



Schenberg Awards

# Hatched National Graduate Show 2023

PICA

Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts

# The Schenberg Awards

## Communicating meaning and purpose: What makes an award-winning artwork?

*Hatched* is Australia's only national survey of recent art school graduates, showcasing work from the most exciting emerging artists from across the nation.

Since 2010, PICA has offered the Schenberg Awards as part of the Hatched program, with a total of \$50,000 prize money for three artists to invest in their careers and develop their artistic practice. The Dr Harold Schenberg Art Fellowship of \$35,000 is awarded to the most outstanding *Hatched* work. These awards are made possible by funds bequeathed to The University of Western Australia by Dr Harold Schenberg.

This year's judging panel this year included Justine Ambrosio, Acting Associate Director, Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, Perth; Hannah Mathews, Director/CEO, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, Perth; and Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran, artist, Sydney (and *Hatched 2012* alumni).

The 2023 award winners explore topics ranging from the social, cultural and historical contexts shaping artists' commentaries, Asian-Australian identities, to the implications of science and technology in a digitised world.

'Hatched is about supporting emerging artists. It celebrates practices that push boundaries.'

2023 Judging Panel

## How are Hatched artists selected?

Graduating art students are nominated by their schools and selected by a panel of judges based on several considerations:

Is their artistic practice rigorous and does it show potential?

Is the presentation of their work resolved in terms of the technical application of materials?

Are the concepts and ideas refined in their work?

Have they clearly expressed their ideas in written statements?

Does the final selection of artists represent Australia's cultural and geographic diversity?

Do the selected artists represent a broad spectrum of approaches, media and art forms?

## How are the Schenberg Award-winners selected?

The judging panel considers the following criteria:

Distinctive and individual approach

Refined visual language

Excellent production and realisation of work

Conceptual rigour

Clarity of communication

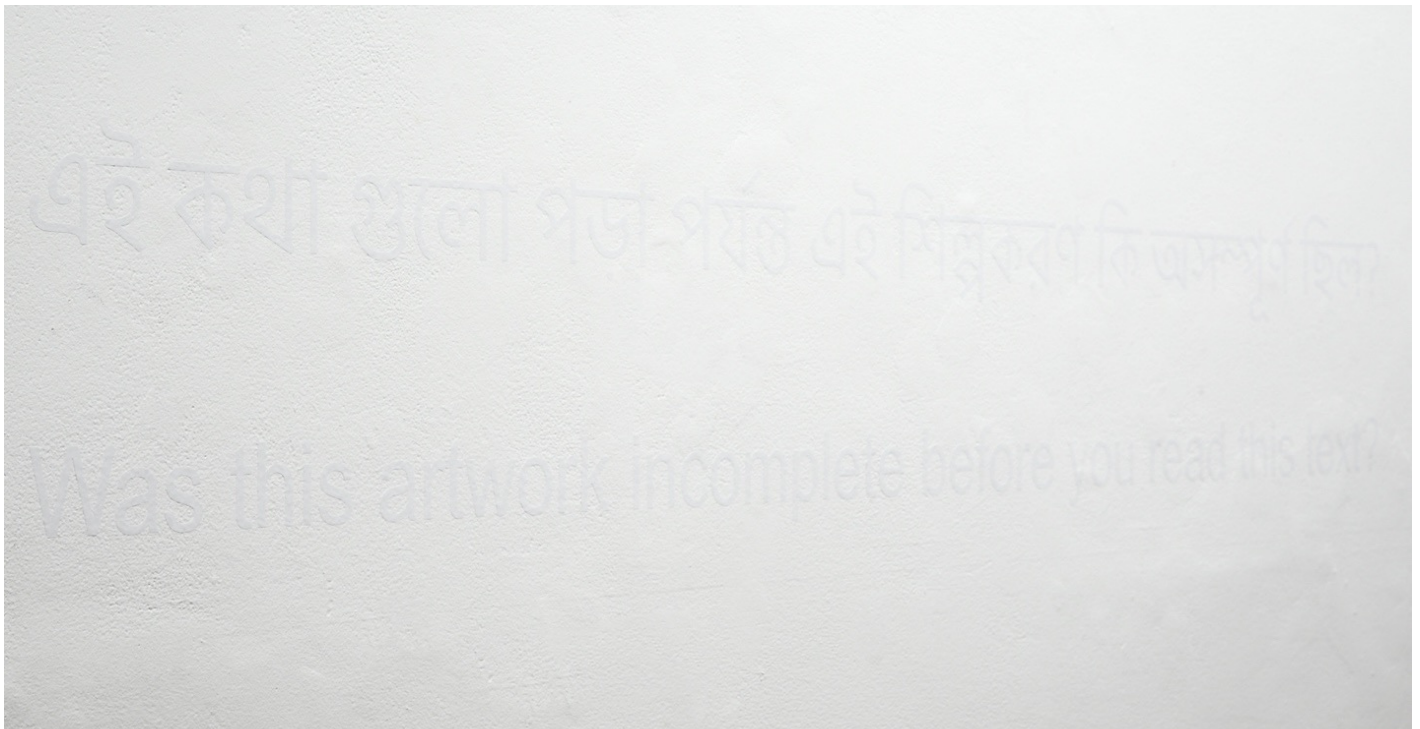
Potential to significantly further their career as an artist

**The Dr Harold  
Schenberg  
Art Fellowship  
of \$35,000**

**Paean Sarkar  
Queensland University of Technology**

Paean Sarkar investigates the institutional, cultural and ideological frameworks that shape the art world. Specifically, she recontextualises the language and methodologies of 1960s Conceptual art to navigate her practice and experience as a second-generation Indian immigrant in Australia. Sarkar utilises audience participation as a medium through which to explore power and autonomy within contemporary art institutions of the Western world.

