>> Hello everyone.  Thank you for joining us today for the amazing 2021 WWDA LEAD art prize award ceremony.  I'm Mali a policy and project officer at Women with Disabilities Australia.  I'd like to start with some housekeeping.  So for tonight's webinar you will see there are a few different options for viewing and listening, you will see at times we have different screen options.  One is a closed caption option.  If you like you can click on this and this can be your main viewing screen.  If you click on the speaker view screen this will be your main viewing screen.  We also have an Auslan interpreter.  If you require this you can make the screen bigger by clicking on the interpreter.  If you click on the start icon at the start of the screen it should take you back to the all screen view.  If at any stage you have a question or need support with these features please click on the information icon for assistance.  Beside that icon is a speech bubble icon for you to ask questions for our judges and winners tonight during our Q&A at the end of the award ceremony.  You can send through questions any time and we'll be answering these later on.  This evening's webcast is being recorded and in the unlikely event that technical issues arise, although we are in lockdown, anything could happen, it will be available to view later today using the same link.  Now, I would like to introduce Aunty involve from the metropolitan local Aboriginal land council to give a welcome to country.

     >> Thank you Mali.  Good evening.  My name is Yvonne I'm a sovereign woman and I come from the waters of the Lachlan and Murrumbidgee rivers.  I am the elected person of the metropolitan land council who are the authority for the land I am on.  I pay my represents to elders past and present, to all First Nations and to you and the ancestors land you are on.  A welcome to country is an age old tradition, it's not just words, a spiritual process, continuing the practice of the generations before us to the many generations to come.  Our boundaries are written into the earth's natural landscapes, the boundaries of the Nepean and the George's river in the south.  On behalf of the Aboriginal land council and the elders and members I welcome and acknowledge the Gadigal people and the people of the lands you are on whose ancestors remain with these lands or mother earth.  Across this beautiful continent of ours we represent hundreds of tribes and clandestine that have existed for so many years, as we are all joined on‑line, let us all remember and acknowledge the many warriors that created pathways for all of us, the ones recognised and the ones we have never heard of.  People have always listened and learned from each other, the environment animals, elements, and our ancestors.  We don't live in isolation of body, culture, spirit land and water because we are one.  We need to reflect upon the footsteps we are leaving to know where we are heading, shaping a society a country we can be proud of.  Traditionally Aboriginal people lived our art through en  graving and painting, dance, song and spoken words.  Originally for our families and clans, now it's done through many different mediums, canvas, convenience and so much more.  As we move through the changes from our world to yours to become ours together it's important to keep art alive.  Not just because it should be seen, but letting the creativity enrich us in ways that our souls need it.  And in these times, the pandemic, with the social distance make us socially absent we need to maintain our physical distancing but not creating barriers to our social connections, so whether it's art work or network, creating an inclusion, an acceptance and a resilience.  All of us together can bring about positive changes to multiple generations because we are in this together.  As we ponder over important milestones and changes in our lives and world think about the difference you are making today.  That will become the milestones of our future.  Through your nominations of these awards or through your continued connection to each and every one of us.  Let us all draw upon my people's spirits as we continue on our journey.  May my people's spirits walk with you and guide you as we strive forward for us all.  Again on behalf of the metropolitan local Aboriginal land council, welcome to Gadigal land.  This always was, always will be Aboriginal land.  Congratulations on sharing your art, your talents speak to us through your creative language, thank you, I'm so proud of you, have a wonderful evening.

     >> Thank you, Aunty Yvonne, we are always grateful to have you join us for our webinars.  Thank you for the big congratulations to the winners we'll be announcing tonight.  I think it is a great observation that during what is a very challenging time for our community as disabled people and in particular disabled women and none binary folks, having art to hold on to as a form of connection during a very big period of isolation is very important.  So we are very happy we got to facilitate the WWDA LEAD art prize during what has undoubtedly been a very chaotic year.  So I would like to acknowledge that I am presenting tonight from Ngunnawal and Ngambri land and I pay my respects to elders and ancestors of this country, it always was and always will be Aboriginal land.  Before I dive into everything I also would like to give a little visual description of what I look like, so tonight I am wearing a pink jumper and wearing some beautiful dark pink and light pink woven hoop earrings.  I have pale skin, I wear wire frame glasses and I have shoulder length brown hair.  So I know everyone is here tonight to hear about our wonderful winners, but before we dive in, I thought I would just give everyone an overview of how the art prize came to be as well as how the WWDA LEAD program came to be.  In 2020 Women with Disabilities Australia received an information and capacity building grant otherwise known as and ILC grant from the department of social services for girls and women with disability.  Lead engage, activate and drive.  We listened to our community and knew members wanted an opportunity to show case their art, acknowledging that a lot of the time art competitions and in particular exhibitions aren't accessible for our community.  So international women's day we launched the WWDA LEAD art prize.  We wanted to encourage our community of women, girls, feminine identifying and non‑binary people to submit their art work on the theme we can all be leaders in a variety of accessible and creative formats.  We are so pleased to announce we had an overwhelming response.  We received over 112 entries from all states and territories across the country including regional remote and rural areas.  So without further ado, I will introduce our wonderful judge Larissa MacFarlane to introduce a highly commended entrants as well as announce the runner up and winner of the over 18s category.  She is a visual artist and disability activist in Melbourne on the lands of the Kulin Nation.  They work across the print making street art and community art practice.  She identifies as a proud queer disabled artist using she and they pronounce and uses their experience of a 22‑year‑old brain injury so investigate disabled culture, community, identity and pride.  Larissa's also informed by the fast changing urban industrial landscapes of Melbourne's west.  So investigate ideas of belonging place healing and change.  Larissa currently sits on the board of arts access Australia as well as on several arts and disability advisory committees, speaks on panels and delivers arts workshops and advocacy training.  We are excited to have her here tonight so I will hand over to Larissa.

