ZORICA PURLIJA

January, 2026

Zorica Purlija is a Montenegrin-born Australian artist whose photographic practice spans over two decades. Migrating to Newcastle in 1972 at the age of eight, she grew up in Waratah and began her creative journey studying Architecture at The University of Newcastle. She later shifted her focus to photography, earning an Associate Diploma with Distinction from The University of Western Sydney in 1989.

Following her studies, Purlija travelled extensively through Europe, immersing herself in art and culture before returning to Australia in 1992 to begin a family. Her experience of motherhood became a central theme in her work, and since 1999, she has pursued photography as a medium for exploring beauty, longing, and the human experience. Her daughter Yumi, both muse and subject, features prominently in a long-running portrait series that exemplifies Purlija's ability to capture emotional depth and intimacy.

In 2020, she completed a Master of Arts in Photo Media at UNSW Art & Design. That same year, she was commissioned by Nillumbik Shire Council to create a work for Art in the Time of COVID-19. During her MFA studies, she received a Student Community and Development Grant for Realising Mother, an exhibition co-curated with Sandy Edwards and presented at Kudos Gallery in 2017. In 2024, she was awarded a residency at Lake Macquarie's YAPANG.

With 10 solo shows and international exhibitions, her practice continues to evolve with emotional depth and visual poetry.

Education

2020	Postgraduate Master of Art in Digital Media	UNSW Art & Design, Sydney
2003	Portrait Summer Course	National Art School
1989	Associate Diploma of Visual Arts, Major in Photography with Distinction	University of Western Sydney

Solo exhibitions

2024	So,This is Goodbye	Stanley Street Gallery, Darlinghurst
2023	The Fall	Stanley Street Gallery, Darlinghurst
2021	Fade Into You	Stanley Street Gallery, Darlinghurst
	Portraits of Yumi	Home@735 Gallery Redfern
2017	Berlin #1- #3	SARA RONEY Gallery Sydney
2016	Crescent	BAROMETER Gallery Paddington
	Smoke and Haze	GALLERY 61 REVISITED, Newcastle
2014	Landscape-Jackson Hole	SARA RONEY Gallery Sydney
2012	Nebula	SARA RONEY Gallery Sydney
2011	Transience	SARA RONEY Gallery Sydney

2010	Awakenings	SARA RONEY Gallery Sydney
2000	Shedding Skin	PND Conference, Rex Centre Potts Point

Group exhibitions

2026	Infinite Mile #1	Shutter hub Open 2026, Art at the ARB, University of Cambridge, Cambridge UK
	Berlin#2	Unearthed Group Exhibition call out, Art to Art Gallery, Hawthorn Victoria
	Faces International Virtual Group Exhibition	Women in Arts Network, Arts To Hearts Project, India
2025	Gushing	Summer Salon, Straitjacket Gallery, Broadmeadow.
	Photo Sydney Booth A02, Various works	Sydney Contemporary Carriageworks, Sydney
	Infinite Mile #2	Lake Macquarie Art Prize, MAC Yapang, Booragul.
	Re-Imagining Family , Collaboration with Janet Chan	Airspace Projects, Marrickville.
	Love-heart Tree, Kilcare	Articulate Project Space, Leichhardt
	Infinite Mile#13	William Bowness Photography Prize. Museum of Australian Photography Victoria.
	Where the Love is, Untitled#15, Bella with full Moon.	Lighthouse Arts: Home Exhibition.Nobbys-Whibayganba headland 41 Nobbys Rd, Newcastle NSW
	Minyon Falls	Finalist, The Josephine Ulrick and Win Schubert Photography Award
	Self Portrait with plant, Lumen Print	Cista Arts, Self Portrait Exhibition online
2024	Two Kings	Finalist, 62nd Annual Fisher's Ghost Art Award, Campbelltown Arts Centre
	Minyon Falls	Finalist, The Josephine Ulrick and Win Schubert Photography Award
	Towards Something	Manipulated, Articulate Project Space, Petersham
	Among Trees	Finalist, Northern Beaches Environmental Art & Design Prize, Manly Art Gallery, Sydney
		Finalist, Shutter Hub's (RETURN) TO THE SEA , The Seafront Gallery, Worthing UK
	Minyon Falls	Finalist, Canberra Contemporary Photographic Prize, Photo Access, Manuka Arts Centre, ACT
	Minyon Falls	Finalist, UniSQ Biennial Art Award,Art Gallery, University of Southern Queensland 487-535 West Street, Toowoomba
	Love heart Tree	Sacred Grove in Your Street, Art Space on The Concourse, Chatswood.

