

### Showcasing the best of Australian art, with an eye to artistic merit and market value

#### **Alex Seton, sculptor**

**Exhibits:** *Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane* ([www.janmurphygallery.com.au](http://www.janmurphygallery.com.au) or 07-3254 1855); *Maunsell Wickes at Barry Stern Galleries, Sydney* ([www.barrysterngalleries.com.au](http://www.barrysterngalleries.com.au) or 02-9331 4676).

Marketing hype often drives an artist's early career, but it takes vision and talent to make a lasting impression. One artist destined to survive the ballyhoo is 28-year-old Alexander Seton, a sculptor whose work is based on humour and undeniable skill.

Described as "the next big thing", Seton has wowed Sydneysiders for the past two years with his craftsmanship in *Sculpture by the Sea*; his pieces have included this much-admired two-seater marble couch (right), which sold for \$22,000.

A self-taught carver, Seton works predominantly in marble, playing on the themes of optical illusion and perception of surface – the real versus the artificial, the everyday object versus the art sculpture. Nothing is left to chance; every mark is deliberate.

The works are humorous and joyful, and their success stems from the viewer's confusion. Seton replicates life-sized jackets, cushions and armchairs in marble and his delicately crafted surfaces

look like the real thing. People have accidentally flopped themselves down on his white marble beanbags (that hurts!). Seton has also amazed and fooled many with the series *Panopticon* (2003). In it, white marble replicas of bench seating feature the subtle backside imprint of a recent sitter. Initially these works sold for \$4900; the latest in the series sold late last year for an impressive \$7000.

Carving quality marble is an expensive and time-consuming practice. Yet even as Seton's star rises, his works remain relatively affordable. During the past few years Seton's prices have been steady at between \$1000 and \$7000 – depending on the size of the work. Last year the maquette (small study) for *No. 23* sold for \$1980. The value of the small study has now doubled. And the top-priced item in an upcoming exhibition of his work is \$13,000.

*Michael Reid is an art collector, author and dealer, with almost 20 years' experience in the art market; [www.michaelreid.com.au](http://www.michaelreid.com.au).*