     >> I think you may be on mute, Larissa.

     >> Hello.  Yes, I was on mute.  Great start.  I'm just going to start by visually describing myself.  I am a white woman, wearing pink and a colourful head band, with some, my dread locks trying to stick out the top which are getting lost in the blurred background and I'm wearing prescription glasses that look like sunglasses and a colourful scarf.  I am coming to you from the lands of the Boon Wurrung people who are one of the five clans of the grates Kulin Nation which is the country that Melbourne is on.  And I pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging.  I also want to give thanks to the disabled Act visits and self-advocates who fought for the rights of disabled people over years and generations who have led to us been here today and me being here today and especially I've been looking into the disabled women of the 1970s and 80s in Australia and some amazing women that led to the formation of Women with Disabilities Australia.  I also want to thank WWDA for initiating this inaugural award and also all the staff at WWDA, especially Mali, for all their hard work.  It's a big, it's not an easy thing to put on an art prize, especially on‑line, and especially during COVID.  And I also want to thank WWDA for acknowledging the role of art in the lives of disabled people and the role of art in disability activism.  Thanks for the great intro, I hardly plead to say anything except that as a visual artist and also as a disability activist, I obviously the art plays a really important part in my work.  And yeah, I've been working with my community here in Melbourne with self-advocates particularly in the self‑advocacy community for the last two decades.  And a lot of my work has been around in more recently has been exploring disability pride.  Because I see that disability pride is our greatest weapon against ableism.  But I'm really interested in using the language of disability and disabled, because it gives us power, and not just gives us power, it also enables us to connect with our community, and connect with our culture.  Because disability culture is a real thing, and it's a big thing, and it's deep.  And it's endless, and it's a great thing to explore, and we can do that when we identify and we start thinking about disability pride.  So that's why I really want to say I am so proud of all the women and girls and non‑binary folks who have entered this art prize because I want to thank you for showing your pride and for exploring your disability and the way disability works in your life and your community.  And thank you.  Look, there's so many amazing art, all the art works are amazing.  It's been quite a job as a judge, as Mali said there's over 100 entries, and it's been an absolute honour to be a judge of this award.  And I also an honour to share the judging with my sister judge Fiona Hamilton, such an amazing honour and also with Malaika as well for a short time.  The judging process was quite extensive, and we had three main criteria, which I'll share with you that we used to look at each work and judge that, and the first criteria was creativity and originality, the second was the interpretation of the theme, and as Mali said the theme is we can all be leaders.  And the third criteria was a combination of the quality of artistic  composition, the overall design and the overall impression, and we had quite a task.  So now I want to announce the highly commended.  I'm going to run through these quite quickly, and we don't have images for this work but I encourage you to go and look at the website and check these out.  I just want to say congratulations to all these highly commended winners, in no particular order, Rebecca Newell for her work leading together.  Casey Gray for Desert Dive, this is really hard because I want to make comments about all of them but we don't have the time.  Feris Knight for a seat at the table.  Elizabeth Meldrum for the ballerina, Fiona McIntosh for You Shape Us, Taki Sims for behind the mask, Anna Angel for meet me at the gates, and Kim Simpson for life isn't always in black and white.  Now, I would like to announce the second prize for the over 18s.  And this goes to Tracey McGeehan for my way.  I'm not sure if we get a slide for in a, but I just want congratulations Tracey, this work was, we both really loved this small painting, it depicts two disabled children and an apple tree and one is climbing the tree with their walking crutches at the base of the tree, and another is supporting the other child is supporting the first child in their wheelchair.  And we just love the simplicity of this art work, and the way it depicts joy and hope and possibility.  And it very much addresses the theme and we really appreciated the words that Tracey has written as well.  For me, I really felt that it demonstrates that leadership doesn't have to be in a hierarchy, and that leadership works best when we work together.  And the winner, the grand winner of this inaugural art prize goes to Marla Bishop and Sam Makin for their work beyond invisibility.  This is a beautiful art work, it's strong and it's proud, we love the creative use of flowers in the model, and what makes this really so strong is the use of the hand drawn element in combination with the more precise medium of photography, this combination or juxtaposition to be fancy, it really sort of identifies the ways that certain experiences and identities are often hidden, and this work effectively gives a presence to those invisible stories.  So huge congratulations.  To Marla and Sam.  I think with that I'm going to pass on to the next person.  Which I think is Marla.

     >> Hello, it is me again.  Fooled you, no.  Thank you so much Larissa for announcing those wonderful winners, and I'm very pleased to share that we have Marla Bishop here tonight to speak to us a little bit about their practice and art work.  So Marla Bishop is an A gender disabled photographer based in Perth Western Australia.  Aims to celebrate the voiceless through their art work, work with people from the LGBTQIA+ community to promote visibility and awareness of those who are marginalised within society.  Marla's work also stems into plus sized and disabled models in order to give opportunities to those who may not receive them to become a work of art and have their stories told in visually expressive way.  The purpose of their art is to allow people from marginalised group to be seen and heard and give them the power to be seen authentically.  It's my absolute pleasure to hand over to Marla, our overall winner for the over 18s category for the WWDA LEAD art prize.

