



TSERING HANNAFORD

There was a time that Adelaide realist painter Tsering Hannaford felt uncomfortable telling people she was an artist.

“A lot of my friends were starting their first jobs, getting a salary, you know, no longer students and I felt like I was just taking a big risk,” she says. “I didn’t have much to show at that point.”

That was 2012. Things have changed since then. In 2012 and 2013 her entries for the Archibald Prize, the nation’s premier portrait painting competition, were accepted into the elite Salon des Refuses (the “alternative” selection from the

Archibald and Wynne prize entries). This year she went one better, and for the first time was selected as one of 47 finalists, alongside her father, well-known artist Robert Hannaford.

It has been a long time since her father drew a chalk line across half of his studio space for five-year-old Tsering to do her painting alongside him.

Although he was clearly trying to carve out some space for himself to get on with his own work, he was always encouraging his daughter to draw and paint.

“He took me along to his life drawing class when I was only 12 or 13, which was really confronting at the time,” she recalls with a laugh.

“I drew bathers on all the models.”

The fact that both her parents are creative (her mother is a shoemaker as well as a teacher) has meant that, unlike some young artists, Tsering has only ever

received encouragement to embrace art as her chosen career.

“Whenever uni got tough for me, dad would tell me that it didn’t matter, I could just become an artist and paint,” she says.

“He would do not so subtle things like giving me an easel and a viewfinder for Christmas, things like that. So I think Dad was pretty happy when I embraced it.”

Hannaford’s motivation was not that she should follow in his footsteps.

“I just knew that drawing was something she loved doing and was always something that took her out of herself,” he says. “To the extent that a father wants their child to do what makes them happy, I encouraged her.”

An arts career was no certainty. If it wasn’t for Tsering’s Year 11 art teacher, she would have chosen chemistry over art in Year 12. Then at university she majored in psychology for her Arts degree.

But it was a three month European holiday that proved influential: surrounded by the works of great artists, she knew art would be her chosen career.

Initially, Tsering thought it would be in art conservation.

On her return to Adelaide, she took a voluntary job with Artlab, while attending a few introductory classes at the Central School of Art and studying for her Graduate Diploma of Art History.

After encouragement from her colleagues at Artlab and her partner at the time, it wasn’t long before she decided she would try painting herself.

“I would do paintings for family and my partners’ nephews for Christmas presents and that sort of thing,” she says. “I was 24 then, I’m 28 now. That first year, in 2012, I entered a self-portrait into the Archibald. It was accepted into the Salon des Refuses. I was excited because it was the first time I »»»

YOUNG *at art*

words **sarah hender** picture **calum robertson**

Being an artist is a tough business, but it isn’t deterring these three young South Australians who have tasted some early success



had been recognised.” Barry Humphries went to the Salon and bought her painting.

Tsering has always painted and drawn from life, a style also favoured by her father. Some have told Tsering she should paint differently to her dad, and she doesn't dismiss the idea. It is all part of opening herself up to new influences to form her own work.

This October, she heads to New York for two months for an artist residency in a residential college with other like-minded artists. “The courses I will take will be focused on the anatomy of the human form,” she says. “There will be a focus on portraiture, composition, life drawing. I want to go back to basics because it's those foundational courses that are what you are really building on and you bring your own style to it. I want to find my own voice and hear it more strongly.”

In the lead-up to her New York trip, Tsering will be holding an open studio for a SALA exhibition throughout August at her own studio. She is also in a group exhibition at Terrace, Floors and Furnishings' SALA on Terrace until August 15 this year, and will exhibit some works for the Loreto Spring Art show in September. In the meantime, she is building enough work for a solo exhibition. ●

