

Painting Nathan Basha

By Patrick Pace



● Patrick and his daughter Stella

Painting and drawing is something I have always done from a very young age. I have always enjoyed visiting the Archibald Prize but entering was always one of those enigmas for me. One day I thought, 'Hey I just need to do this!' Around the same time, a family member had a dream that I had won the Archibald with a portrait of my daughter Stella. This affirmation quickly encouraged me to dedicate more time for painting. It also was a time to stop and reflect as to who would be the subject of my entry.

In 2013, my daughter Stella was born with Down syndrome and at the time, my wife and I did not know much about what additional needs she may require. For me personally, it was already a challenging time; I had just started my architectural practice, I was already a father of two young boys and becoming a father to a child with extra needs really threw me into a state of anxiety and

panic. Over time everything seemed to settle down and through the support of Lifestart and connecting with other fathers in similar situations, I was able to find my feet again.

During my research to seek out others who live with Down syndrome and what people have accomplished living with the condition, I came across an impressive young man by the name of Nathan Basha. As I learned more about Nathan's life, I felt an instant connection to him, and knew he would make a great subject for my Archibald entry.

Upon meeting Nathan, he gave me a new sense of confidence through his achievements. For me, he set a future vision for Stella if she too put her heart and mind to it. Nathan and I discovered we had a lot in common as we both shared a passion for great film directors and film making. Walking away from that meeting I felt uplifted and inspired not just about the Archibald work but about the future.

My initial idea was for the portrait to incorporate a lot of colour to reflect Nathan's vibrant and colourful personality. When around Nathan, you feel a distinct buzz of energy. I wanted to focus on this energy and his zest of life and not so much that he has Down syndrome.

The background of the artwork is a very subdued texture of plants from his garden flushed in pink. Why pink? I link it to femininity. The plants in the background represent Mother Nature. During the sitting, I met Nathan's mother Jo. Within the few hours of speaking to Jo, I saw in her my own wife; the efforts, the fears and the endless love a mother has for her child.

Although the artwork did not make it as a finalist in this year's Archibald, it has been a very uplifting experience for me personally, enforcing the idea that we are the boundaries we set up for ourselves.

Patrick Pace is a Sydney-based architect. See more of photos of the development of this work on the Voice website.
www.downsyndromevoice.org.au



The artist's subject

By Nathan Basha

Of all the things I have ever thought that I could achieve, I never thought having my portrait painted for the Archibald would ever be possible. So when my EA Rhiannon (who helps me manage my motivational speaking business **NB – No Barriers**) texted me to say I had received a message from a person called Patrick asking if I would be interested in being his subject to paint for this art prize, I really was surprised and taken aback, but more so very humbled.

We responded to Patrick to say yes. I was keen but also curious to find out more about why he wanted to paint me as his subject. Patrick and I first met just before Christmas 2018 and from this first meeting we got along well – how could we not when his knowledge of movies was just as extensive as mine, plus he has a great sense of humour. I also liked how Patrick was interested in who I was as a person and he obviously had done some research as he knew all about my motivational speaking and advocacy work and the campaigning I do in supporting better employment opportunities for people with intellectual disability.

Patrick is a dad too to a young girl who also happens to have Down syndrome, so I was really touched when he told me how refreshing it was to find out about me and the advocacy work I do.

At this first meeting Patrick asked if he could take a few photos of me and not long after he started to send through some sketches – and let me say for a first draft I was impressed!

We met up after Christmas for the actual portrait sitting. I wasn't sure what to expect from this. Here I was thinking it was going to be something like a Mona Lisa moment where I was to remain still with absolutely no body movement at all, not even a twitch of the eye! Let's be real here though, I'm no Mona Lisa. I see myself more of the Picasso type and soon after Patrick got stuck into sketching away, I realised this!! We did have a few laughs along the way, and I think this helped Patrick get to know me more intimately and capture this in the final portrait he submitted.



● Nathan Basha

I was really fascinated how he developed the depth of my portrait using the different shades of colour and painting techniques.

When he shared with me the final version – I really was blown away. I had a few moments where I thought I looked like a number of celebrities such as Al Pacino, Rowan Atkinson and Jean Reno but I think it's just an overwhelming feeling when you are staring at yourself in a picture fully exposed (although not in the naked sense!) In all seriousness, Patrick should be really proud of what he submitted particularly as it's a portrait of me, a man who is living the dream and breaking down stereotypes and barriers for people with disability.

Nathan Basha is an advocate and motivational speaker from NSW. www.nathanbasha.com