     >> Has it changed, or am I just not ‑ hi everyone, just a quick image description.  I am a white person, with a very curly copper mullet right now, my eyebrows and eye lashes are painted white and I have a ridiculous amount of blush err on and wearing a very frilly white floral dress.  I would also like to acknowledge that I'm calling in right now from Whadjuk Nyoongar in Western Australia and speak on behalf of the artist, Frankie who resides in Adelaide.  We did talk a little bit about my description but also with the help of Frankie we are now starting the journey into the realm of mixed medium portrait tour.  They have said I'm a con I cannily ill A gender from Adelaide working in the realm of media.  I met Marla ... where Marla won first prize and flew over to receive in Adelaide.  We are the designer for the calendar and will be both judges in this year's competition.  I also have an artist statement from both of us, which will probably take up most of my time.  We'll start with my perspective for the photograph element because Frankie did the illustrative element.  So it was basically about my fibromyalgia, like many chronic illnesses not taken seriously due to their invisibility.  It shows us 930 (reading) by society prejudices still remain, through my photographic art and illustrative works A gender Adelaide artist I would like to validate the struggles of those who live with invisible illnesses to break through the historical ignorance of the medical system and promote awareness.  From Frankie's perspective, we have a shared history of the chronic pain, and know the struggles of being a young healthy appearing person in society.  I wanted my illustration to portray the anxiety fear and pain that hides behind the well-constructed social mask we wear on a daily base.  We have also gone into the intricacies of the work because there are a quite a few different poses, so it was quite interesting to actually hear what they used to express it because it was done quite quickly.  So the heart the anxiety and the pain caused palpitations all I can focus on is the feeling of my heart beating in my chest, my head, whatever joined is in today, it's all encompassing, echoes through my bones makes focussing on anything external so hard.  That leads on to the blind folded figure unable to see anything beyond their own self.  It gives a sense of derealisation.  To try and escape from the pain.  Is this my body, is this all it is.  It's holding the face, feeling it, making sure you're still present in your own skin.  The screaming and crying is pretty obvious, a hundred per cent what you feel like doing at all times during a flare up but can't.  The feeling of looking at a kid screaming in public and being like dam, I wish it was acceptable for me to it that without taking a seat on the train and getting an earful from a person who thinks you take someone else's space. ... this isn't what's real, this is there for the public face, for everyone's expectations.  So I would like to sign off by thank you so much for choosing our art work as the winner, we are honoured and love that these pieces are celebrated an an organisation that celebrates disabled artist, and open dollars to take up space in the artistic  world with disability advocacy art works.  So that's all.

     >> Thank you so much, Marla.  That was beautiful.  I really appreciated hearing more about your work.  As a fellow chronically ill person I can totally relate to the internal monologue and struggle that you have with physically being disabled by pain and illness.  But not I guess visibly presenting that way and not having that pain and illness acknowledged.  It's wonderful to, yeah, have those feelings validated and expressed in art work like yours.  So I think I will pass on to another one of our amazing judges to announce the runner up and winner of under 18s category.  So Fiona Hamilton, is a woman of the Tasmania Aboriginal First Nations people, respected advocate for Aboriginal women in economic development arts family violence prevention culture heritage senior level.  We are so lucky to have Fiona here with us tonight, so I will pass on to the wonderful Fiona.

     >> What an honour to be here, my name is Fiona Hamilton.  I am coming to you live and deadly from my lands in lutruwita Trowunna as Mali said that wonderful warm welcome, always was always will be our lands.  I want to pay my respect to any First Nations people watching tonight from across our lands, all around this country, and I want to give a brief description of what I am wearing tonight.  I'm wearing a black top, I am a fair skinned Aboriginal woman, I have long kind of wonky wavy crazy brown hair, and I am wearing black rimmed glasses and a very long traditional Tasmania an Aboriginal shell necklace made of white black shells and I remember DSS ENT purple and green shells.  I want to say what an absolute honour it is and I wanted to thank Larissa who gave just a wonderful, I guess entrance into really what this art award is all about.  And how critical it is for in particular our young artists to have opportunities and supported opportunities to not just have a voice but to make work and to present work and to not just talk about, but talk to the world around us.  I've been making art for, gee, it would have to be 30 years, and I've been doing that in all sorts of ways.  Sometimes making my own work, and that incorporates a lot of traditional Tasmanian Aboriginal practices, that I like to turn on their head and use in new ways, and sometimes I'm writing, sometimes I'm culturally producing and sometimes I'm working with remote Aboriginal art centres in particular to support other are artists to make their work and within those art centres I have had the honour and privilege to work with many of the country’s best First Nations artists, and when I reflect on the diversity of artists and particularly First Nations artists I have had the honour to work with it's a very humbling experience and I guess I can only liken that to what a humbling experience it's been to work with the other judges to try and select winners from what is just a stellar array of art work that's been submitted for this art prize, for an inaugural art prize, it's quite overwhelming really to see how many people have entered.  Have we swapped?  Now, we're still going.

     >> Still going.

