



MEDIA RELEASE

18 August 2019

FINALISTS ANNOUNCED FOR WA \$50,000 PORTRAIT PRIZE WITH A NEW NAME

Forty adult finalists have been chosen for WA's premier portrait prize – The Lester Prize. Formally known as The Black Swan Prize for Portraiture, this award is one of the country's richest prizes for portraiture and is now in its thirteenth year. It was renamed in 2019 in honour of the award's leading patron Richard Lester AM.

The works will be on public display at the Art Gallery of WA (AGWA) in the Centenary Galleries from 9 November – 9 December 2019, with the winner announced on 8 November 2019.

The Lester Prize total prize pool available to emerging and professional artists is now over \$77,000, making it the third richest prize in Australia after the Archibald and Doug Moran competitions.

More than 400 artists from across Australia entered the prestigious competition with a portraits of an Australian, or Australians, that they respect or admire, or a self-portrait, with the hope of winning The Richard Lester Prize for Portraiture \$50,000 cash prize, as well as two economy class return tickets to any Singapore Airlines destination valued at \$3,660 excluding taxes.

The finalists come from throughout Australia (15 from WA, ten from VIC, nine from NSW, with two each from Queensland, Tasmania and ACT, and a quarter of the finalists have been named as finalists in previous years of the competition. The majority of the finalists' works are self-portraits, or if a subject is featured, they have been chosen for the significant part they play in the artist's life rather than being a high-profile celebrity.

The Pre-Selection Panel (Olga Cironis, Dr Darren Jorgensen, Dunja Rmandić, Mark Stewart and Toni Wilkinson) said: "the diverse cultural and personal narratives presented were revealing of our contemporary world today—it certainly made the selection process challenging. The works uncovered stories of self-reflection, struggle over hardship and unique insights which will hopefully ignite imaginations and evoke emotions with the viewing public. Media such as oil, acrylic, watercolour, graphite, woodcut print, and mixed media will feature in this year's collection.

The other prizes up for grabs are the \$10,000 Tony Fini Foundation Artist Prize (selected by artists' peers); the \$7,500 Baldock Family People's Choice Award (selected by the general public); and \$1,000 cash and \$250 from Oxlades Art Supplies plus one economy class return ticket to any Singapore Airlines destination (except USA) valued at \$3,660 excluding taxes each for two highly commended artists.

John Langoulant, Chairman of The Lester Board comments, "Portraiture is the most accessible form of visual art. No matter the style in which it is rendered, the human likeness is something we can all relate to. It's the one form of art we have all created at some point in our lives—there is something elemental in human nature that drives us to draw or paint the likenesses of people. We don't have to be experts to enjoy portraiture and we are proud to provide Western Australia with the opportunity to engage with the best of the artform each year in a format that puts the artists and community front-and-centre."

The Lester Prize

Thirty finalists in The Lester Prize Youth competition for high school students across Australia have also been chosen. Youth finalist works and Salon de Refusés works (which will be selected from entrants across the country and featured digitally on the big screen as well as on outdoor exhibition panels) will be on display during this time at Brookfield Place and various other locations around Perth city.

www.lesterprize.com

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ABOUT THE LESTER PRIZE

The Lester Prize is managed by The Lester, a not-for-profit organisation, founded in 2007 by Tina Wilson to provide an avenue for artists to exhibit works of portraiture within Western Australia. After successfully taking the Main Awards and Exhibition to its new home at the Art Gallery of Western Australia in 2016, Tina stepped down to return to her own artistic practice.

Tina Wilson was made Patron of the Prize in 2018 in recognition of her passionate and tireless work to ensure there was a prize of ever-increasing excellence and prestige.

Dick Lester was made Lifetime Patron of the Prize in 2018, in recognition of his passion for the Arts, his encouragement of Tina Wilson during her tenure as Executive Director, and his advice and financial assistance that, from modest beginnings, enables the Prize to flourish.

KEY DATES

2019 Exhibition Season at the Art Gallery of WA, Brookfield Place, Perth Cultural Centre, Yagan Square & various locations around Perth city	Sat 9 Nov – Mon 9 Dec 2019
Media Session – interviews with winners and their subjects (under embargo)	Fri 8 Nov 2019 (10am – 11.30am)
2019 Winners (Adult) announced at the Art Gallery of WA	Fri 8 Nov 2019 (6.30pm – 9.30pm)
2019 Winners (Youth) announced at Tower 2 Brookfield Place 125 St Georges Tce Perth	Wed 13 Nov 2019 (6pm)

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