

Australian Furniture Design Award 2024: Shortlisted Finalists Announcement



19 December 2023: Today, the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) and Stylecraft announced the finalists shortlisted for the **Australian Furniture Design Award** – one of the nation’s richest furniture and lighting design accolades with a \$20,000 cash prize.

Presented by the NGV and Stylecraft, the biennial Award celebrates the most interesting and innovative furniture and lighting design being created in Australia today. Now in its fifth iteration, the Award seeks to recognise outstanding new design ideas; critical and creative thinking; sustainability; material development; and research that explores innovative production processes.

The finalists for the Australian Furniture Design Award 2024 are:

- **Bala Ga’ Lili - Bonhula Yunupingu and Damien Wright**
- **Marta Figueiredo**
- **Michael Gittings**
- **Nae Tanakorn**
- **supermanoeuvre + Tomkins Design**

The shortlisted finalists will be invited to present their realised designs for exhibition and judging at the Stylecraft showroom during Melbourne Design Week 2024. The winning designer will receive a cash prize of AUD \$20,000 and an invitation to develop a commercial range or product with Stylecraft.

The 2024 jury comprises **Ewan McEoin**, Senior Curator, Contemporary Art, Design and Architecture at the NGV (Chair); **Tony Russell**, Brand Director at Stylecraft, Melbourne; **Anne-Claire Petre**, Founder Anaca Studio, Melbourne; **Hamish Guthrie** co-director Hecker Guthrie, Melbourne, and **Elliat Rich**, Alice Springs-based designer and 2017 AFDA winner. Competition advisor 2024 is **Simone LeAmon**, Curator, Contemporary Design and Architecture, NGV.

Tony Ellwood AM, Director, NGV, said: 'The Australian Furniture Design Award presents an invaluable platform for local furniture and lighting designers to showcase their extraordinary work. This Award celebrates the incredible creativity and innovation empowering this design discipline, as well as its contribution to design discourse and Australian culture.'

Anthony Collins, CEO, Stylecraft, said: 'For 70 years, Stylecraft has been guided by the principle of active collaboration with the global and Australian design community. The Australian Furniture Design Award is unique in the national design landscape for its combination of recognition, professional development, financial support and very importantly, a commercial opportunity for an Australian designer. We are excited to build upon the legacy of this important award, founded by Stylecraft and the JamFactory, in 2015.'

Sydney-based designer Seaton McKeon won the inaugural award in 2015 with *The Sun The Moon and Me*, a freestanding light and mirror. In 2017, Alice Springs-based designer Elliat Rich received the award for her sculptural vanity, *Place*. In 2020, Sydney-based industrial designer James Walsh won, impressing the jury with *Anthropic bench*, which combined rammed earth with recycled glass filings to produce a sustainable and hard-wearing composite. Most recently, Ashley Eriksmoen received the award in 2022 with *The Dream, or: the view from here is both bleak and resplendent* – a signature work that conveys the potential of postconsumer waste for transformation and reuse. At the conclusion of the award exhibition in May 2022 Eriksmoen's piece was acquired into the permanent collection of the NGV and is now on display at the Ian Potter Centre NGV Australia, Federation Square.

Call for Entries for the 2024 competition closed on 18 October 2023. From the entries received, the jury selected a shortlist of five finalists to proceed to Stage Two of the design competition.

ABOUT THE SHORTLISTED DESIGNERS

Bala Ga' Lili is the name of Bonhula Yunupingu and Damien Wright's creative practice. The pair are long time collaborators. Damien is a balanda (white man), a settler. Bonhula is Yolnju, from the Gumatj clan of Northeast Arnhem Land. In spite - or in fact because - of their vast cultural differences, the two have successfully collaborated in the production of their craft. The pair make limited edition furniture. The name Bala Ga' Lili comes from a Yolnju term which describes the place where salt water and freshwater mixes to create brackish water. It is here in the brackish water - in the balance of different world views - that creative moments materialise. As master woodworkers the outcome of their collaborative partnership is a distinctively Australian, design vernacular. Combining sketch and role play Bonhula and Damien have developed their own generative design dialogue. The language of difference and tension permeates their creativity. Bala Ga' Lili creates furniture pieces that examine and reveal the complexities of First Nations and Settler Colonial relationships. Their work has been collected by the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney, they have exhibited around the nation and were awarded Winner of the Victorian Craft Award 2022.

