Shanti Sea-An - Australian National University - PhD

I am motivated to enter the Eloquence Art Prize both as a painter and as a student of art history and theory. The history of western painting is a constant source of inquiry in my own artistic practice, and I see the dialogue that persists between contemporary art and historical precedents as a driving force in my work. This prize would provide an opportunity to expand my study into this idea of an artistic "encounter" within an Australian context and also to further develop my skills in speaking publicly about art.

I am interested in examining Henri Matisse's influence on the work of the Australian painter **Hilda Rix Nicholas.** Taking the paintings that both artists produced in Morocco between 1912 and 1914 as a point of departure, I wish to analyse the extent of Matisse's influence on the Australian artist, especially in regard to formal qualities such as colour and flatness. These appear to take on a new significance in Rix Nicholas's work when she returned from her travels. Furthermore, this idea of an "encounter" — between artists, cultures, and as subject in itself for painting— is a key aspect I would like to focus on, as it not only implies something which is transitory or fleeting, but also something which occurs without force, something serendipitous. This will serve as a starting point for the analysis.

Henri Matisse has been an influential figure within my own painting practice, particularly as someone who has grappled with the limitations of visual and textual expression. His 1908 *Notes of a Painter* is a text I often return to, particularly passages where he details the difficulty in translating his experience of painting and its unique expressive qualities into language. This tension also informs part of my doctoral research, where I am currently investigating the intersection between painting and textuality, particularly ideas around reading practices, ekphrasis, and intertextuality.

My career aspirations involve practising as an artist and an academic, researching the relationship between painting and textual practices. While I am drawn to writing about art and finding ways of articulating the particular experience of encountering paintings in the world, I believe that this prize would allow me to not only improve upon my ability to speak about these reflections in a public setting but also an invaluable opportunity to learn from professionals who work at this intersection.