



MEDIA RELEASE

14 August 2020

FINALISTS ANNOUNCED FOR WA'S RICHEST PORTRAIT PRIZE

Forty Main Awards Finalists have now been chosen for WA's premier portrait prize – The Lester Prize. Formally known as the Black Swan Prize for Portraiture, this award is now in its fourteenth year. It was renamed in 2019 in honour of the award's leading patron Richard Lester AM.

The forty finalists' works will be on public display at Art Gallery WA (AGWA) in the historic Centenary Galleries from 31 October – 29 November 2020 with the winners announced on 30 October 2020.

The Lester Prize is one of the nation's most recognised and prestigious fine art prizes, renowned for putting artists and community front-and-centre. Due to prize partnerships with the Lester Group, Tony Fini Foundation, Minderoo Foundation, and the Baldock Family, the prize pool available to professional, emerging and young artists is now worth almost \$85,000, including the main prize of \$50,000.

The finalists were chosen from a record-breaking 750 entries received from artists across Australia, nearly double the entry numbers of previous years (34% of entries came from WA, 24% from NSW, 23% from VIC and the remaining 19% from QLD, SA, ACT, TAS and the NT).

“This large number of entries is very satisfying and demonstrates The Lester Prize's strong standing amongst artists across the country. We are very pleased to be able to provide artists this opportunity to create and express themselves through The Lester Prize at a time where these opportunities have been very limited.

We now look forward to celebrating their work as we prepare for the award ceremonies and our month of exhibitions and community engagement advancing arts and culture across the State”, said John Langoulant, The Lester Inc Board Chair.

All states and territories throughout Australia are represented this year with twelve finalists from WA, eight from NSW, seven from VIC, five from SA, three each from QLD and TAS, and one each from the ACT and NT. Sixteen of the finalists have been named as finalists in previous years of the competition.

The Pre-Selection Panel members for both the Adult and Youth Awards change every year. They are a group of independent experts in their respective fields with no commercial association with The Lester Prize. During the Pre-Selection process, the panel is never provided the name or location of the artist (just the artwork image, title, dimensions and medium on screen).

This year's Main Awards Panel comprising Abdul-Rahman Abdullah, Rachel Ciesla, Alan R Dodge AM, Gemma Weston and Laetitia Wilson said: “we were impressed with the standard of works this year. Artists were keen to explore the intricate and multi-layered connections between home, identity and everyday life in the contemporary world. Life stories and solitude provided a particularly rich source of inspiration, and it was interesting to see how COVID-19 has put a new twist on autobiographical narratives and the sharing of many deeply personal memories and everyday experiences.”

The Lester Prize

The Panel was pleased to see a wide variety of forms of portraiture submitted and a selection of domestically-scaled works (rather than just large-scaled expressions). Media such as oil, acrylic, watercolour, charcoal, ink, mixed media and embroidery will feature in this year's collection.

Also announced today were the thirty Youth Award finalists selected from High School across the country. The Semi-Finalists' Salon (an exhibition of over forty-five artworks not selected for the Main Awards Exhibition) will allow the public to experience the full variety of works submitted. These will be presented digitally as part of The Lester Prize's 'On The Big Screen' program and on 2.4m high outdoor exhibition boxes at Brookfield Place and other locations around the Perth CBD during November.

The Prize has had nearly 6,000 artwork entries submitted and showcased more than 1,500 finalists from across Australia since its inception. Over the last fourteen years, more than 3.2 million visitors have attended its exhibition season events and activities.

This year, The Lester Prize allowed artists to submit an unlimited number of portraits (instead of a maximum of two) and, due to physical distancing restrictions, works could be created from a photograph instead of from "life"—as long as the photograph had been approved by the subject.

Artists from across Australia were invited to submit portraits of an Australian, or Australians, that they respect or admire, or a self-portrait.

To view the finalists online from 19 August 2020: <https://www.lesterprize.com/index.php/gallery/the-lester-prize-for-portraiture/>

High res images of artists' works are available upon request.

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ABOUT THE LESTER PRIZE

The Lester Prize is managed by The Lester Inc, a not-for-profit organisation founded in 2007 to provide an avenue for artists to exhibit works of portraiture within Western Australia. With an annual prize pool worth over \$85,000, it is now one of the nation's most recognised and prestigious fine art prizes.

Working with government, peak arts bodies and community groups, it plays a critical role in helping to diversify WA's local economy, grow cultural tourism, and activate spaces through creative placemaking. The Lester Prize is proud to provide locals and visitors 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's exhibitions and public events program is targeted at diverse groups in the community and includes artist floor talks, workshops, live art demonstrations and pop-up community activations across the city. The Prize advocates for Australian art and artists through a full month-long exhibition season which includes:

- Main Exhibition of original artworks at AGWA
- Youth Exhibition of original artworks at Brookfield Place
- Outdoor Salon des Refusés and Community Exhibitions at Perth Cultural Centre and Brookfield Place
- Big Screen Displays at various locations around Perth.

KEY DATES

2020 Exhibition Season at Art Gallery WA, Perth Cultural Centre, Yagan Square, Northbridge Piazza & various locations around the Perth CBD	Sat 31 Oct – Sun 29 Nov 2020
2020 Semi-Finalists / Salon Outdoor Exhibition at Brookfield Place	Mon 2 – 27 Nov 2020
2020 Main Awards Winners announced	Fri 30 Oct 2020
2020 Youth Awards Winners announced	Wed 12 Nov 2020
2020 People's Choice Prize Winner & winning voter announced	Wed 2 Dec 2020 (5pm AWST)

For more information, visit: www.lesterprize.com

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