	Into Silence, Rockhead	Beauty Runs the Gauntlet, Bondi Pavilion Gallery, Bondi Beach
2023	Yumi with pink Rose at 16	Paris Photo OFF at Galerie Joseph, Paris
	Submerge	Finalist, Canberra Contemporary Photographic Prize Exhibition, Manuka Arts Centre Gardens
	The swan Sunbaker	Finalist, PH21 Contemporary Photography Gallery Budapest, Portraits Beyond Faces
	In a Trance	Finalist, City of Sydney Art and About Exhibition, Custom's House Circular Quay
	For our Children	A Festival of Repair, 107 Projects Redfern
	Gushing	Finalist, Gosford Art Prize, Gosford Regional Gallery,East Gosford
	Into Silence	A Different Kind of Place, Group Exhibition, Chrissie Cotter Gallery, Camperdown
	Submerge	Awagami International Miniature Print Exhibition (AIMPE), Inbe Art Space, Japan
	9 x 5	Walker Street Gallery and Arts Centre, Victoria
	Golden Moments	Earth Group Exhibition, Articulate Project Space, Marrickville
	Online	Humans and the Environment, Cista Arts, International Call Out
	Mum dying Rajka's hair, Featured artist	The Luupe's Visions of Motherhood
2022	Purple Dreams	Finalist, The Little things Art Prize, Saint Cloche Gallery, Sydney
	Lethbridge Landscape Prize	Finalist, Salon des Refuses, Queensland
2021	Contemporary Portrait Exhibition at The SE Center for Photography	Greenville, SC, US
	GOT THE SHOT, NOW GET CREATIVE	Finalist, New York Center for Photographic Art, Curator Ellen Denuto
	Flora Exhibition	City of Greater Dandenong, Victoria
	Into Silence	Summer Group Show Aro Gallery Darlinghurst
2020	Biomorphic	UNSW MFA Graduate's Exhibition, UNSW Galleries, Paddington
	Smoke and Haze #3	Goodnight, GAFFA Gallery, Sydney
2019	Berlin #2	The Corner Store Gallery, Orange NSW
	Let the Love Shine Through	Ilford CCP Salon, CCP Gallery Fitzroy, Victoria
2016	Persimmon, Pear	The Gaze, Gallery 61 Revisited, Newcastle

2015	Agent Fetish	Portraits, Stanley Street Gallery, Darlinghurst
	Ode to el Greco & Tam	Passion Fruits Group Show Exhibition, GAFFA Gallery, Sydney
2013	Australian Identity and Beyond	MUSE Gallery, Ultimo
	Nebula	SARA RONEY Annex Gallery, Sydney

Awards and achievements

2025	Waverley Artist Studios Residency	Waverley Woollahra Art School, Bondi Rd Bondi. Six month contract.
	Lake House Artist Residency	Lake Macquarie NSW.
2024	Lake House Artist Residency	Lake Macquarie NSW.
2024	Long Listed	Aesthetica Art Prize, The Future Now Symposium, York Art Gallery, UK
2023	Winner	Charring Cross Photos 'Streets' call out
2017	Early Curator Award	ARC and UNSW School of Art and Design Paddington
2015	First Prize	Value Your Mind, Mental Health Month Art Exhibition, UNSW Art & Design, Sydney
	Portrait Category 3rd prize, Yumi in her Bedroom	MIFA 2014 Winners Exhibition, Rooftop Gallery Bangkok
	3rd prize, Yumi in her Bedroom	Portrait Finalists Exhibition NYC4PA New Century Artists, Chelsea, NY
2014	3rd Place Fine Art Portrait Category, Yumi in her Bedroom	Moscow International Foto Awards
2009	Winner, Food for Thought	Wesley Mission Photography Competition - Our Community

Residencies & Workshops

2025	Lake House Artist Residency	Cyanotype Workshop, MAC Yapang, Lake Macquarie NSW.
2024	Lake House Artist Residency	Cyanotype Workshop, MAC Yapang, Lake Macquarie NSW.

Collections

NYC4PA New Century Artists, Chelsea, New York US
Malamegi Lab, Udine Italy
Tweed River Art Gallery, NSW
Sara Roney Gallery, NSW

Commissions

2020	Art in the Time of COVID-19	Nillumbik Shire Council, Victoria

Grants

2016	Student Community and Development Grant for Exhibition 'The Mother'	ARC and UNSW Kensington

Reviews and publicity

2024 I'D Rather catalogue publication competition & online exhibition https://www.pointpleasantpublishing.net/single-post/zorica-purlija
Best in show grand prize goes to Giorgia Valli, Artashes Sardarian, Heidi Lanino, Zorica Purlija, Luciano Cian, and Jesús Núñez. You may read their critical review catalogue articles at https://www.aedrafinearts.com/catalogue
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