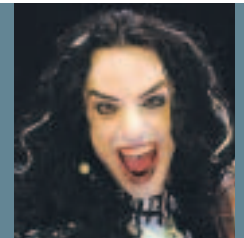


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The best thing I've seen lately

"Shine a Light, the Rolling Stones movie by Martin Scorsese. I saw it on IMAX – rock 'n' roll heaven"

Paul Capsis, Riff Raff in the new *Rocky Horror Show*, here in September



arts&entertainment

Art goes sports-mad

With a big new sports-art prize and three shows of sports-related photos, Melbourne is in the grip of a sporting art frenzy, writes **Mischa Merz**

ART and sport are so often in opposing corners, but a new \$100,000 prize has brought them together. Basil Sellers, a businessman and sports fanatic, is the creator of the new art prize with a sporting theme.

Described as the "turnaround king", he is well known for breathing life into ailing companies.

He is also a former basketballer, owner of the Newcastle basketball team and longtime art collector and sports philanthropist.

The finalists vying for the prize will appear at Melbourne University's Ian Potter Museum next month.

"There'll be colour and movement but also history, politics, humour and controversy," says prize judge Chris McAuliffe, who is also director of the Ian Potter Museum.

Among the 16 short-listed artists selected from 355 entries are three who work in the same art school, the Victorian College of the Arts, and jokingly remind one another of the pending showdown.

Kate Daw, whose collaboration with **Stewart Russell** about sprinter Peter Norman, works with **Richard Lewer**, another short-listed artist.

Painter **Jon Cattapan** was once Lewer's post-graduate supervisor at VCA and is now a colleague of both.

Cattapan is perhaps the seasoned veteran of the group, at least when it comes to art.

He has been exhibiting for 30 years, was the subject of a major retrospective last year and this month a book about him *Jon Cattapan: Possible Histories* will be published by Miegunyah Press.

THE 52-year-old painter is relaxed about the competition. He has submitted three paintings that consider different aspects of Australian rules football, from the humble paddock to the corporate arena.

A lifelong St Kilda supporter, the artist goes to games every week and has recently been trying to teach his six-year-old son how to kick a football.

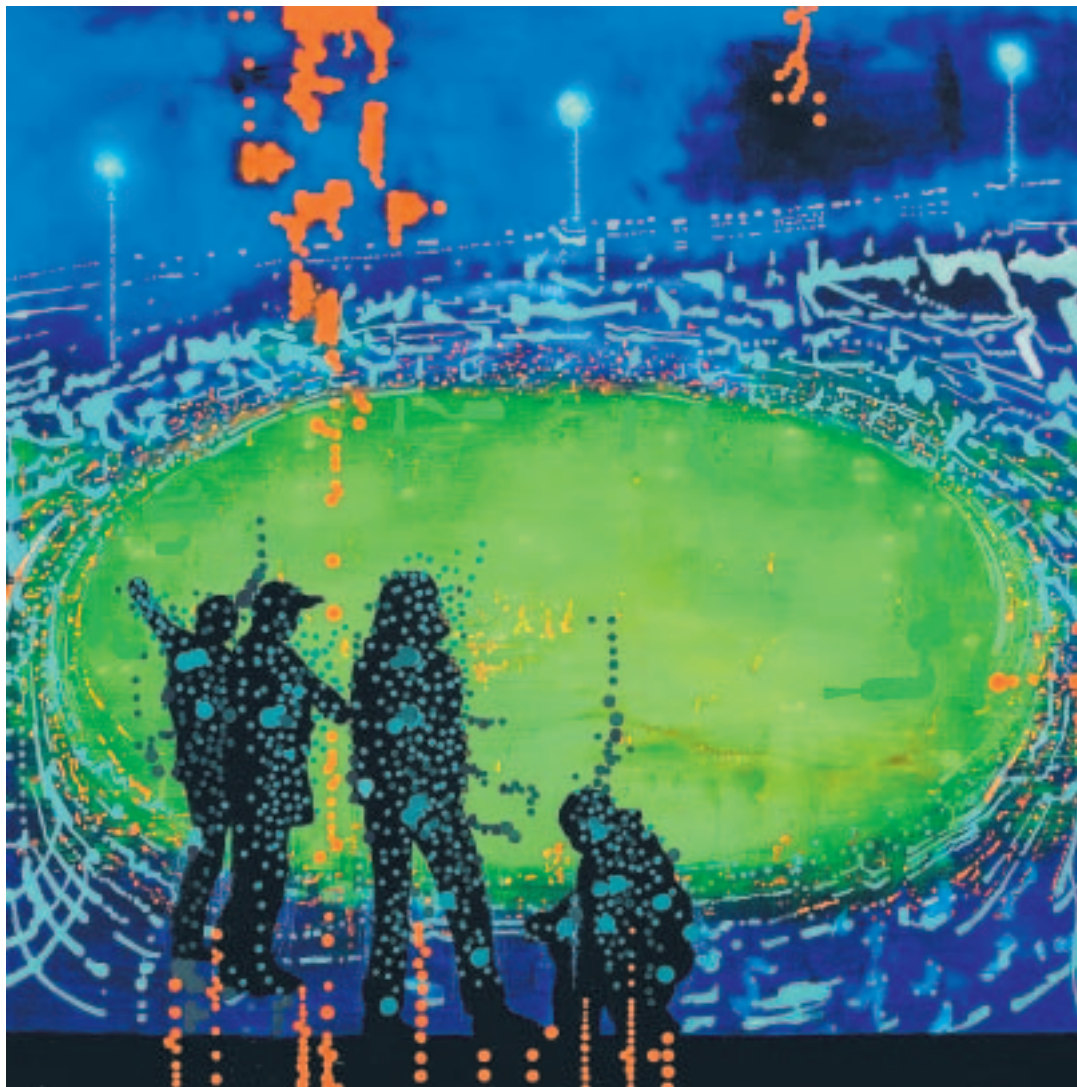
He says art and sport are similar in the way that an artist has to take "body blows" during career lows and keep on going. Both also have a certain element of creativity and self-absorption.

