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HIGH CALIBRE JUDGES PARTNER WITH EMERGING ART AWARD

Some of the most highly-regarded professionals in the contemporary arts scene have been confirmed as judges for the 6th annual John Fries Award.

This year's new curator, **Oliver Watts** is joined by New Zealand-born curator and acclaimed arts writer, **Justin Paton**, Aboriginal artist **Fiona Foley** and exciting cross-disciplinary artist, **Nell**. Long-term judge, accomplished installation artist and daughter of the late John Fries, **Kath Fries** will continue on the panel in 2015.

Entries into the John Fries Award opened last week and will close at **12 noon on Thursday, 19 February 2015**.

Curator Oliver Watts said this year's selection of judges adds significant weight to the prestige of the \$10,000 award.

"I'm really excited about working with the judges. We have brought together a group that is so diverse in experience but all well connected to what is at the edge of contemporary arts right now," he said.

"Justin has an exciting take on contemporary art. His recent rehang of the Asian wing of the Art Gallery of New South Wales brought new and old together in an engaging and thought-provoking way. He's also very knowledgeable and generous in his approach to art and educating.

"Fiona has a great understanding of international contemporary art practice having exhibited widely throughout the world. As someone who founded the Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Cooperative, she's proof of how self-determination for emerging Indigenous artists can go a long way to getting their art seen and accepted.

"Nell is also an incredibly vital artist. She somehow manages to fuse the intensity of a rock God with the transcendental qualities of a Buddhist monk. Nell is deeply embedded in the contemporary art scene and brings a great deal of knowledge and passion to her decision-making.

"Together as a panel, we want to see some exciting artworks that push boundaries, encourage the exploration of new ideas and that really blur the edges of defining contemporary art.

"This award is about providing a platform for emerging artists to develop and refine their craft, provide valuable experiences that will help them grow as an early career artist, as well as providing the chance to break into the competitive emerging art scene," he said.

All finalists' entries will feature in a month-long exhibition at **UNSW Galleries** at **UNSW Art & Design** – the award's presenting partner for the second year running. This continued partnership outlines both Copyright Agency | Viscopy and UNSW Art & Design's desire to build a professional and resilient creative economy by recognising outstanding talent in the emerging arts sector.

Viscopy will pay all finalists an artist fee at NAVA recommended rates and will also assist with freight costs to support artists from interstate and New Zealand.

The award's prize money has been donated by the Fries family in memory of former Viscopy director and honorary treasurer, John Fries, who made a remarkable contribution to the life and success of Viscopy.

For further information, see www.johnfriesaward.com

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Contact

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Judges Bios

Oliver Watts (Curator)

Oliver Watts is an artist, theorist and curator. He currently lectures at the Sydney College of the Arts (University of Sydney) in the Masters of Curating. He is the co-director of Chalk Horse Gallery in Darlinghurst and has curated exhibitions in Australia, Hong Kong, The United States and Singapore. As a critic and theorist he has published in various magazines such as Art and Australia, Art Monthly, Das Superpaper and leading academic journals.

Justin Paton

Justin is Head Curator of international art at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia. He is one of New Zealand's foremost curators and an acclaimed art writer, with a wide range of exhibition projects and publications to his credit. He was widely lauded as curator of New Zealand's presentation at the Venice Biennale in 2013, organising a survey of light artist Bill Cuthbert's work. Justin travels widely and his well acquainted with the international movements of contemporary art. From 2007, he was Senior Curator at the Christchurch Art Gallery, Te Puna o Waiwhetu in New Zealand, and before that he was Curator of Contemporary Art at Dunedin Public Art Gallery. In 2012, Justin was announced as Katherine Mansfield Menton Fellow.

Fiona Foley

Fiona Foley is a Brisbane-based artist and exhibits regularly in Australia and internationally. Her recent solo exhibitions were held at Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane in 2013 and Niagara Galleries, Melbourne in 2012.

In 2014, she received an Australia Council Visual Arts Award. Fiona is a regular keynote speaker at conferences and symposia all over the world. Most recently she is convening 'Courting Blakness: Recalibrating Knowledge' in the Sandstone University (2014) at the University of Queensland, where she is currently Adjunct Professor.

Nell

Nell's practice is rooted in her exploration of personal identity and a search for universal meaning. Her cross-disciplinary work often fuses the aesthetics of rock 'n' roll with quieter and more contemplative themes of Buddhism and spirituality. At the Glastonbury Festival Nell "DJ-ed" by ringing bells to help create clarity at the beginning of each day of the festival, even though some of her work is highly energetic. She was chosen to be part of the Museum of Contemporary Art's *Primavera* at the age of 24 and was then picked up by one of Australia's most high profile galleries, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, by the time she was 26. She has exhibited widely in Australia and been awarded residences in Rome, Beijing and Paris.

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Kath Fries

Kath Fries is a Viscopy board member, Chair of the John Fries Award committee and daughter of the late John Fries. She is a Sydney based artist and a PhD candidate at Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney. Next month, Kath will begin a residency in Finland, where she'll extend her research into sensory engagement with fragile materiality by developing new ephemeral installations responding to Finland's unique climate and landscape.