

Immediate release

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Art Phoenix – HIV+ creativity and resilience ahead of Mardi Gras.

Bobby Goldsmith Foundation (BGF) and the National Art School (NAS) will co-present *Art Phoenix* – a one-night-only exhibition showcasing artworks created during four weeks of artmaking workshops programmed by the National Art School and led by NAS artist educators. The program celebrates the creativity, resilience and lived experiences of people living with HIV across diverse backgrounds and identities.

Developed through BGF's long-running *Art Phoenix* program and realised through NAS' intensive studio-based teaching, the exhibition brings together emerging and first-time artists whose works explore identity, stigma, survival, joy and community connection.

For many participants who lived through the HIV/AIDS crisis of the 1980s – a time of profound trauma, discrimination and loss – art has been a lifeline, a way to process difficult emotions, reclaim identity and rebuild hope.

“*Art Phoenix* is a reminder of how art can transform, uplift and heal,” said Dr. Kristen Sharp, Director and CEO of the National Art School.

“Our partnership with BGF gives people living with HIV a creative home at NAS – a place where their stories, histories and emotions can be explored through colour, texture and form. The artworks created through this program are powerful, deeply personal and incredibly moving. We are honoured to stand alongside BGF in presenting them to the public at Mardi Gras.”

“For many of our long-term survivors, art is what kept them going,” said Ruan Uys, BGF Programs Manager.

“During the height of the HIV epidemic, creative expression became a lifeline, a way to cope, to make sense of a diagnosis and to stay connected when the world turned away. *Art Phoenix* continues that legacy, bringing people together to heal and create.”

Mike Searle, Acting CEO of BGF said, “*Art Phoenix* shows the power of creativity to build confidence. To share these stories during Mardi Gras, when our community’s history, resilience and activism are front and centre, is incredibly meaningful.”

Alongside elders who lived through the crisis are younger people newly navigating HIV today. Side-by-side, their works create an intergenerational story that captures the true spirit of Mardi Gras as both celebration and protest.

Art Phoenix is a one-night-only exhibition – the culmination of four weeks of studio workshops programmed by the artist educators of the National Art School, taking place Thursday 26 February, 6pm – 8pm at the Cell Block Theatre, National Art School, 156 Forbes Street, Darlinghurst.

Bobby Goldsmith
Foundation

NATIONAL
ART
SCHOOL ▾

Learn more about *Art Phoenix* here: <https://www.bgf.org.au/art-phoenix/>

Secure your tickets to the exhibition here: <https://www.bgf.org.au/art-phoenix-2026/>

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ABOUT BOBBY GOLDSMITH FOUNDATION:

Bobby Goldsmith was one of the first Australians to die from an AIDS-related illness in 1984. In his final weeks, his friends came together to ensure he could remain at home, surrounded by love and treated with dignity. He died at home, just as he wished – cared for with compassion by the people who loved him.

From that act of love, Bobby Goldsmith Foundation was formed. His friends set a powerful precedent – if support could be provided for one person, it could be done for many.

We are the legacy of that dedicated group of friends.

For more than 40 years, BGF has been a lifeline for people living with HIV, providing practical, emotional and financial support to help them live well and independently. We remain the only community-based organisation in Australia solely focused on delivering frontline services to people living with HIV.

BGF has since expanded its services to include disability support – particularly for the LGBTQIA+ community and others seeking inclusive, progressive, person-centred care. We are a registered NDIS provider, accredited under the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)

BGF is a registered not-for-profit with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission. We have no political or religious affiliation – just a commitment to helping people live with dignity, on their own terms.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL ART SCHOOL:

The National Art School is Australia's leading independent art school, dedicated to exceptional, studio-based art education, empowering artists to grow, experiment and thrive. Our community shapes Australia's art ecology and connects globally. Through our art school and site, we educate and inspire students and audiences by creating innovative, accessible arts programs to make lively contributions to a global society. Our campus sits within the sandstone walls of the former Darlinghurst Gaol on unceded Gadigal Country.

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