# Painting Nathan Basha

## By Patrick Pace

**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](http://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](http://nathanbasha.com/)**) 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.

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 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