Marta Figueiredo, born in Portugal in 1979 and currently based in Naarm/Melbourne, is an Australian-Portuguese architect and multidisciplinary designer. In 2018, she founded her practice, which combines traditional processes with innovative technology to produce immersive, playful, and sensory-rich projects. Her work extends beyond aesthetics, gently challenging preconceptions about design, standardisation, and sustainability, fostering a broader sensory experience. Marta's creations emphasise emotional connections through narrative and sensory interactions, often incorporating elements like sound and scent to redefine design expression. Recognised for innovation, Marta received the 2021 High Commendation Clarence Prize for Excellence in Furniture Design (Tasmania) and was a 2020 Australian Furniture Design Award finalist. Her work has been featured globally, from Melbourne Now 2023 and Sydney Contemporary 2023 to Milan Design Week, Belgium Collectible Fair, Shanghai, and Metaphors - Hermes Paris. Moreover, Marta secured funding to participate in the City of Melbourne's Test Sites program for public art in 2021. Most recently, she unveiled a captivating public art installation, "The Diva Garden" in Melbourne's CBD.

Michael Gittings was born and raised in Albury, Victoria, and established his design studio in Fawkner, in Melbourne's north, in 2016. Michael's practice is intuitive, allowing metals and their properties to direct the form of the work. He is interested in the myriad of treatments and technologies employed throughout history by industry and artisans to form and finish metal products. His techniques span those at the very forefront of modern science to those that have been around for millennia, harking back to pre-industrial craftsmanship. Michael allows these techniques to hold influence over the final form of the work. While some techniques involve meticulous planning and construction, others require no previous plans or sketches and the metal can be worked by hand, like clay at a potter's wheel. Michael's work is a continually evolving dialogue between artist and material.

Nae Tanakorn is a passionate designer, creating exciting art forms that resonate with his emotions. Throughout his journey, he has learned to harness his feelings into his creativity and craft, allowing him to feel a deep connection to his pieces. There is no defined pattern or a certain measurement when his creations are conceptualised, but only when it feels right. Having a clear focus on ergonomics and sustainability, Nae creates harmonious connections within his works that not only evoke a sense of wonder but are also environmentally considered. In 2023, Nae was awarded the Vivid Furniture Design award for Resonate side table, shortlisted for the Interior Design Excellence Award 2023(Idea), The object, furniture, and lighting – rising category for Resonate side table, and made the TOP 100 shortlists for Maker of the Year, Tables, chairs & Desks category, in the Wood Review Maker of the Year awards for Resonate side table.

supermanoeuvre + Tomkins Design is an interdisciplinary collaboration by two internationally recognised and multi-award-winning design and innovation studios: supermanoeuvre (architecture and technology) and Tomkins Design (industrial design). Sam Tomkins is a nationally awarded industrial designer and educator. His professional and research practice centres on the possibilities of technology as tools to address the contemporary challenges of waste and over-consumption while exploring new object typologies. Iain [Max] Maxwell is co-director of the international award-winning architecture studio supermanoeuvre and an Associate Professor at the University of Canberra. He is a registered architect, design researcher, and educator. His practice operates at the creative overlap of digital design culture, material practice, and fabrication innovation. Combining professional practice with academia. Dave Pigram invents new design and material systems to produce memorable experiences and climate positive outcomes. He is a computational designer, educator, advanced fabrication researcher, and co-director of supermanoeuvre.

For further information on the Australian Furniture Design Award, please visit the competition website: ngv.vic.gov.au/australian-furniture-design-award-2024

The Australian Furniture Design Award Competition process is delivered by CityLab.

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IMAGES:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/d4p75qlff3jr57wlq1q7z/h?rlkey=w336dyj30csuryjxirz5172o0&dl=0>

Image credit: **James Walsh**, *Anthropic Bench* 2020, Image courtesy of James Walsh; **Eliat Rich**, *Standing place* from the *Other places series* 2017, Australian Furniture Design Award Winner 2017, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Image courtesy of the artist; **Ashley Eriksmoen**, *The Dream, or: the view from here is both bleak and resplendent* 2022, ©Ashley Eriksmoen, Image courtesy the artist, The NGV gratefully acknowledges Esther Frenkiel OAM & David Frenkiel in supporting work by Ashley Eriksmoen in NGV Triennial.

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