     >> Okay.  I just wanted to talk a little bit about pathway for young artists before I get to announcing our runner up and winner of the Under 18s category.  When I was young, as a neurodivergent young woman, one of the ways that I found to be able to give voice to the things that I felt that I could see and notice about the world that nobody else seemed to, was to make art.  And that made it all right.  And it made it all right to be different, and to be an outsider, and to sometimes have people kind of look at you a little strangely whenever you opened your mouth and talk about the things that sometimes other people won't talk about.  And as I made more art I felt better about myself and felt better about moving through the world and I felt stronger and I felt like I had a voice.  And as I've become older and my practice as an artist has developed I realised that we have to make it easier for young people to make art and we have to make it easier for young women and young non‑binary people to have access to opportunities to make art and to have valuable platforms like this, so I just want to really thank WWDA for really instigating this art award.  It's incredibly important and I really hope it continues in the future.  And without further ado, I guess I'd like to announce our runner up in the, Under 18s category.  Some exciting.  So our runner up is Madeline Lowe for her just staggering art work invisible battles, which is such a beautiful clear concise and vibrant work, and Larissa and I just fell in love with this art work, and we were like, we're not worthy.  It really just is such a delightful, strong and very well-articulated art work, the medium is beautiful, the use of colour is beautiful, and you know, Madeline we are extremely proud of you, that's a great piece, and I have to talk to you later on about whether I can buy it.  Our winner tonight, this was so tough, I'm going to have a bit of a suspenseful moment, this was so so tough, to choose between these two art works, but our winner tonight is leading with vision by Jennaveve Mulherin.  I thought, I mean I'm sure that Larissa has other thoughts about this art work, but I thought you know, the artist's statement about this work was just so beautifully articulated to the theme.  And it just really captured that idea that leadership is about differing perspectives.  And about kind of seeing the world continually from different positions and different perspectives.  And I loved the idea of using different styles of mediums in one work, it was just beautiful.  So congratulations to Madeline Lowe for Invisible Battles as our runner up and Jennaveve Mulherin as our winner for Leading with Vision.  Thank you.

     >> Thank you so much Fiona.  What a pleasure it has been to have you as one of our judges.  I looked at all the entries and I just could not have judged this category.  It's too amazing.  Unfortunately, Jennaveve can't be here with us tonight but it's my absolute pleasure to introduce you to our runner up of the Under 18s category, Madeline Lowe.  So Madeline Lowe is a 17‑year‑old artist living with Tourette's syndrome, ADHD, OCD trichotillomania and PTSD.  Had a passion for creating art and telling stories a desire to share her ideas with the world being one of Madeline's inspirations in life.  Enjoys animating creating digital art and water colour paintings, lives in Tasmania with her loving family and pet frogs, I will hand over to Madeline.

     >> Thank you very much.  I'd like to say thank you to Fiona, you're a lovely judge and I really appreciate your kind words about my art work, it really means a lot.  I'd also like to pay my respects to the native Aboriginal people past present and future.  I'll just do a quick audio description.  I'm a fair skinned woman with long brown hair and I'm wearing a multi‑coloured T‑shirt with diamonds and stripes on it.  So a bit about me.  I'm currently being home schooled which has significantly helped me with my learning disabilities, and it's far easier for me to concentrate because it's very difficult with my ADHD when there's lots of people talking, and also I'm with people, I've now got really good friends who are nice and not judgement Al about my Tourette's, and other things.  I've also got a lot more time to work on projects I'm very passionate about, and ever since I could hold a pencil incorrectly I have had a passion for expressing my thoughts and feelings through the medium of art and enjoy writing stories and creating animations.  I have recently Al novel called Planet Alterra, it's very shiny, it's got a blue character who is a fish, it's hard to see, there's a very dark green shadow of a cat.  I really enjoy doing the art work for it and I also wrote the book with my friend, we both have ADHD so we could help each other if one of us got distracted or ran out of steam we'd switch our devices and work on different chapters.  We have self-published it and proven it doesn't matter if you have disadvantages everybody can create something beautiful from the heart and we can help each other, and our friends over our daily battles, as well as me and my sister my mum also struggles with invisible battles, she has to deal with them every day but never stops her from being a loving strong single parent who takes care of two children with special needs.  She means the world to me and my sister so when I heard that Women with Disabilities Australia organisation was doing art contest I instantly knew who I was going to draw.  When people hear the world disability hour minds tends to go towards more obvious disabilities we can see but most of my friends and a lot of my family have invisible daily struggles, so my art piece is titled invisible battles and it's a drawing of my mum and the colour of the flowers represent her different internal disabilities, and this piece is dedicated not only to my mum, but to everyone who has their own daily invisible struggles.  Just a reminder that you are powerful and you are loved.  Thank you.

     >> Thank you so much Madeline.  We will now be going to a break.  We will be back in around 7 minutes, but until then you can watch a wonderful slide show of all the amazing entries that we received.  So if you need to go to the toilet, grab a cuppa, some dinner, now is the time.

     (Short break).

     >> Hello everyone.  Welcome back from that short break.  We hope it gave you the opportunity to go to the toilet, maybe get a cuppa.  Most importantly to get a taste of all the amazing entries that we received as part of the WWDA LEAD art prize this year.  There were drawings acrylic paintings, videos, photography, I'm just astounded by the level of talent in our community.  Also very sad that I do not seem to be talented in any of these aspects.  But I will now pass over to a very special guest, who is an expert in this field I guess of accessible arts.  And was very kind enough to donate a prize for our People's Choice awards winner.  So Liz Martin is one of New South Wales leading specialists in disability related access and inclusion for the arts and cultural sector and has over 20 years of experience working within the arts and disability sector as a musician producer trainer and advocate.  Liz currently works as accessible arts development and training manager, and in this role Liz provides training and consulting services to a broad range of arts organisations across New South Wales.  For major companies such as Sydney festival, museum of applied arts and sciences and Sydney by annual to small independent operators.  Liz is also Deputy Chair of arts access Australia, a member of Sydney festival's access and inclusion advisory panel and active leader within the arts and disability community.  It's my absolute pleasure to hand over to Liz to tell us a bit more about accessible arts New South Wales and also introduce an announce the runner up and winner of our People's Choice award category.

