

## MEDIA RELEASE

### SHEILA FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES SECOND MICHELA AND ADRIAN FINI ARTIST FELLOWSHIP

**Perth, Australia: Sheila Foundation – A Foundation for Women in Visual Art** has announced the awarding of the **2022 Michela and Adrian Fini Artist Fellowship**.

Brisbane-based artist Natalya Hughes has been awarded the Foundation's second Fini Fellowship, an opportunity that will allow her to create a body of new work for her forthcoming solo exhibition *The Interior* at The Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, 30 July – 1 October 2022.

The Michela and Adrian Fini Artist Fellowship is unique in Australia. The Fellowship supports the development of new work by contemporary wom\*n practitioners at a critical juncture of their career, whether they be emerging, mid-career or senior artists, and assists in the presentation and documentation of the work at contemporary art spaces within the national Contemporary Art Organisations Australia (CAOA) network.

The Fellowship was established through the generosity of Sheila Foundation board member Michela Fini and her husband Adrian, and is awarded annually over three years, to provide vital support to wom\*n artists and contemporary arts institutions around Australia.

Michela and Adrian felt it was particularly important to launch the Fellowship at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic had made the situation for the visual arts especially challenging, and the support for female artists, and spaces for them to show in, even more crucial. This situation has been compounded in 2021, as extended lockdowns have wreaked havoc on both the commercial and museum sectors. As projects have been cancelled or delayed, contemporary wom\*n artists need support more than ever, given the likely added burden of home schooling and caring responsibilities, and their impact on their creative practice.

"It was important to Adrian and I that we created something significant", says Michela Fini, "something that provides a much-needed opportunity in the Australian arts sector. The Fellowship is designed to make a real and practical difference to both artists and contemporary art spaces", she said.

Chair of CAO, Alexie Glass-Kantor said the organisation recognised the vision of Sheila as pioneering equity and representation in the arts through the commissioning and development of new work.

"The Sheila Foundation's Michela and Adrian Fini Artist Fellowship is a tremendous initiative that supports women artists to create ambitious new works that are foundational to the future directions of their practices. By supporting a solo exhibition at a highly-regarded Australian contemporary art space, this Fellowship enables leading women artists to connect with new

audiences and develop career-defining works. The Sheila Foundation's important advocacy of women artists is exemplified in this visionary program, which offers a substantial and significant investment that recognises their remarkable contribution to the field of contemporary art. We warmly congratulate Natalya Hughes as the recipient and everyone involved in this impactful initiative.”

Fini Fellowship recipient Natalya Hughes is one of Australia’s most exciting mid-career artists. Her new project, *The Interior*, will be an immersive full-gallery installation that draws on mid-century aesthetics and psychoanalytic theory to create an alternative space for the “talking cure”. Utilising the trope of Freud’s couch and the way it echoes into the contemporary quasi-domestic setting of the therapist’s office, Hughes will recreate her own interpretation of the treatment-space using sculptural and décor elements whose scale has been manipulated and made strange.

Bodily, compelling, but ultimately estranging *The Interior* will create an alternative space for the “talking cure” and an experience that emphasises the bodies of its participants through object and interaction. The work is motivated by a desire to explore what kind of new dialogue might be produced and what new relationships might be facilitated by taking on ‘the problem of women’ in a contemporary context. By placing the female form at the centre of the installation Hughes hopes to induce timely discussion around ‘the problem of women’ stemming from their historical fixing as object as opposed to subject, and the unease which persists around female agency in the contemporary #metoo moment.

On receiving the Fellowship, Natalya Hughes said,

“I’m so grateful to receive the 2022 Michela and Adrian Fini Fellowship. It will allow me to work in ways that are both more ambitious and more embracing of the risks and challenges that experimentation pose. It’s so important to have that push to go further as an artist, and especially as female artist at this stage in my career”.

Brisbane’s Institute of Modern Art will be the second CAOFA partner to host the fellowship. IMA Director Liz Nowell commented,

“Natalya Hughes is an exceptional artist and her immersive exhibition *The Interior* will form a highlight of the IMA’s 2022 Artistic Program. The generous support of the Fini Foundation Fellowship will allow her to experiment with new mediums and think about her work on a large and ambitious scale. *The Interior*’s investigation into domestic and public space, decor and fine art, as well as the so-called ‘problem of women’ will resonate strongly with audiences – we are excited to see this project take shape.”

The inaugural Michela and Adrian Fini Fellowship was awarded to Sydney-based artist Salote Tawale, whose exhibition *I don’t see colour* was recently premiered at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (PICA), to great success.

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## **ABOUT NATALYA HUGHES**

Natalya Hughes' practice is concerned with decorative and ornamental traditions and their associations with the feminine, the body and excess. Recent bodies of work investigate the relationship between Modernist painters and their anonymous women subjects.

Hughes won the Sunshine Coast Art Prize in 2020 and was a finalist in both the Sulman Prize at Art Gallery of NSW and the National Works on Paper Prize at Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery in 2018, as well as the 2017 Ramsay Art Prize at Art Gallery of South Australia. Her work has been included in institutional exhibitions at Queensland Art Gallery| Gallery of Modern Art (2019, 2017 and 2012), Artspace, Sydney (2016), Hazelhurst Regional Gallery (2015), the Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne (2009) and Tarrawarra Museum of Art, Victoria (2006).

Hughes completed a Bachelor of Visual Arts at the Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane in 2001 and a PhD in Art Theory at the College of Fine Art (UNSW) in 2009. She currently lives in Brisbane and lectures in Fine Art and Expanded Practice at the Queensland College of Art. She is represented by Milani Gallery, Brisbane and Sullivan + Strumpf, Sydney.

## **ABOUT SHEILA**

<https://sheila.org.au/>

Sheila is a national philanthropic foundation with a mission to overturn decades of gender bias by writing Australian women artists back into our art history and ensuring equality for today's women artists.

Sheila will have succeeded when a visit to a state or national gallery shows equally the art, lives, stories and ideas of women and men, when students learn about our great women artists in equal measure to the great male artists, and when the women graduates from our art schools are equally represented in the art community.

Sheila has three strategic focus areas:

- Contemporary Women – Providing opportunities and support for contemporary Australian women artists.
- Into the Light – Painting women back into Australia's art history.
- Going Global – Supporting the unique Cruthers Collection of Women's Art, the largest stand-alone collection of Australian women's art.

The foundation is named after Lady Sheila Cruthers, a trailblazer in supporting and collecting Australian women artists. Sheila Foundation honours Lady Sheila in name, and in mission.