

# Artists miss the cut but subjects make it

**STEPHEN BEVIS**  
ARTS EDITOR

WA artists have missed the cut in the Archibald Prize this year but three of the State's famous faces are among the 39 finalists in the art race that almost stops the nation.

Portraits of young actor Brandon Walters, footballer Ben Cousins and pianist David Helfgott are in the running for the \$50,000 Archibald Prize next month.

A WA artist has never won the Archibald in its 68-year history.

An Art Gallery of NSW spokeswoman said the judges assessed all the 708 entries "blind", without reference to the artist's names or place of residence.

Melbourne artist Vincent Fantauzzo's painting of Walters, the 13-year-old who upstaged Hugh Jackman and Nicole Kidman in the film *Australia*, follows his success last year as the winner of the people's choice award for his moody study of Heath Ledger. "I enjoyed being part of it last year and it is nice to back it up with a painting I am happy with," Fantauzzo said.

His depiction of youth is a rarity in a competition dominated by more mature subjects. Fantauzzo said Walters had great character in his face. "He's got an energy and quite intense gaze," he said. "His life has been quite dramatic and he has seen a lot even in his life in Broome."



**Finalist: Comedian Paul Livingstone and artist Paul Jackson.** Picture: Fairfax

Adelaide artist Megan Roodenrys said her painting of Cousins, called *Waiting for the Day*, was painted last August when the Brownlow medallist was interested in showing his inner turmoil and was making a documentary about his drug addiction. "I was attracted to the idea of doing a portrait of someone who people think they know but don't, which is the nature of celebrity," Roodenrys said.

Helfgott's portrait is by NSW artist Cherry Hood, who won the Archibald Prize in 2002.

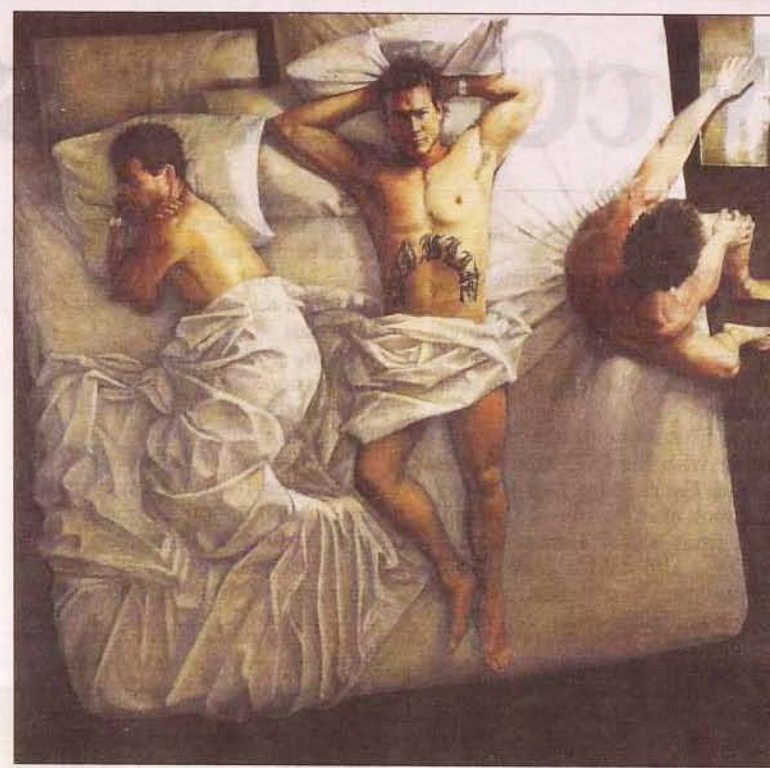


**Piano man: David Helfgott's portrait by NSW artist Cherry Hood.**

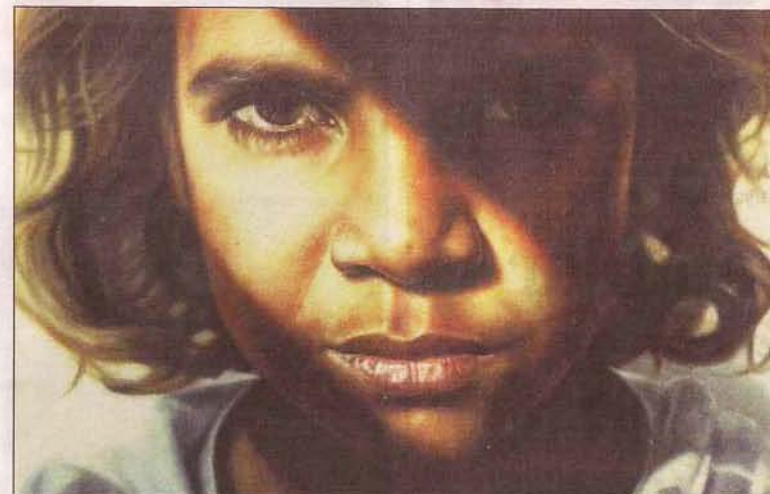
Sydney artist Paul Jackson won the packing room prize yesterday for his portrait of comedian Paul "Flacco" Livingstone that the subject claimed depicted him as "a rather pathetic little old man".

The choice of the head storeman at the Art Gallery of NSW is considered the kiss of death for the actual Archibald because no winner has ever gone on to take out the main award. However, Jackson and Livingstone were confident.

The 2009 Archibald winner will be announced on March 6.



**Inner turmoil: Adelaide artist Megan Roodenrys' portrait of Ben Cousins.**



**Intense: Melbourne artist Vincent Fantauzzo's painting of Brandon Walters.**