     >> Hello everyone.  I am dialling in from Gadigal land of the Eora Nation and would like to pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging.  What can I tell you, I have an over grown haircut, like a mullet, I guess you would say, I'm wearing a large fluffy blue scarf and a blue sweat shirt and sitting in lockdown in my small flat in Sydney.  My name is Liz Martin, I'm the arts development and training manager at accessible arts, also I'm a musician and huge lover of all things arts and culture.  I also identify as a queer person with disability.  I'd like to say thank you to Mali and the wonderful team at WWDA for inviting accessible arts to be involved today.  If you don't know us, accessible arts is the peak arts and disability organisation in New South Wales.  We were established in 1986, we work with and for our community to accelerate and celebrate the diverse professional cultural and social impacts of arts and disability in New South Wales.  Our mission is to advance the rights of and opportunities for people with disability, and/or who are deaf to develop and sustain professional careers in the arts and have equitable access to arts and culture across New South Wales.  Our vision is equity and excellence in arts culture and disability.  We provide a range of programs and services which focus on career advancement, audience development and community engagement for arts practitioners and audiences with disability including things like creative initiatives, intern ships mentor ships and artist residency, professional development workshops, industry advocacy community forums not working events and advisory services.  We know through research done by Australia council for the arts artists with disability earn on average 42 per cent less than artists without disability.  We are doing everything we can to create an equal playing field for artists and audiences with disability.  If you haven't come across accessible arts before, or even if you know of us, you've heard of us, check out our website, follow us on social media platforms, keep track what we are doing, what we are up to, what opportunities there might be for you to join one of our programs or get involved with accessible arts.  We are a super small team but we're very friendly and keen to connect.  So yeah, do get in touch.  It's our great honour today to be sponsoring the People's Choice an award, it's a prize that's close to my heart.  The winner of the prize of the People's Choice award will be eligible for up to $300 worth of training which can be used to complete our training packages which include disability confidence training, our accessible, being accessible on‑line training and our accessible marketing and communications training.  Each of the training packages have a very arts solutions focus, so there's loads of opportunities for really practical learning in that space.  So it is my absolute pleasure to announce the runner up for the People's Choice award for their work, lady 1955, a huge congratulations to Rebecca and now it is my honour to announce the People's Choice winner for their work rainbow Rozetta, a massive congratulations to Leonie Donohue.  I'll pass over to Mali.  Thank you.

     >> Thank you Liz, thank you again to accessible arts for your very generous sponsorship and donation, I'm sure Leonie will very much enjoy the training that they will be able to access now.  I will pass over to the wonderful Leonie Donohue who is here to join us.  Diagnosed with primary progressive MS in 2017, after 20 years of misdiagnosis.  Due to being immunosuppressed doesn't leave the house a great deal and has a huge amounts of free time.  Started crocheting around 15 months ago to help manage her pain and keep dexterity in her hands.  I must say for someone who only started crocheting 15 months ago, rainbow Rozetta is an incredible piece of art.  I'll pass over to Leonie.

     >> I always say to everybody, I'm a little bit special so you've got to be just be tolerant with me because it takes me a while to get the hang of things.  Thank you everybody for that.  I would like to give a visual of my appearance.  I have short silver hair and I've got black glasses on, and I've got a green shirt on, and I would also like to pay my respects to the elders past present and future.  I'm really, really thank for everybody that went out of their way to vote for me, it's been a hard journey, it's a hard journey for people living with disability, it doesn't matter what your disability is, but it's definitely a hard journey for all of us that do live with disabilities, I found that I needed something to help me manage my pain, I do live with chronic pain also due to fibromyalgia, I have chronic pain in both hands and feet, I'm very limited with what I can and can't do.  So I decided to start‑up crocheting because I thought that would help me with the pain in my hands.  And I picked it up quite quickly.  The Rozetta is something that I made that shows the dark side of my disability and also the light side of my disability.  So it is, there is black and then is very colourful, it's a big colourful flower like someone coming out of themselves, shows me coming out of, living the way that I have to live with chronic pain, and this disability.  And also it reminds people of a glass stained window in a church, that's what it looks like.  It took me around six weeks to do the Rozetta cow, and I did it all day every day, it's become a bit of an addiction crochet, it's something I do from the time I wake up to the time I lay my head on the pillow, but it also helps me bring happiness to other people.  I don't do it to sell it I actually do it to give away as gifts to people that I love, so every blanket and every piece of art work that I do is different, and none are the same, and it's brings happiness to other people.  When I bring happiness to other people it in turn brings me happiness.  It's been a long journey.  But I'm really grateful to be here today and I want to say thank you to everybody that's put this together.  It's the first art show I've actually ever entered, all my family have been on my back for about 12 months, you should enter that, you should enter that, what is wrong, put it in the Easter show, or, I'm like I don't know how to do those things, but I was on Facebook and I come across WWDA and I was like, oh, my God, I think I was meant to put my art work in this show, how fantastic is this.  I can actually find like‑minded women that understand the daily struggles that we go through and how art can, we can express ourselves by doing this art, and also bring happiness to other people.  So I'm really grateful for everybody that has put this together.  I'm grateful for people that voted, and also all the judges and thank you very much for everything.  Thank you.

     >> Thank you Leonie.  So happy that you have found the WWDA community, and found a community of like‑minded people, and I think that is exactly what we want the WWDA LEAD art prize to be, to be a space for disabled women, feminine identifying and non‑binary folks to express themselves through art and have the community around us understand and relate and most importantly I think feel validated by the leadership of other people in our community.  So that concludes the announcement section of this evening's webinar, but we are really excited to now transition into a Q&A with all of our wonderful winners as well as our wonderful judges.  So I will invite Fiona, Larissa, Marla, Leonie and Madeline as well as the wonderful Liz Martin to join me now for a Q&A, as a reminder, besides the little information icon at the bottom of your screen, there is a speech bubble icon for you to ask any questions you may have for our judges an winners tonight during our Q&A.  Rest assured I will get them and we have more than enough time to ask and find out what about these incredible people's art practice, so I think to kick us off, I wanted to ask you, Marla, how does art allow you to express yourself differently, I guess to speaking in words or written language.

