

MEDIA RELEASE

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Melbourne Photographer wins NSM Basil Sellers Creative Arts Fellowship

The National Sports Museum (NSM) at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) is thrilled to announce Melbourne artist Ponch Hawkes as the winner of the biennial NSM Basil Sellers Creative Arts Fellowship 2011 – 2012.

The talented freelance photographer was selected from a small pool of applicants, who were all finalists in the acclaimed 2010 Basil Sellers Art Prize (held every second year at the Ian Potter Museum of Art, University of Melbourne).

The Fellowship, which began in 2009 and is awarded biennially (alternating with the Basil Sellers Art Prize), funds the presence of contemporary art practice within the NSM and the MCG and is designed to increase public appreciation and understanding of Australia's sporting heritage.

The initiative is supported by well known philanthropist and sports fan, Basil Sellers, through a financial contribution of \$250,000 (to fund five, two-year cycles at \$50,000 each) and his personal passion for bringing art and sport together.

As part of the application process, the selected candidates were invited to make a submission to the NSM to undertake the creative arts fellowship. Ponch Hawkes impressed the selection panel, made up of representatives from the NSM, MCG Trust and curators from the visual arts sector, with her concept of a photographic exploration of love in sport.

Through her Fellowship, Ponch will be able to draw on inspiration from the nine permanent exhibitions at the NSM to bring her concept to life. "It's a dream job for an artist who is a sports nut, not quite like winning the second Grand Final, but close!" she said.

"I am excited and honoured to be awarded the Fellowship. Over the coming months, I will explore the various kinds of love that circulate within the pyramid of sport, which has the elite athlete at the pinnacle. I hope that my completed works will offer a fresh perspective on the philosophical ideas of love in sport."

The Melbourne-based photographer has a decorated career which has seen her work published widely in Australian books, magazines and newspapers and showcased around the country through 18 solo exhibitions. Her photographs are included in many collections including the National Gallery of Australia.

Ponch is no stranger to integrating sport and art, as seen in her previous work about marathon runners, water polo players and circus performers and is looking forward to exploring this further with her residency at the NSM.

Margaret Birtley, General Manager of the National Sports Museum, is excited to welcome such a celebrated artist to the Fellowship. “We look forward to sharing our resources with Ponch and to helping her explore ideas about the love of sport, including the dedication of the volunteers and family members who help make great achievements possible”, she said.

As part of her 12-month Fellowship, which commences in mid-2011, Ponch will take part in education programs and talks and will also have access to sportsmen and women through the NSM network. She anticipates completing new artworks during the Fellowship and hopes to display these at the NSM and MCG for visitors to enjoy.

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