



MEDIA RELEASE

30 October 2020

WINNERS ANNOUNCED FOR WA'S PREMIER PORTRAIT PRIZE – THE LESTER PRIZE

Serena Cowie from Victoria with her portrait of her good friends Maria Arvanitis and Alexandra Perrott, titled *The conversation* has been announced as the 2020 winner of The Richard Lester Prize for Portraiture for WA's premier fine art prize – The Lester Prize. Serena wins \$50,000 cash donated by founding partner, Lester Group. The winner was announced tonight at the Main Awards Night at the Art Gallery of Western Australia (AGWA), where the 40 finalists' works will now be on public display until 29 November 2020 in the historic Centenary Galleries.

The Judging Panel comprised AGWA's Guest Artistic Director Ian Strange, Art Historian and Professor Dr. Clarissa Ball and Director of John Curtin Gallery Chris Malcolm. They said of the winning work "the polished execution of *The conversation* and the portrayal of the intimacy between these two larger-than-life women, offer a compelling insight into the nature of friendship in an era of social and digital media. The exquisitely refined facture of this painting is perfectly attuned to the temporal sensibilities of our technological age."

Serena, who was unable to attend the award ceremony in WA due to border restrictions, said "as an emerging artist you do face a lot of doubt and at times rejection, but this award is the greatest piece of encouragement for my career as an artist. To be celebrated with such a prestigious prize is unbelievable. This prize money presents opportunities that I could have only ever dreamed of. It will give me the freedom to just paint and hone my practice. It gives me the support and stability to produce an exhibition and find a studio other than my parents' living room."

Other winners announced on the evening:

- Tony Fini Foundation Artist Prize \$10,000 (selected by artists' peers) was awarded to Sebastian Galloway from Tasmania for their portrait of Pirrin Francis titled *Warm air, cool light*.
- Minderoo Foundation Spirit Award (selected by Minderoo Foundation) \$10,000 was awarded to Stacey Evangelou from NSW with her portrait of Joe Williams titled *Warrior by spirit*.
- Ashurst Emerging Artist (selected by our judges) \$5,000 is Kierah Falkner Babbel from VIC with her portrait of Robyn Babbel and Karl Babbel titled *Race car ya ya*.
- Two Highly Commended Prizes were awarded to Daevid Anderson from WA for his portrait of Andrew Nicholls titled *The dying slave - study*; and Joshua Cocking with his portrait of Franque Batty titled *Making plants - a portrait of Franque*. They each take home \$1,000 cash, a \$550 domestic art transport voucher, \$500 framing voucher and \$250 art supplies voucher.

Still to be announced is the \$10,000 People's Choice Prize donated by the Baldock Family, which is voted by the general public throughout the month-long exhibition. The winner will be announced on 2 December 2020.

John Langoulant, The Lester Inc Board Chair said "this year we received a record number of entries, indicating that more than ever the creative industries matter to the economy and represent an investment in our quality of life. This year The Lester Prize focused on ways we can bring people closer together through engagement in art. A virtual exhibition of our Main Awards Finalists works at AGWA will launch this weekend, offering visitors an opportunity to view this year's collection no matter their geographic location. Artists will reveal the stories behind the portraits in our 2020 Exhibition & Guided Art Practice Book with tutorials and creative resources for artists of all skill levels. Online panel discussions, demonstrations and podcasts; as well as in-person floor talks, tours and workshops will provide additional ways for people to celebrate portraiture during our month-long Exhibition and Event Season.

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 Lester Prize total prize pool available to emerging and professional artists is nearly \$85,000, making it one of Australia's most prestigious art competitions. This year a record number of artists entered the competition from across Australia, with more than 750 artists submitting portraits of an Australian, or Australians, that they respect or admire, or a self-portrait.

The Prize has had over 4,800 artwork entries submitted, showcased more than 1,300 finalists from across Australia, and more than 3.2 million visitors have attended its exhibition season events and activities since its inception.

ENDS

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 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's historic Centenary Galleries – runs from 31 Oct to 29 Nov 2020
- Big Screen Displays at various locations around Perth including Perth Cultural Centre, Northbridge Piazza, Yagan Square, Myer Forrest Chase – runs Oct – Dec 2020
- Virtual Gallery, online events and creative resources – head to lesterprize.com / Linktree @lesterprize
- Youth Exhibition of original artworks at Brookfield Place Tower 2 (123-125 St Georges Tce, Perth) – runs from 2 to 27 Nov 2020
- Outdoor Salon des Refusés and Community Exhibitions at Perth Cultural Centre and Brookfield Place – runs until 27 Nov
- Exhibition Book with Guided Art Practice Tutorials – available for purchase from The Lester Prize Welcome Desk at AGWA's Centenary Galleries and lesterprize.com / Linktree @lesterprize

KEY DATES

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

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