     >> I would say being able to visually express how I feel was a big part of that piece.  Where for a lot of my life I've been treated as if I'm not disabled enough, because I don't look the way people perceive disability to be.  So it's nice to be able to give that opportunity to other people to have their stories told, if they have been invalidated or not been listened to or on had their voices silenced, I find it's a lot easier for people to relate to the art, they can visually see what another person is experiencing rather than just writing about it, but usually I do get my models to write something to go along with the piece, so you have as much context as possible.

     >> Brilliant.  Leonie, what about you?  You said that crocheting was for you a very physical activity to try and manage and mitigate pain, and I guess that's something that you didn't use words or language for.  How do you think art, I guess, allows you to express yourself differently?

     >> I think that it's for me, you see, I have over 60 lesions in my brain so I'm losing my memory much like Alzheimer's but worse, so for me I needed something that was going to keep my mind aware and alert, and every little stitch with crochet, every single different stitch can be have intricate which means I'm using parts of my brain that I need to keep going, not lose it, because I am losing my ability to talk, my ability to think, and this is some unfortunately what happens with people with primary progressive MS so I needed something that was going to help me sort of keep a little bit of that memory going, and keeping the little tiny stitches, every little stitch is a thought, it's me having to think about how I am going to do that, and how it looks once I'm finished with it all as well.

     >> Brilliant.  It's such a beautiful skill to be borne out of pain.  I wish that, yeah, I wish that I was a fraction as talented as you, Leonie.

     >> At the end of the day I have a tried everything for pain management.  I'm permanently on morphine, it's my life, you know, I'm on a lot of painkillers and no amount of painkillers will ever get rid of my pain because it's all neurological pain that I get, so I needed, I've tried self‑awareness, meditation, I've gone through all of those sorts of things to try and manage my pain, and I just haven't found anything that really truly gets rid of it.  So I wanted to find something where I had to really concentrate and that way I'm not always thinking about the pain.  I'm thinking about the next stitch I'm going to make, I have to count, okay, I've just counted 200 stitches and when I'm counting I'm not thinking about that pain as much.

     >> Absolutely, I can totally understand how that would work.  Madeline, I guess I wanted to ask you this question too because we're asking everyone about how does art allow you to express yourself differently to speaking in words, I guess written language, but I know you showed us the wonderful book that you have written with your friend as well.  I wonder if you could tell us a bit about how you feel you express yourself differently in your digital art compared to your writing.

     >> Well, yeah.  It's very hard to form sentences, to really get across what I'm trying to say, so I like to do it through the medium of storytelling, I take bits and pieces of myself, things that are important to me and experiences, and make them like a whimsical journey and I always loved drawing because I can just express all these bright, you know, nonsensical things happening in my head and put them on paper and it makes it easier for people to understand what I'm thinking.  Yeah, I find it hard to express myself but when I can sit down and think of a story it's very therapeutic and calming to me.

     >> Absolutely.  And I think too that aspect of storytelling that's across both written language as well as art is like incredibly important, and I think I wanted to pass over to you Fiona.  How do you incorporate story telling into your own artistic  practice?

     >> Story telling is incredibly important to First Nations people and it's incredibly important to me.  In my work, I don't work well, and I don't think artists often don't work well if you don't have something to say, if you're not trying to communicate something.  I think the stories that we need to be, you know, telling of ourselves, often don't need interpretation and I think that's the beauty and power of art.  For a long time when I exhibited my work you'd have one of those sort of white cards that is like this is a such and such and here is the size of it, and this is what it's made out of, and here is a little artist statement about what it's about, and I actually stopped doing that, I felt a little time ago, because I realised that the only person that the story of my art work really means anything to is me.  What other people see in your art work is up to them.  And they might see what you've intended, or they may not.  But it kind of doesn't matter because the beauty of the story of art is in the dialogue that it creates, and in the lasting memory of experiencing it, and that's just so important.  So I'm not sure if that answers the question.

     >> I think that more than answers the question.  I love that idea too of what is the dialogue being facilitated by the art and the importance of like, you know, having something to say through art, and I think in particular Larissa you touched on this earlier as disabled people, art is something that we use as a medium to explore what we have to say as disabled folks.  So I wanted to ask you for people who might not be aware, Larissa, was one of the main artists and facilitators of a very big disability pride mural in Footscray, I wonder if you could talk us through that piece of art and the dialogue that you hope and also you saw facilitated through that piece.

     >> Sure.  Yeah, that was a big art work.  I'd like to say first that I came to art through my brain injury, which was 22 years ago, so I didn't actually participate in any visual art before that at all.  And I just found that words weren't, didn't, weren't easy for me, and so visual art became really important.  And yeah, I said before how disability pride is really important to me, because I want us, I want my friends to, the disability pride mural came about because I want my friends to join in in creating a visual representation in space that showed pride in who we are and what happened I suppose was that the making of the work and the relationships we built and the connecting with each other and the conversation was actually the important bit, and the action of making the work, so my medium is paste up, in public space, so a form of street art and it's actually quite simple and accessible, and so that's what we did, we held a paste up party and took a whole day people dropping in and out to paste up images that were important to them on to this wall, so it was sort of a mish‑mash of images at the end, but it encapsulated all these relationships along the way.  And community.  And it kept going, because unfortunately the wall was removed by mistake a week later, so we did it all over again.  And hopefully there will be more in the future.  Larissa, I'm sorry it was removed, but I'm glad that it's back and there will be more in the future.  And I guess would you be able to quickly tell our audience if they wanted to view this work, is there a particular phrase that they should Google to see an image, or?