*এই শিল্পকর্মটি কি incomplete?* presents the phrase ‘was the artwork incomplete until you read this text?’ in the artist’s mother tongue, Bengali. The text is depicted quietly but assertively in white vinyl against the white walls of the gallery, critiquing the canon of white male Conceptual artists, yet denying access to most viewers. In *Artwork by an artist*, visitors are invited to complete the phrase ‘This is an artwork by a \_\_\_\_\_ artist’ using the labels provided that list a number of cultural identifiers. Through these works, Sarkar declares her position as an artist on the margins of the canon, appropriating from within this system in an attempt to change it.



Paean Sarkar, *এই শিল্পকর্মটি কি incomplete?*, (detail), 2022, *Hatched: National Graduate Show 2023*, installation view, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, 2023, photo: Dan McCabe



Paean Sarkar, *Artwork by an artist*, 2022, (detail), 2022, *Hatched: National Graduate Show 2023*, installation view, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, 2023, photo: Dan McCabe

## The judges said:

‘Paean’s work grapples with the foundations of the Western art canon and its place within art pedagogy in a profoundly layered way.’

‘Conceptual art has the potential to alienate audiences. Paean has played with this through a multi-lingual approach, incorporating her native Bengali language. She offers us, the audience, a fresh perspective of what it means to make, disseminate and experience art from a second-generation migrant perspective. Paean’s work is declarative, it comes from the margins to claim and create more space for others in the canon.’

## Paean Sarkar said of her win:

‘It gives me the confidence and resources to keep working on this process of unpacking how my identity as a second-generation Indian immigrant coincides with my role as a contemporary artist.’

‘I want people to take a step back and question the fundamental ways in which they engage with art specifically, but also with other parts of life, and the perspectives, privileges they hold and institutional structures that influence this.’

## What is the Western art canon?

The Western canon describes the greatest works of art in Western culture that are so highly valued and influential they become known as ‘classics’. Recently there has been discussion about expanding the canon to include more works by overlooked and marginalised groups such as women and racial minorities. This is because the ideal standards used to evaluate the quality of art are a product of social, cultural and historical contexts. As times change, these contexts are often reassessed as problematic.

## What is Conceptual art?

In Conceptual art, the idea or concept is more important than the finished art object, such as a sculpture or painting. In Conceptual art the value of art lies in the thought processes and methods used to produce it. It refers to an art movement in the 1960s–70s shaped by predominantly white male artists such as Joseph Kosuth, John Baldessari, and Sol LeWitt.



**Schenberg  
Art High  
Commendation  
of \$10,000**

**Jingxuan Chen  
University of Melbourne**

Jingxuan Chen uses her experience of growing up in China and living in Australia to create works that navigate the differences between eastern and western cultures. Employing images, both familiar and foreign to an Australian audience, Chen's works foster a sense of confusion and explore romance, love, narcissism and the changing social landscape of a new generation of Chinese youth. Her practice is heavily influenced by Asian literature and film, adopting storytelling and cinematic conventions.

*Transformation vol. 2: a romantic incident* is a triptych of videos documenting three East Asian female archetypes: *kōng jiě* (airline hostess), *gōng wù yuán* (female government office worker) and Japanese school girl. The videos show the artist dressed in character-specific uniforms performing these roles. Typically fetishised as objects of the white male gaze, Chen draws attention to the dichotomy at play, noting how these archetypes represent both desire and authority. Employing subversion, Chen's videos depict an alternate reality and dystopic dating scene where women literally talk men to death.

The judges said that the High Commendation 'goes to a work that is punchy, funny, skilled and seductive. The language of self-promotional tools is intelligently used to create seductive portraits that make you question what you know'.

