

Homeward Bound promotes a spectrum of female leaders

On the 13 June 2018 I had the opportunity to participate in a breakfast tour of the Archibald Prize Exhibition at the Art Gallery of NSW. While this is always an exhibition I enjoy, it really rounded out Sydney's VIVID Festival for me this year inspiring me with women's stories of leadership and visibility at all stages of their lives and careers. This is very much a theme embraced by the Homeward Bound Program, which aims to attract scientists, engineers and technologists from a wide variety of disciplines, leadership experiences and at different stages of leadership journeys. Turning this lens to the Archibald Prize Portraits I thought I'd share some highlights on the leadership stories that resonated with me.

'Strength and honour of women in powerful positions'



Photo-realistic portraiture was very common at the Archibald's this year. So this portrait is both huge and one of the very first you experience as you enter the exhibition, but it was probably the portrait that was least about the painting and most about the story (which more than explains the haphazard photograph!).

The portrait is of the Chief Justice Susan Kiefel AC captured in her chambers at the High Court of Australia. She was chosen to represent the centenary of women being allowed to practice law and stand for parliament in NSW (*Women's Legal Status Act 1918*).

Her incredible intellect is represented by the books behind her. She is represented with 100 books for each year being commemorated. Their spines are blank to represent the anonymity of the many women who have worked tirelessly to achieve their goals. The artist Yvonne East says " This portrait represents the strength and honour of women in powerful positions, combined with femininity and order."

'Age shall not weary them'



This portrait has to be one of my favourites for the year. It was also developed using a photo-realistic style and depicts an amazing 84-year-old artist who is almost bleeding off the page with life and vitality. Indeed, her portrait is larger than life and stands about 7 feet tall. She is a local celebrity, mentor to other artists and cornerstone member of the local regional community.

Though I made no notes about her name or that of her artist she represents the fullness of influence, wisdom, experience we are able to bring to life through later stages that are valued, rich in contribution, respect and are still very much two-way exchanges about learning. I've never seen a mature life stage transformed into something so tangibly enviable. For me this portrait made me want to be just like her.

‘Looking for leadership in the young’

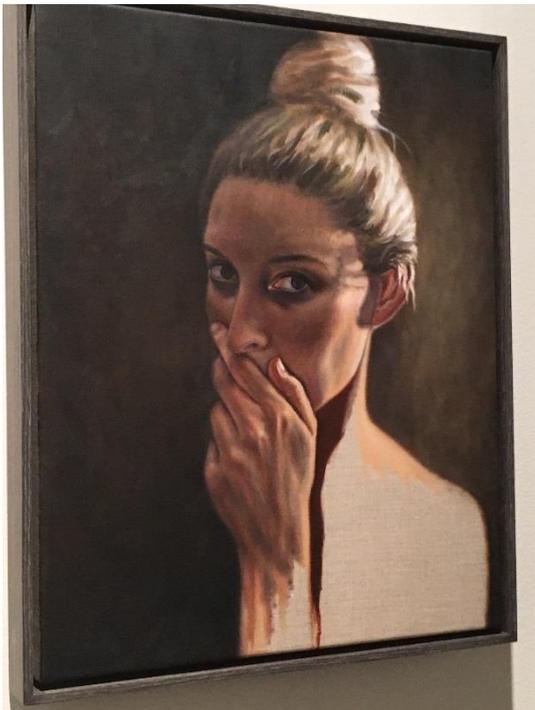


Benjamin Aitken’s subject is award winning artist Natasha Bieniek. Natasha has knocked back several requests to paint her portrait in the past; what appeals to me so much about this story is that she was willing to give 26-year-old Ben the opportunity.

The painting sits in a sequence of subjects respectively 98 and 85 and draws attention to the life stages sequence of subjects and artists, with this being the ‘Young promoting the Young’.

Benjamin Aitken himself is the founding director of the Nicholas Foundation, an itinerant gallery and public collection supporting Australian artists at all stages of their career. The collection currently holds 50 works.

‘Understanding our fears and vulnerability’



‘Anxiety still at 30’ is a self-portrait by Kirsty Neilson depicting what anxiety looks and feels like. “Anxiety disorders are the most common mental health issue in Australia. On average one in every four people will experience it. ... For me, anxiety is like having an outer-body experience where logic doesn’t exist and the voice in your head is not your own. ... More recently my anxiety took me to the point of almost being sick so I forced myself to paint what that looked like.”

This portrait makes me reflect on how rarely we have the bravery to expose our vulnerabilities, our fears and challenges. What it also demonstrates is how much we learn from doing so.

Homeward Bound requires all participants to undertake Life Style Index surveys to learn about our strengths and weaknesses and undertake career coaching to develop strategies to use our different talents and characteristics more effectively as leadership and communication tools. Having just completed my surveys I am about to embark on my career coaching with some excitement and definitely some trepidation!

Giving women a voice



'The Serenity of Susan Carland' is nothing short of beautiful. Dr Susan Carland is a senior lecturer and researcher at Monash University's National Centre for Australian Studies. She is a prominent feminist, media personality, author and an acclaimed Islamic leader. Artist Andrew Lloyd Greensmith states "Susan's work gives Muslim women a voice in an age when many speak over and about them but never with them."

The artist reflects on Susan's patience and resolve when working at the coalface of the dichotomy between Islam and Western cultures. Andrew depicts Susan in a generous space on the canvas to convey this lonely isolation but nevertheless capture her serenity.

The isolation of leadership, or advancing in your career to a stage where you are a minority or sometimes only female in a discipline is a very common theme for women in STEM. Where local networks for work and collaboration cannot be formed Homeward Bound strives to create a global network of women who can call on each other, collaborate, learn from, share with other women in STEM.

I am so honoured to be able to commence this participation in the Homeward Bound Community for women in the Spatial and Surveying industries this year. It is six months until my departure for Ushuaia in South America, where our ship will set sail for three weeks of collaboration, exploration, challenge and communication in Antarctica. The work has already commenced – I will be sharing more of this with you over the coming months as an insight to the preparation and development we are undertaking. It is a deep hope I can inspire others to participate in future years and we can increase the cohort of women in spatial within this global community of women in STEM.

It's been 100 Days since the second cohort 'Homeward Bound 2018' returned from Antarctica. When asked to reflect on her last 100 Days, and what leadership means to her, Karen Alexander, Research Fellow at University of Tasmania, says "**I have realised that we need a mixture of leaders.** Not only of genders, but also of extroverts like Sheryl Sandberg and Steve Jobs, and introverts like Barack Obama and Rosa Parks." It takes a mixture of leaders to change the perspectives on the influence of women ... that was the message I took away from the Archibald Prize Exhibition this year.



I am an introvert. I really struggle with making 'visibility' a priority ... perhaps I will solve problems in a quiet way. And that's ok, I am certain the world needs leaders like me too.

Karen Alexander, Homeward Bound 2018

<https://homewardboundprojects.com.au/2018/06/20/100->

100 days since Karen Alexander returned from Antarctica (Homeward Bound 2018)

- 1st week home, March - I organised A 'Women and the Coasts' event at a conference I was involved with – a brief peek into the lives of women leading in the coastal management sphere.
- Mid-May, I ran a training course for members of my research centre
- Start June – I received university funding to hold a workshop to establish a research agenda on 'Antarctic Ambassadors'.
- Now - some of my Antarctic images are being displayed at a photographic exhibition at IMAS in Hobart, Tasmania, showcasing how humans interact with this fragile terrain.

Read more: <https://homewardboundprojects.com.au/2018/06/20/100-days-later-karen-alexander/>