     >> Good question.  I think that if you Google disability pride and my name, you would come up with a whole lot of images, or Footscray, because it's located in Footscray in Melbourne, and it's still there, it's a bit faded, but you can actually go and visit and see it.

     >> If I'm ever in Nam I will be talking a selfie with it.

     >> And you have to call me so I can come and meet you.

     >> Absolutely.  So Liz I have a few questions for you from the audience.  The first one is wondering what do you suggest for those who do not live in metropolitan areas to access mentors in different art mediums.

     >> Interesting.  Two years ago some things seemed to difficult, and I guess the whole, one great thing, one great thing out of this ridiculous time of COVID and restrictions and all the heartache in it is that for some people, not for everyone, but for some people, the on‑line experience is really great.  And it means you can connect with other artists, and mentors.  I'm not sure which state you're in or territory, but I know that in Western Australia DADA has a fantastic mentor ship problem, I'm pretty sure arts access Victoria has a similar program.  I can see a thumbs up from Larissa, so it's true.  In New South Wales we are talking about it like earlier today, and the day before, so we are on our way to establishing one.  So I would definitely reach out to your local arts and disability body, and there's one of these in nearly every state in Australia, state and territory, you can have a look at the accessible arts website, so if you go AARTS dot net.au, we have a resource page, and on that you will find a whole list of all the state orgs you can contact and also arts access Australia the national body, you can get in contact with them and say I want to connect, I want to get a mentor and hook into the arts and disability community and they will help you find your way.  It's so wonderful to find other people with disability who have a real passion for the arts, and want to make stuff.  And it's one of my favourite places on the planet to communicate with other artists with disability, so there's a whole community out there for you, if you've not connected in with, that you can connect with now.  I hope that helps.

     >> Definitely Liz, I think a nice segue is that we have another question, and I think it touches on what you were saying before, about we are in a very strange time period for disabled people, where we are being made vulnerable by COVID as well as very immense pressures on our healthcare system but at the same time there are a lot of accessibility features for us that are being introduced that our community has been fighting for for years.  So Fiona, I wanted to pass on to you for this one first, is do you have any tips or suggestions for how disabled artists can remain connected to the artist community during current times with lockdowns.

     >> Yeah, absolutely.  Like you just go reach out to other artists, and the beautiful thing about us mob, is that we love to talk about our work, by and large we just love to talk about our work and to exchange ideas, and I really encourage people, especially if you're a bit shy, you know, about your art, or about those conversations, one of the great things I think about social media is, my social media is chockers full of arts friends and all sorts of other people and they'll go can you guys stop talking about art.  We can live such isolated lives and we can face so many struggles, and I guess I have to caution too that the art world is a tough place, it's full of ableism, it's full of struggles, there's a whole heap of gallerists and institutions and still aren't where they need to be for us mob.  And they're getting there, but the more we bang on those doors and the more we present our voice and present our art, we have those dialogues within our disability community, and kind of hook up, and discuss ideas, and discuss collaborations, because I think there's so much strength for us in collaborations as well, it's a beautiful way to make work and exchange ideas and create really complex sort of multi‑layered dialogue.  The more powerful aspect it's going to get, because that's what we are, we are an art sector, and a really important and powerful one, and growing more powerful every day.  But I think absolutely the best way I reckon is to just make something and show it to someone.  That's how you start an art dialogue.

     >> Absolutely.  And Fiona, I think that leads in beautifully to a question that we have about I guess the process of being seen as an artist.  Sandra has said that I'm legally blind and I had my first exhibition earlier on this year.  Congratulations Sandra.  I have been painting for a year and a half, my question is how do you break the ice as people seeing you as a person with a disability rather than seeing an artist.  Leonie I want to pass this on to you.  How have you experienced considering yourself not only as a disabled person with MS but also as a brilliant artist, would you call yourself an artist?

     >> I definitely would.  I know some people don't see crochet as an art, but you can definitely make it as an art.  I like doing graph gowns which is what that Rozetta cow was, so I can make any image into a blanket.  Art is what you make it, you can turn anything into art as long as you have that artistic  flare to be able to do that, I've always been an artistic  person, art was the only subject at school I got an A for, I can tell you that, but I think people can look past the disability, I know not everybody can, but many people that actually appreciate art can look past your disability.  They see the art, and the beauty in what you do.

     >> Thank you, Leonie, Marla I'd be interested to hear your take on this question, because I know through your artist statement and bio that in particular you've wanted people to acknowledge you as specifically a disabled artist.  And kind of look at the way your work is informed by disability.  So I guess how do you break the ice of people seeing you as a person with a disability rather than just seeing an artist.

     >> It's always been quite difficult just because I don't look the way that people perceive disability to look, so I'm often pushed to do more things if I get commissions, I'm expected to do a lot more because I'm quite good at articulating myself, I manage everything, I sometimes have to tell people and remind them that I'm a disabled person, I can't do everything they want me to do, I'm on a disability support pension so I can't pay for everything they want me to do as well.  And it seems like it's always a shock to them as well, and it's frustrating because it is a big part of who I am and my life experience, and all I really can do is help other people be seen through my work and be shown in a way that is authentic to them, and they don't really have to keep saying it over and over again, they've just got a picture and say this is me.  So that's really hopefully that answered the question.  But yeah.

     >> I hope so.  Yes, although I'm not an artist I do consider myself a writer, and I totally experienced that myself in the kind of creative world in which, once you build some sort of small profile as a disabled artist or writer, there are so many demands of you, and I think a lot of publishers or a lot of galleries kind of forget the limits that we have as disabled artists.  And the need for slowness and intention in the practice that we are creating with our art.  So Madeline I had a few specific questions for you.  One is a funny one.  One is a serious one.  So first of all, the audience wanted to know do you think having an artist per cent own a lends you a louder situation where young women and non‑binary people with disability are usually silenced and an audience member wanted to know what are the names of your frogs.