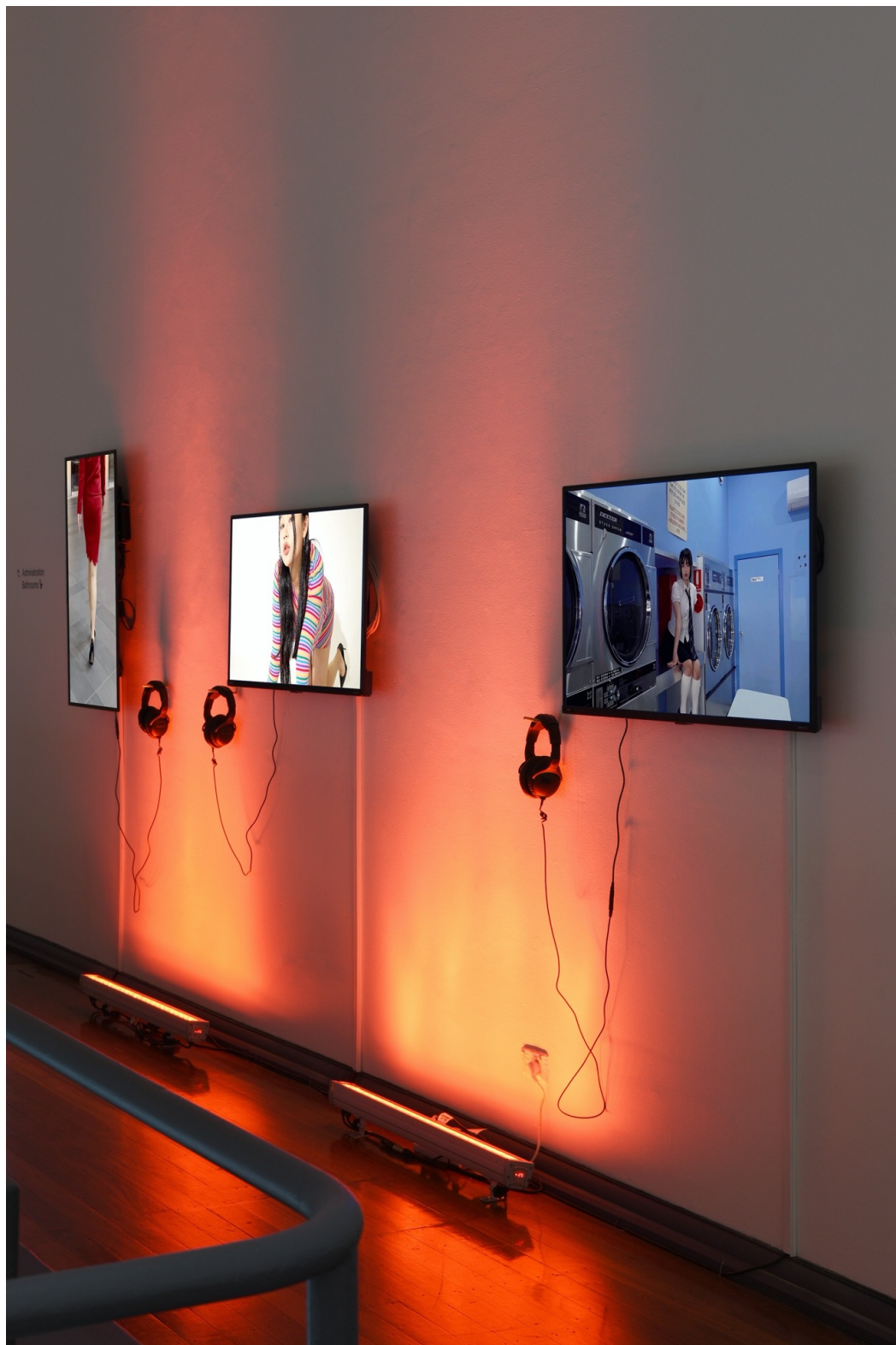


Image: Jingxuan Chen, *Transformation vol. 2: a romantic incident*, 2022, *Hatched: National Graduate Show 2023*, installation view, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, 2023, photo: Dan McCabe



**Schenberg Art  
Commendation  
of \$5,000**

**Agatha Okon  
University of Western Australia**

Agatha Okon's practice grapples with the implications of science and the relationship between objectivity and subjectivity. Informed by her chemistry studies, Okon explores the nature of representation in the post-quantum world, constructing virtual objects that attempt to represent their physical counterparts. For Okon, these virtual objects remain hollow facsimiles of the original and, in doing so, demonstrate the uncrossable gap between virtual and real.

*Outside of truth* consists of a series of pom poms made from paper and a 3D animation mapped to match the Cullity Gallery at The University of Western Australia, Perth. Within the virtual exhibition depicted in the animation, photogrammetric models of balls of scrap paper fly through space and portraits of the artist and associates float suspended above plinths. Presented alongside, the physical paper pom poms undercut their animated counterparts, revealing our failure to effectively capture reality. In *Self-portrait with fruit*, Okon uses the DNA extracted from berries and the DNA from her saliva to illustrate the ease in which data such as DNA can be manipulated to construct a new truth.

The judges said that the Art Commendation 'goes to a work that is unique in showing both the potentials and pitfalls of computer-generated imagery and data'.



Image: Agatha Okon featured in *Hatched: National Graduate Show 2023*, installation view, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, 2023, photo: Dan McCabe

**Reflection****Consider the artworks by Paean Sarker, Jingxuan Chen and Agatha Okon**

What techniques have the artists used to convey meaning?

How did you respond to the way the artists have communicated their ideas?

What are the different ways the artists have explored identity?

What contextual factors (social, cultural and/or historical) have influenced the artists' commentaries or points of view?

How do these artworks challenge the attitudes and values of the audience?

## Expression

## Can you draw an artwork?

