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Melbourne artist Natasha Bieniek wins Wynne Prize with miniature landscape

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The Archibald Prize couldn't get any bigger, and the Wynne Prize couldn't get any smaller.

Measuring just 9 x 9 centimetres, the Wynne-winning miniature landscape Biophilia by Natasha Bieniek, 30, is the smallest of any artwork in the Archibald, Wynne and Sulman exhibitions.

The Melbourne painter's voice quavered with emotion as she accepted the Prize at the Art Gallery of NSW on Friday.

Natasha Bieniek's Biophilia, which won the Wynne Prize. Photo: Supplied

"I feel blown away, this is an incredible moment," Bieniek said. "You spend so much time in your studio alone, isolated. To be awarded a prize like this means so much."

Bieniek has been painting for almost half her young life; the past five years she has been painting on a miniature scale. After mostly painting portraiture, this year she started painting elements from the natural world. Leaning hunched over the work is the only way to get close enough to paint without a magnifying glass. It requires good eyes and a steady hand, Bieniek says.

"I work myself to the absolute core each day. I'm in physical pain because I spend so much time in my studio working."

Bieniek says the small-scale work draws people in. "Because it's so small you have to get up so close to view it accurately, creating this intimate one-on-one relationship."

The inspiration behind Biophilia, which literally means 'love of life', was a scientific study that examines human responses to the natural world.

"I want to pull [viewers] in to experience the subject ... the landscape is situated in a very busy area of Melbourne. It's these beautiful pockets of nature that contrast so greatly with the chaotic way a very populated city can feel. I think it's very important to affiliate with nature for our own personal fulfillment in our daily lives."

The \$50,000 prize money will sustain Bieniek's craft for another year. "It has to go straight back into my work. Hopefully I can continue to add to this country's artistic culture. I feel a lot of self doubt a lot of the time. Accolades like this are what keep you going as an artist."

John R Walker is the Wynne Prize runner-up for his landscape Flood Creek approaching summer I.

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