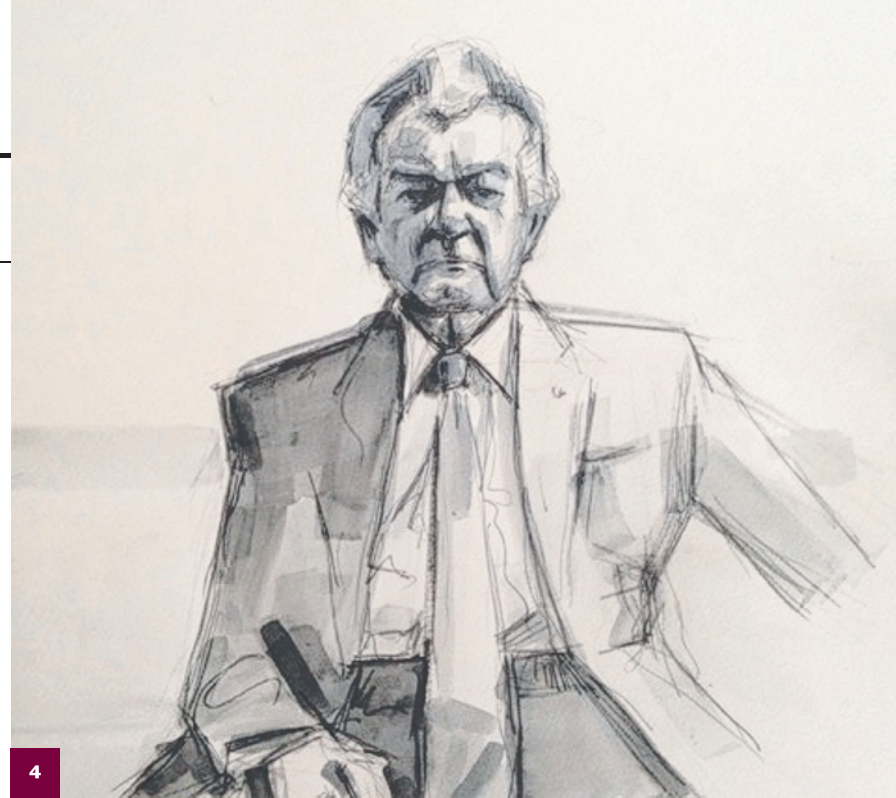
Tsering will be holding an exhibition of new paintings and drawings from 2015 at her garden studio at 44 Albemarle St, West Hindmarsh, during SALA, 10am-4pm from August 2-23. The official opening will be at 2pm on August 2. There will be a talk by the artist at 2pm on Sunday, August 9.



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HARRY THRING

“I don't think about art when I'm working,” said the late Jean-Michel Basquiat, an American street artist turned neo-expressionist painter, famed for the social commentary in his work. “I think about life.”

Adelaide artist Harry Thring, whose work is influenced by Basquiat, also has a lot to say about life. The frustrations and tension that Harry feels about humanity's direction fuels his drive to create art.

“That quote from Basquiat remains the best artistic advice I've ever come across,” he says. “Painting has always been a way for me to deal with frustration and anxiety. It's obviously nothing new to paint about conflict, but it does help or enable me to deal with it constructively. I don't really feel the need to paint about happiness – you just want to enjoy that.”

He recalls the impact of Basquiat's work on him when introduced to it by his Year 10 art teacher. “It hit me straight away, not just the aesthetic but the life in the work. You can feel his emotion in the strength and confidence of the lines, there's nothing contrived about it; very free, very pure. He was the first artist I looked at with awe.”

It was from that moment that Harry took his art more seriously. He finished Year 12 art with a perfect score. Equally good at writing, and with football in his blood (two of his brothers are SANFL players for North Adelaide) Harry went on to become a sports journalist.

Although having a busy full-time job means less time to spend on art, there have been other benefits. He is able to bank ideas, then paint with a sense of urgency and energy that can be difficult to

PICTURE calum robertson

1 Tsering Hannaford's *Magnolia Lethbridge Gallery* 2 Harry Thring's *Peace At Last* 3 Thring at his Croydon studio 4 Angus Hamra's sketch of Bob Hawke 5 Thring's *Per Aspera Ad Astra* 6 Angus Hamra 7 Hamra's painting of Dylan Lewis

conjure up spontaneously. And on a practical level, it gives the 29-year-old the financial means to produce art free of commercial pressures.

His latest series of paintings share the theme of space exploration and the human conflict that he sees in our search for other worlds.

"If we are to successfully explore the universe it will mean we have conquered many of our current issues as a species," he says. "I mean we will have to work together, solve our energy situation. But the size of even our own solar system gets you questioning your place in the scheme of things, so it's a lot to take in".

Harry has had several recent solo exhibitions based on this theme, one last year at Tinning Street Gallery in Melbourne and in March this year, at Peter Walker Fine Art in Walkerville. The latter was titled *Per Aspera Ad Astra* (Through Hardships to the Stars), and its main painting, indicative of Harry's style, is full of symbols and images.

An arm reaches up towards the stars which, Harry explains, is "the arm of humanity" but it is being held down by a darkened area of the painting where there are various images: a Power Ranger helmet, Superman's chest and flowing cape, interposed with the shocking image of the Jordanian pilot who was burnt alive by ISIS.

Harry is about to embark on the adventure of a lifetime to a place not dissimilar to another planet, the Arctic Circle. In October, he will be one of 25 international artists on board a century-old sailing ship for three weeks sailing the frozen archipelagos of Svalbard, an island north of the European mainland, as part of an artist residency.