He admits, though, that they're seen as a strange mix, adding: "A lot of my artist friends have been fairly bemused that I've launched into this."

Though they clearly depict sporting grounds, players and spectators, Cattapan's paintings are based on themes he has been exploring for many years about reconciling big ideas with personal ones.

"I thought I could use AFL footy as a metaphor for things that move from local to global, things that are about the community and the personal and the communal.

"These kinds of ideas have been of



interest to me for some time in my work anyway," he says.

Cattapan has used images taken from his mobile phone, others from his high-school yearbook as well as his two children perched on his car bonnet watching a game at the Peanut Farm oval in St Kilda.

"There's a kind of nostalgia for the pure simple pleasure of just running on an oval in a paddock. And there is also some kind of parallel to being an artist.

"For me, as I've become a little bit older, and particularly the space I'm in at the moment where I'm very busy as an artist, there's a nostalgia for a much simpler time when it was just the purity of simply wanting to try to make a picture as opposed to being within the art world."

Though Cattapan places himself outside the game, **Richard Lewer** likes to get his hands dirty. The 38-year-old New Zealander is sport-obsessed and relentlessly competitive. His work is intense and autobiographical.

His past work has involved training as a woodchopper, having a boxing fight in a gallery and making work that documents his weekly table tennis games with friends.

For the Sellers Prize, Lewer has done three works documenting these activities etched in white on green billiard table felt.

He has also included a piece about his childhood rugby games with his father watching from the sideline.

"The works are very much about relationships," says Lewer, who is on the social club committee of the Northside Boxing Gym, the subject of one of the works. He trains there three times a week.

"The committee is also about friendship, loyalty and a shared commitment to the wellbeing and longevity of the gym," he says. "My work's always been really physical and has always taken a masculine approach. At art school I was always a bit apologetic about that. Most artists are repelled by sport, but there are all these parallels between sport and art," he says.

Despite his competitive nature, Lewer still feels strange competing for a prize with other artists because they're not really running in the same race.

"I'm hugely competitive. I'll play to win, but in the end I don't care who wins. I'm not going to tear myself up about it."

Continued extra 11

>> new prize

Strange mix: (above) *Home Game 3* by St Kilda supporter Jon Cattapan.

>> The big three



Sport and War, a travelling exhibition from the Australian War Memorial, examines "the long association between sport (among soldier mates) and war and how wartime experiences are reflected in modern sporting events". It features personal stories from sport stars affected by the war, including Ron Barassi Sr, Keith Miller and Don Bradman. Among the relics is a Melbourne Cup handmade by prisoners in Borneo. **State Library until October 26**



Play On, 150 Years of Australian Football celebrates footy's 150 years, from humble Victorian beginnings to a national code. Classic photos include this 1962 photo of Ron Barassi "flying", taken by Bruce Howard (from the HWT Collection).

Post Master Gallery, 321 Exhibition St, until October 4.



Around the Grounds shows "the action taking place around the boundaries". It's the work of five photographers who capture different aspects of our love and passion for football.

City Museum, Old Treasury Building, Spring St, until August 24.



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