     >> I'll do the frog one first.  So the names are Billie bob, cube, Kermit and Raoul.  And they're about this small, I love them very much and I have done some water colour paintings of them, they are on my drawing desk, so when I am writing and drawing I just look at them and they look at me, it's great.  It's a very mutual respect.  And my artist per cent own a can you clarify what you mean by that exactly.

     >> Of course.  I guess would you consider calling yourself an artist and being someone who not only writes but creates visual art, would you say that kind of allows you to speak to disability and feel like your voice is heard a bit more than if you weren't using art as a medium, especially as a young person?

     >> Well, actually for a while I didn't call myself an artist, I didn't think of myself as an artist or author because I would put myself down and think I'm not good enough, but I found that being friends with other people with disabilities who are also artists and being on groups on‑line with people who have similar interests has made me feel more confident in myself and now I would say that I'm an artist, and it's a very big passion inspiration in my life and helps me cope with my problems, it almost makes them feel like they're not there when I'm really in the zone with drawing and writing.

     >> Brilliant.  I'm so glad you consider yourself an artist because you are a brilliant one as confirmed and attested to by our judges, and I hope that all of our WWDA art prize entrants joining us tonight do consider themselves artists, because you are all brilliant artists, Larissa I wanted to pass over to you for a big question.  It might not have easy answers.  But Casey wanted to know how can we as a movement start to get the art work of people who do not have the technical skills to be as valued in mainstream culture as other art works.  So that the artists' messages are appreciated and conveyed and enjoyed and included like anyone else's, for instance maybe a person with intellectual disability who may not have the technical skill but has a message, passion and every other aspect, how do we get those artists included and valued in mainstream arts culture.

     >> Yeah, that's a big question.  Lots of words.  And I'm tiring a lot.  But I'm thinking about how one of the things I've done over the years is lead little workshops making scenes, and I've done lots of workshops with people with intellectual disability and cognitive disability, and they are the best at it.  Making these little scenes, and they make these amazing scenes about, because my focus has been around making work about your life with disability and what that means to you.  So there isn't a lack of talent or lack of skill even, I think the issue is more about the attitudes and discrimination and ableism from the arts world that doesn't recognise certain types of art.  Yeah, it's not about lack of skill.  How do we change that?  We keep making art.  And come together, talk about it, I suppose, it's a big question, how do we get rid of ableism.

     >> It is a huge question.  And I knew it wouldn't have simple answers.  As we're wrapping up tonight, Liz, I thought I would hand over to you for a final minute or two to get your views on someone who has been working at the cross‑sections of disability, and arts and culture, what have you seen in the last decades of your career that has really pioneered the way to value disabled artists, as brilliant creators just like anybody else.

     >> I feel like my Internet is going strange right now.  Can you hear me?

     >> Yes, I can hear you.

     >> Excellent.  I just wanted to say actually, when Larissa when you were speaking there's some brilliant artists out there you plead to, not Larissa, but I'm sure you know about them, but everyone else can check out, there were a couple of artists with intellectual disability who were finalists in the Archibald last year, Emily Crockford and Digby Webster, Emily Crockford's I wish was in my house, and there's another couple, if you are curious around this area I suggest checking out a group called studio A in Sydney, and these artists out of studio A they have more finalists in this year's arch bald prize and also one of those that happen at the same time.  There's so many brilliant artists out interest, I'm probably an eternal optimist is probably my problem but to me when I look at the arts I feel like it's opening up, and there's more and more room gradually being made for different stories and different representations of all types of people on our stages, and on the walls and in the music we make and that's people with disability, it's also First Nations people and people from different cultural backgrounds.  There's space and there's an openness in audiences and audiences are starting to be more open‑minded and learn to be more inclusive in what they're looking at and engaging with.  So I just think it's a wonderful time to make stuff, you feel curious or make stuff, you can call yourself an artist or a maker, or whatever you want to do, just make stuff, and get it out there, show your friends, start entering things, connecting with the communities that already exist, and enjoy yourselves, that's essentially what it's about.  But congratulations to everyone today.  What a great thing this has been.  Wonderful.

>> Thank you, Liz.  Larissa has popped in our little presenter's chat thanks Liz for your optimism, and I would like to thank you too.  I'm currently in lockdown, in Canberra and I know Larissa is in lockdown in Melbourne, and I know a lot of other people are in lockdown in this country and as disabled people it's a very scary time so having the optimism and joy that art precincts has been very, very pivotal.  That wraps up our wonderful inaugural WWDA LEAD art prize and award ceremony.  Thank you for the wonderful judges and winners and runners up who have presented tonight.  It's been an absolutely pleasure to learn more and I guess see more about your artistic  practice as well.  So there will be a link for anybody wanting to rewatch this webinar or share with your friends and family, and we will be posting that an WWDA's social media and emailing that out to all those that registered for tonight's event and if you are want to get more involved you can join WWDA by becoming member and joining our WWDA community Facebook group.  In regards to what's next for the lead project you can contribute to the weed lead blog, may be you consider yourself a writer, you can email me at project at [WWDA.org.au](http://wwda.org.au/), you can check the pod cast out, and stay tune for the next date to be announced and finally stay tuned for some very exciting leadership developments next year including our leadership tool kit and what will be an amazing virtual leadership summit at the end of 2022.  Thank you all for joining us again and finally a big congratulations to our WWDA LEAD winners and entrants.