"I like the idea of being in a place that is completely untouched but at the same time is changing so quickly, knowing that the arctic ice is melting," he says. "It reflects our immense challenges in the decades and centuries to come."

Harry is conscious of the need to challenge himself by showing his paintings to a wider audience and this will be an important step in that journey. Being completely self-taught, he has not had the benefit of painting with others constantly critiquing his work and this will be an opportunity for him to be surrounded by other artists and a way to fully immerse himself in art.

Harry's mother Cassie, an artist herself, has been his greatest mentor. "It's always interesting work so it's a real privilege to see it in its growth. He has an intuitive sense of colour that is obviously just within, as he hasn't learnt that," Cassie says. "He was always like a sponge, interested in everything. He devoured books as a child and he has got more of (his father) John's sense of social conscience. He's always had a lot to say and that is how he's been able to express himself. He just seems compelled to make marks."

And maybe his mark. ●

Harry is exhibiting as part of a group show for SALA called SALA on Terrace at Terrace, Floors and Furnishings, Glen Osmond Rd, until August 15.



PICTURE tricia watkinson

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ANGUS HAMRA

It was a bizarre start to a career as a serious portrait artist but drawing 1950's football caricatures was Angus Hamra's favourite thing to do as a 9-year-old. Soon, Angus was drawing all of his friends and family in this way, with large heads and tiny bodies. Angus's family was used to his obsessions and this just seemed to be one more. That part of his character hasn't changed, but to the relief of his family and friends, he has changed his artistic style.

The breakthrough moment for Angus was an introduction to French and Australian impressionist art at his school in Year 9, when he was 15.

"I never felt the need to do anything much at that age but I remember that around that time, I really felt the need to try and paint so I used to paint our backyard with a kind of quick brushstroke... at different times of the day to capture the changes in the light," he says. "As you can imagine, these paintings would have looked pretty horrible." From that time on, though, Angus didn't stop painting.

His family didn't notice any precocious talent, but that changed with a portrait of his step-grandfather in Year 11.

"Everyone sat up and took notice after he did that," says his father, Paul. "It was such a strong likeness."

Peter Walker, of Peter Walker Fine Art Gallery in Walkerville, noticed it too. He'd been to the school art show, and was surprised. "There was just something there. I wouldn't like to say realist style, not photographic, it was realism with his own personal touch," Walker says, and was impressed enough to ask Angus to paint his children.

Soon, Walker was organising commissions for Angus to do portraits. Angus had been selling his portraits himself, asking the princely sum of \$50. When Walker advised him to bump it up to \$3000, Angus quit his job at the bottle-o the next day. That was in early 2013, and by mid 2014 Angus had held his first exhibition at Walker's gallery. It sold out.

Since his first portrait, Angus's style has developed from the detail of a Robert Hannaford-style piece into more of an impasto style, using thick layers of paint.

"I've always been quite impatient so working quickly and thickly was natural to



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me," he says. "I like working tonally rather than the fine detail of portraiture. I like the thick painterly approach of Ben Quilty and Guy Maestri's work and their use of space and figures."

Angus attributes the development of his figurative style to the indie punk music he was listening to then. He wanted to capture the immediacy of this type of music in his art – quick, loud and instantly appealing, with relaxed figures resembling soothing melodies.

Last November, he was asked to paint Bob Hawke as a possible fundraiser for the Hawke Foundation and a potential Archibald entry, subject to the former prime minister's approval.

"I was nervous and my first sketch was crap," Angus recalls. "When he asked to look at it I thought I was going to die, but all he said was 'why don't you paint me with a smile next time?'"

Luckily, his sketches improved when the original five minute sitting extended to forty-five minutes, as the sitter relaxed with a few reds. The painting that would emerge had to wait though, because only two weeks later Angus's painting career was called to a shuddering halt. After a night of celebrating the end of university

exams and sleeping heavily, he woke up unable to lift his right – painting – arm.

The diagnosis was an injury to the network of nerves that sends signals from your spine to shoulder, arm and hand. His dream of submitting a painting of Hawke for the Archibald was out the window.

So Angus improvised. "I couldn't really lift my arm at all, but my hand was working so I managed to teach my left hand to paint and do any intricate details with my right hand," he says.

"I did my own sort of painting, like painting my own hands. I got to be quite proficient with my left hand, almost better than my right."

Now 21, he has regained full use of his arm and is back painting. But he's unsure where he's headed. Next year he plans to hold another exhibition and spend time focusing on his art before starting a Masters degree in architecture in 2017.

"I'm currently at a crossroads at the moment wondering if I could make a go of art as my profession," he says.

"But I know that no matter what I will do I will always be painting". ●

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