

# Let's draw the line

## CRITIC'S CHOICE

### HIDDEN FACES OF THE ARCHIBALD

**Where:** Crown Towers Lobby, 8 Whitman St, Southbank, until December 19

**Reviewer:** Jeff Makin

When viewed with the "official" Archibald Prize, this *salon des refuses* of 20 portraits fleshes out a fuller picture of portraiture today.

Leading the field are two outstanding artists' portraits, Andrew Sibley by Victor Rubin, and Rubin by Sibley. Each is a good likeness, and more: they are outstanding paintings.

A former Miss Australia, Beverly Pinder, is well caught by Rachel Rovay, who combines stencilled text with stylised representation. A softer, more painterly portrait, *Aimee in Wonderland* by Dagmar Cyrulla, is perceptually based.

But it is Benjamin Lai's episodic heads of the actor Bud Tingwell, who opened the Hidden Faces of the Archibald exhibition last week, that dominates the show.

### BRONWYN OLIVER

**Where:** Christine Abrahams Gallery, 27 Gipps St, Richmond, until December 11

**Reviewer:** Jeff Makin

The intricate nature of these skeletal sculptures by Bronwyn Oliver really do challenge the complexity of nature's sea-dwelling

### THE ARCHIBALD PRIZE 2004

**Where:** George Adams Gallery, Arts Centre, until January 9  
**Reviewer:** Jeff Makin

IS IT a drawing or a painting? Again there is a legal battle over the Archibald Prize.

The 2004 winner is Craig Ruddy with a giant portrait of Aboriginal actor David Gulpilil, but according to disgruntled entrant Tony Johansen, it's a drawing.

The Archibald has a history of controversy, so much so that some people wonder if works are selected for their publicity value rather than the original criteria set out by *Bulletin* editor J.F. Archibald 80 years ago.

His intention was clear: an annual prize for a portrait painted from life, "preferentially of some man or woman distinguished in Art, Letters, Sciences or Politics, painted by an artist in Australasia during the 12 months preceding the closing date".

The key words are "painted" and "portrait". Archibald didn't set up a portrait prize for a drawing.

But the trustees of the Art Gallery of NSW, who judge the Archibald, either can't tell the difference between a drawing and a painting or are doing this as a publicity stunt.

Dictionaries define drawing as the art of representation by line, in black and white or one colour. A painting is defined as a work of art made with paint on a surface in colour.

Reference is often made to the primacy of drawing as a first



studded cast and includes a well-endowed nude self-portrait by former winner Lewis Miller.

John Olsen, without his beret, by Jason Benjamin is one of the many

red star for his Russian partner. It's a fine genre painting, arguably better placed in the Sulman Prize for subject and genre painting.

There are several excellent con-

Pople's witty homage is the outcome of Pople's young son, Oscar, seeing this portrait in the National Gallery of Scotland and choosing it because it reminded him

**Witty homage:** Rodney Pople's self-portrait is among several excellent contenders that could have been chosen for this year's Archibald Prize.