

# Lessons from master artist



Inspired . . . Sarah Nolan with her sewn artwork at the Harrison Galleries.

Picture: KATRINA TEPPER

## Sarah Nolan: Damien And Me

Harrison Galleries  
Exhibition

Imagine walking into a Sydney dinner party with Damien Hirst on your arm. "Hi everyone, this is Damien from London. Damien puts cows and sharks in formaldehyde. He's supposed to be worth about \$200 million."

"Ooh, I've read all about you, Damien," the hostess coos. "You're the one who did a diamond-encrusted platinum skull that sold for \$122 million last year. And all the labour was done by jewellers, not you. How super." "Yes," you say. "And in September, Sotheby's will auction some of Damien's new works for an expected total of about £65 million."

If that kind of talk tends to put you off your dinner, perhaps

you've never been an artist who needs to turn a dollar.

Not like Sarah Nolan, who knows what it's like to survive in a competitive market. Nolan is more than happy to take a couple of tips from Hirst, as she freely acknowledges with her new exhibition, *Damien And Me*.

It all started last year when Nolan exhibited a series of stitched fabric "homages" to her artist heroes, including Hockney, Bacon and Hirst.

The Hirst-inspired homages, featuring bright dots like those which Hirst has used in hundreds of his paintings, proved popular.

Nolan decided to make more dot works in deliberate reference to Hirst's artistic process. She is up to number 33 and hopes to make it to 100.

Each of Nolan's dot works is quite different, and all are immaculately worked. Unlike

Hirst's dot works, however, Nolan's are lovingly hand-made by the artist. Nolan has stitched long into the night for many months to get her work done. Hirst is reported to have an army of assistants.

"No one is forced into working with Hirst, he pays them," Nolan says. "It's just the way it is. I've tried to learn from what he's been doing. If you want to take [being an artist] seriously, you have to use the market and the system as best you can."

One of Nolan's works features a skull emblazoned with the word "ker-ching", referring to an essay she read about the features that make art saleable. They included nudity and celebrity.

"Ker-ching was the bling factor," Nolan says.

□ 294 Glenmore Rd, Paddington; until August 28, 9380 7100, [harrisongalleries.com.au](http://harrisongalleries.com.au)

ELIZABETH FORTESCUE