



Jack Ball wins \$100,000 Ramsay Art Prize 2025

Adelaide, Australia: The Art Gallery of South Australia today announced Jack Ball as the winner of the \$100,000 Ramsay Art Prize, the nation's most generous prize for Australian artists under forty. Ball's winning work, a large-scale photographic and sculptural installation titled *Heavy Grit* will be displayed in the *Ramsay Art Prize 2025* exhibition which opens on Saturday 31 May.

AGSA Director Jason Smith said, 'The Ramsay Art Prize sets out to elevate and accelerate careers for contemporary Australian artists. From a record number of entries in 2025, *Heavy Grit* by Jack Ball perfectly captures what the Ramsay Art Prize aims to offer artists – a platform to present their most ambitious work, unrestrained in scale and medium.'

The Perth-born, Sydney-based artist explores themes of queer intimacy and desire in their winning work. *Heavy Grit* was developed in response to a collection of scrapbooks held by the Australian Queer Archives, including press clippings from the 1950s to 1970s that referenced trans lives. Ball's work reveals fragments and glimpses of queer histories, layering archival materials with personal images and soft form sculptures, and creating an interplay between the past and the present.

In a prize with no material boundaries, this year's winning work is comprised of diverse mediums including inkjet prints, textured stained glass, beeswax, charcoal, copper pipe, fabric, paint, sand and rope.

Resisting a particular artform, Ball's work is fluid, embracing multiple forms to create a large-scale immersive installation where viewers can trace their own connections and interpretations of the work. The

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Finalists' travel supported by AGSA's Contemporary Collectors

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Friday 30 May 2025

installation alludes to the body and transformative processes through beeswax sculptures, sand-filled fabric forms and photographs, while other elements incorporate textured stained glass to distort and bring awareness to notions of the gaze.

A record number of entries were received for this year's prize, with more than 500 artists from around the country submitting their best work created over the past year. In 2025, the judging panel was comprised of leading Australian artist Michael Zavros; 2025 Archibald Prize winner and recipient of the 2017 Ramsay Art Prize's People's Choice Prize, Julie Fragar; and Emma Fey, Deputy Director, AGSA.

The judges were unanimous in their decision. 'Jack Ball's *Heavy Grit* impressed us with its experimental processes and sophisticated creative resolve. The work evokes a sensual response to the substance and aesthetics of the Australian Queer Archives to which the work refers, while proposing new possibilities for how we understand those archives in relation to contemporary culture and experience. We were particularly struck by the installation's restless, kinetic quality that refuses definition and creates an open opportunity to connect individually with the materials, forms and images the work deploys.'

Established in the name of South Australia's leading cultural philanthropists James Ramsay AO and Diana Ramsay AO, the Ramsay Art Prize is an acquisitive art prize for contemporary Australian artists. Presented by AGSA and supported in perpetuity by the James & Diana Ramsay Foundation, the Ramsay Art Prize is held every two years with the winning work being acquired into AGSA's collection.

Chair of the James & Diana Ramsay Foundation, Nicholas Ross, says, 'The Ramsay Art Prize has gone from strength to strength since its inception in 2017, presenting the work of Australia's most talented artists under forty. We are thrilled to see Jack Ball receive the 2025 Ramsay Art Prize and look forward to witnessing their future success.'

South Australian Minister for the Arts, The Hon. Andrea Michaels MP says, 'Congratulations to Jack Ball on winning this prestigious prize. The Ramsay Art Prize provides artists a life-changing opportunity at a critical point in artists' careers. It is thanks to the vision of leading South Australian philanthropists James and Diana Ramsay that our state is home to this extraordinary Australian art prize of national significance.'

All works selected as finalists will be exhibited in a major exhibition at AGSA from 31 May until 31 August 2025. Jack Ball's work will now be acquired into AGSA's collection, joining works by past recipients Sarah Contos (2017), Vincent Namatjira (2019), Kate Bohunnis (2021) and Ida Sophia (2023).

The *Ramsay Art Prize 2025* exhibition also includes a People's Choice Prize, supported by sponsor LK. The People's Choice Prize is a non-acquisitive cash prize of \$15,000 chosen by public vote and announced on Friday 15 August 2025.

Jack Ball will speak as part of a series of artist talks at AGSA on Saturday 31 May. For further details visit agsa.sa.gov.au.

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Friday 30 May 2025**JACK BALL BIOGRAPHY**

Jack Ball grew up in Boorloo, Perth and moved to Gadigal, Sydney two years ago. They held a major solo exhibition at PICA in 2024. In 2021 they had a solo exhibition at AGWA and they have been part of group exhibitions at MCA, AGNSW, AGWA, Artspace, PICA and MAPh. Ball's practice involves large-scale photographic and sculptural installations that explore themes of queer intimacy and desire using collage – a method of thinking and working that involves undoing and remaking to create new forms.

RAMSAY ART PRIZE BACKGROUND

The Ramsay Art Prize, a \$100,000 acquisitive visual arts prize, invites submissions of new work by Australian artists under the age of forty years working in any medium, including sculpture, painting, drawing, photography, installation and the moving image.

Presented by the Art Gallery of South Australia and supported in perpetuity by the James & Diana Ramsay Foundation, the Ramsay Art Prize aims to support and encourage contemporary Australian artists to make their best work at a pivotal point in their career.

The Ramsay Art Prize is held every two years at AGSA. The finalists and winner are selected by an eminent panel of judges. The winning work is judged from the exhibition and is acquired into the Gallery's collection, with the winning artist receiving \$100,000. The exhibition also includes a People's Choice Prize worth \$15,000, supported by sponsor LK, and decided by public vote.

KEY DATES

People's Choice announced
Exhibition Season

Friday 15 August 2025
31 May – 31 August 2025

IMAGES

agsa.sa.gov.au/media/ramsay2025winner/

FINALIST BIOGRAPHIES

agsa.sa.gov.au/whats-on/exhibitions/ramsay-art-prize-2025/

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Image caption: Jack Ball with *Heavy Grit* in Ramsay Art Prize 2025, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide; photo: Saul Steed.