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Artist's Oscar potential

Northern Star, Lismore

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Secretly-shot doco in the selection pool for Academy Awards

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LENNOX Head artist and filmmaker Angus McDonald said it was “mindblowing” that a documentary he produced and directed had made it into the pool from which Oscar nominations are selected.

The Archibald Prize finalist and his team of Nolan Verheij and Rebecca Booth made the 13-minute documentary titled *Manus* over two months at the end of last year, using footage shot secretly in 2017 by journalist Olivia Rousset at the time of the closure of the detention centre on the Papua New Guinean island.

It won the award for Best Documentary at the St Kilda Film Festival in January, which has qualified the work to be one of about 140 films in the pool for selection for final Academy Award nominations.

That's not a bad effort considering Mr McDonald only ventured from the paintbrush and canvas to film in 2016.

This film aimed to give a face to refugees and the mental health and other problems they face while in limbo.

“It's pretty mindblowing,” he said of the potential for an Oscar nomination.

“We didn't expect that.”

“I was becoming more and more uncomfortable about the way we were treating a very small number of people arriving here by boat.”

He agreed to take on the project to give a face to the refugees who had been on Manus Island for more than four years when the footage was taken.

“We don't know them, we don't see them,” he said.

“And that makes it very easy for the Federal Government to dehumanise them.”

The final selection for Academy Award nominations in the Documentary — Short category will take place in December.

Local people will be able to see the film at the upcoming Byron Bay International Film Festival.

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GREAT ACHIEVEMENT: Lennox Head artist and filmmaker Angus McDonald has a documentary film he produced and directed in the pool from which the final Oscar nominations for 2020 will be selected.

Photo: Marc Stapelberg