

International tapestry talent takes centre stage at the 2026 Kate Derum and Irene Davies Awards



From bold experimentation to extraordinary technical skill, the world of contemporary tapestry takes centre stage as the winners of the 2026 Kate Derum and Irene Davies International Tapestry Awards are announced.

Bringing together **125 finalists** from **22 countries**, the Australian Tapestry Workshop's biennial awards celebrate the creativity and excellence of artists working in small-scale, hand-woven tapestry. The selected works showcase the expressive possibilities of the artform, exploring the interplay of material, concept, colour and design.

Jane Walkley (United Kingdom), *Peg Plan* (2025)

2026 AWARD WINNERS

- **Kate Derum Award — \$4,000:** Jane Walkley (United Kingdom), *Peg Plan* (2025)
- **Kate Derum Highly Commended — \$500:** Louise Martin (United Kingdom), *Amaranth Blue* (2026)
- **Irene Davies Award — \$1,000:** Emilie Jeffreys (Australia), *Frayed* (2025)
- **Irene Davies Highly Commended — \$500:** Anne Smith (United Kingdom), *Kenosis* (2026)
- **Chris Cochiuss Innovation Award — \$1,500:** Melanie Cobham (Australia), *Hanging Rock* (2026)
- **Brian Derum People's Choice Award — \$500:** To be announced, Public vote now open
- **Maker to Maker Award — \$200 ATW Yarn Voucher:** Hanna Zabudska (Ireland), *Shelter* (2025)

Jane Walkley (United Kingdom) has been awarded the prestigious **Kate Derum Award**, receiving \$4,000 for *Peg Plan* (2025). The **Irene Davies Award**, recognising emerging talent and artists in their first five years of tapestry practice, has been awarded to **Emilie Jeffreys** (Australia) for *Frayed* (2025), taking home \$1,000.

The judges praised *Peg Plan* for its compelling concept and technical skill, recognising a work that pushes the boundaries of contemporary tapestry. *Peg Plan* Evokes both an archaeological

remnant and a post-industrial artefact, with every element feeling deliberate and integral to the work's meaning.

Described by the judges as conceptually compelling, visually striking and unique, **Frayed** transforms an intimate subject into a work of broader resonance. Its diminutive scale is both enchanting and purposeful, while the emphasis on frayed edges and the reverse of the tapestry enhances its sculptural presence. Personal and historical in nature, the work offers a poignant reflection on memory, domestic life and the enduring significance of textiles.

The 2026 awards also mark an important new chapter for the Australian Tapestry Workshop (ATW), with the introduction of the **Chris Cochius Innovation Award** and the renaming of the People's Choice Award in honour of Brian Derum. Both recognise the lasting contributions of much-loved members of the ATW community and their dedication to the artform.

The inaugural **Chris Cochius Innovation Award**, worth \$1,500, has been awarded to **Melanie Cobham** (Australia) for **Hanging Rock** (2026). The award celebrates an artist whose work pushes the boundaries of contemporary tapestry through original approaches to technique, materials or design. It honours Chris Cochius, a beloved colleague, friend and ATW master weaver whose commitment to innovation and excellence in textile practice continues to inspire.

Hanging Rock was praised by the judges for its clarity, confidence and innovation across concept, materials and process. The striking integration of bronze cast into the void left by incinerated weaving creates a compelling tension between hard and soft, structure and movement. Through the contrast of digital traces and the physical act of weaving, the work explores how memory is recorded and transformed, bringing together the rigidity of the grid and the unpredictability of human experience.

The newly named **Brian Derum People's Choice Award** invites exhibition visitors to vote for the work that resonates most with them. Worth \$500, the award celebrates Brian Derum, husband of Kate Derum and a passionate supporter of tapestry, while recognising the vital role audiences play in championing the artform.

The 2026 judging panel brings together perspectives from across the contemporary art and tapestry landscape: **Rachel Arndt**, Director of Wangaratta Art Gallery; **Anna Dunnill**, artist and winner of the 2024 Kate Derum Award; **Beck Jobson**, ATW Head of Studio; and **Ema Shin**, a 2026 Biennale of Sydney artist.

The Highly Commended awards recognise outstanding work across both the established and emerging artist categories. **Louise Martin** (United Kingdom) has received Kate Derum Highly Commended for **Amaranth Blue** (2026), while **Anne Smith** (United Kingdom) has received Irene Davies Highly Commended for **Kenosis** (2026). The **Maker to Maker Award**, judged by ATW weavers, celebrates technical excellence. This year's award, which includes a \$200 ATW Yarn Voucher, goes to **Hanna Zabudska** (Ireland) for **Shelter** (2025).

The finalist works will be exhibited at the Australian Tapestry Workshop, from **29 October 2026 until 16 January 2027**.

ABOUT THE AUSTRALIAN TAPESTRY WORKSHOP

The Australian Tapestry Workshop (ATW) is a not-for-profit organisation that creates handwoven tapestries for public and private commissions. Working across disciplines — with painters, ceramicists, and fashion artists — its weavers represent one of the most specialised workforces in Australian craft.

ATW tapestries are held in collections across Australia and internationally — at the MCG, the Melbourne Recital Centre, the Arts Centre Melbourne, the State Library of Victoria, the Sydney Opera House, and in embassies and high commissions around the world.

The Irene Davies Award is generously supported by Alayne Davies in memory of her mother, Irene Davies, a tapestry enthusiast. The Kate Derum Award is generously supported by Susan Morgan and honours Kate Derum's significant contribution to tapestry as an artist, weaver, teacher, mentor and former ATW Studio Manager.

MEDIA INQUIRIES

Michelle Sakaris, Development & Communications Officer, Australian Tapestry Workshop
T (03) 9699 7885 E contact@austapestry.com.au

[VIEW THE KATE DERUM AND IRENE DAVIES AWARDS CATALOGUE](#)

[LINK TO FEATURE IMAGE](#)
