship is core to enhancing the sustainability and breadth of artistic excellence in South Australia. We are so grateful to the James & Diana Ramsay Foundation and AGSA for their unwavering support; we look forward to working with Michelle Nikou as this time will, undoubtedly, lead to new ways to progress studio-making practice. We are thrilled to support Michelle as the 2024 Fellow.'

AGSA Acting Director Emma Fey says, 'The Guildhouse Fellowship plays a critical role in amplifying the careers and practice of South Australian artists. Michelle Nikou is an extraordinary artist and her appointment as the 2024 Guildhouse Fellow comes at a critical time for her. We look forward to sharing the outcomes of Michelle's research, travel and practice in a presentation at AGSA.'

Now in its fifth year, the Guildhouse Fellowship has previously been awarded to Troy-Anthony Baylis (2019), Sera Waters (2020), Liam Fleming (2021) and Tom Philips (2022) who have presented their outcomes in exhibitions at AGSA. In 2025, AGSA will present new work by 2023 Guildhouse Fellow Kyoko Hashimoto, South Australian contemporary jeweller and critical designer.

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ABOUT GUILDHOUSE

Guildhouse is South Australia's leading organisation for visual artists, craftspeople and designers. A dynamic for-purpose organisation with a 55-year history, Guildhouse supports a thriving visual arts, craft and design ecology through working directly with practitioners to develop their practice and work with ambition. With a clear focus on creating opportunities for artists and leading sector development, Guildhouse engages and supports artists with creative and career development programs such as residencies, mentorships, one-on-one advice, tailored business skill development, network development and opportunities to create new work.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

Merinda Edwards | Interim CEO, Guildhouse

merinda.edwards@guildhouse.org.au | P 08 8410 1822

Lindsay Ferris | Head of Communications, Art Gallery of South Australia

ferris.lindsay@artgallery.sa.gov.au | P +61 8 7085 1617

IMAGES

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/52sil04b1b7i5vf1namsj/AHy0YuKtmGkxxlQ2e6orbCw?rlkey=gf35x7gz8rvwgdd5itvf86b61&st=5qjpsuzj&dl=0>

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Supported by



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Header image: 2024 Guildhouse Fellow, Michelle Nikou; photo: Saul Steed.