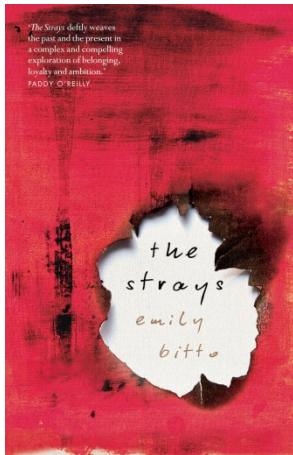




STELLA PRIZE SHORTLIST BOOK CLUB - READING PACK

***The Strays* – Emily Bitto (Affirm Press)
Published May 2014**



On her first day at a new school, Lily befriends one of the daughters of infamous avant-garde painter Evan Trentham. He and his wife are trying to escape the stifling conservatism of 1930s Australia by inviting other like-minded artists to live and work at their family home. Lily becomes infatuated with this wild, makeshift family and longs to truly be a part of it.

As the years pass, Lily observes the way the lives of these artists come to reflect the same themes as their art: Faustian bargains and spectacular falls from grace. Yet it's not Evan, but his own daughters, who pay the price for his radicalism.

The Strays is an engrossing story of ambition, sacrifice and compromised loyalties from an exciting new talent.

From the Stella Judges

Lily is an only child, and when she befriends the exotic Eva – daughter of artists and 'old money' – at school, it's the beginning of the kind of love affair that solitary children often have with large exuberant families. But this is bohemian Melbourne in the 1930s, and in many ways it's not a good place for any child to be. As the girls grow up their world gets darker and more complex, eventually imploding into scandal.

While it's partly inspired by the real-life 1930s artists' colony at Heide in Melbourne, this novel's characters and plot are wholly fictional and the result is a satisfyingly cohesive vision and story. With its reflective tone, rhythmic style, and vivid scenes, Bitto's novel illuminates the history of a particular time, place and way of living, but it also draws out the more abstract themes, common to all times and places, of friendship, memory, ambition, and family life.



About Emily Bitto

Emily Bitto has a Masters in Literary Studies and a PhD in Creative Writing from the University of Melbourne, where she is also a sessional teacher and supervisor in the creative writing program. The manuscript of her debut novel, *The Strays*, was shortlisted for the 2013 Victorian Premier's Literary Award for an Unpublished Manuscript.

USEFUL LINKS

Author twitter:

- <https://twitter.com/emilybitto>

Reviews

- *Sydney Morning Herald*: <http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/books/emily-bittos-debut-novel-of-loneliness-and-selfabsorption-20140619-zs5lh.html>
- *TEXT* journal: http://www.textjournal.com.au/oct14/todd_rev.htm
- Readings: <http://www.readings.com.au/review/the-strays-by-emily-bitto>
- Booktopia: <http://blog.booktopia.com.au/2014/05/01/caroline-baums-book-of-the-month-the-strays-by-emily-bitto/>

Interviews

- Caro Baum interviews Emily Bitto: <http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/books/interview-caroline-baum-talks-to-new-author-emily-bitto-20140526-zrky4.html>
- Emily Bitto on the inspiration and research for *The Strays*: <http://www.fancygoods.com.au/booksandpublishing/2014/05/14/artistic-licence-emily-bitto-on-the-strays/>
- Kristina Olsson, author of *Boy, Lost*, interviews Emily Bitto for Readings: <http://www.readings.com.au/news/emily-bitto-chats-to-kristina-olsson-about-the-strays>

Book Club Discussion Questions

- [Click here for Book Club Discussion questions from Affirm Press](#)

Extract

- [Click here to read an extract from *The Strays*](#)