

Polixeni Papapetrou (1960–2018)

The Melbourne, Australia–based photographer [Polixeni Papapetrou](#) has died, writes Debbie Cuthbertson of the [Sydney Morning Herald](#). For more than ten years, the artist had struggled with several bouts of cancer. She was fifty-seven when she passed.

Papapetrou “lived an important and magnificent life as an artist, as a feminist, as a mother, as a wife, as a daughter, and a very significant member of the Australian arts community,” said the director of Melbourne’s Centre for Contemporary Photography, [Naomi Cass](#). “She was intellectually very robust and clear to the very end . . . she had both an extraordinary will to live and a capacity to meet suffering and death in the eye, really.”

Much of Papapetrou’s work focused on the strangeness and vicissitudes of childhood, and at one point, it even caused controversy: Australia’s former prime minister [Kevin Rudd](#) criticized the artist’s nude photograph of her daughter, Olympia, taken in 2003 when she was five years old, after it was reproduced on the cover of an art magazine in 2008. “A little child cannot answer for themselves about whether they wish to be depicted in this way,” Rudd said. “Frankly, I can’t stand this stuff.” Olympia had her own thoughts about the image, saying that it was among her favorites.

An exhibition of the artist’s work opened at the Michael Reid Contemporary Art Gallery in Sydney on April 4 and will run until April 28. Of the show, the director of Reid’s galleries in Sydney and Berlin, [Toby Meagher](#), said, “Her current exhibition . . . is a profound body of work fearlessly engaged with the reality of Poli’s own illness, looking closely at her relationship with her muse Olympia and the relationship between the photographer and the sitter.”

Last year Papapetrou won the William and Winifred Bowness Photography

Prize, which is worth almost \$23,000. The photographer exhibited her work widely and had shows in many countries, including the United States, China, Japan, Italy, and Germany.