



MEDIA RELEASE

6 August 2021

40 FINALISTS ANNOUNCED FOR WA PORTRAIT PRIZE

40 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 fifteenth year.

The 40 finalists' works will be on public display at the Art Gallery of Western Australia (AGWA) in the Centenary Galleries from 16 October – 29 November 2021 with the main winner announced on 15 October 2021.

Entries to the 2021 prize exceeded last year's record-breaking 750 entries received from artists across Australia, which was close to double the entry numbers of previous years. All states and territories throughout Australia were represented this year amongst the 40 finalists, with the exception of NT and Tasmania. 22 of the 40 finalists are emerging artists, and there are seven former finalists including 2 previous winners in the final list.

Amongst the finalists works were 15 self-portraits, with the common theme of self-reflection and isolation as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Famous sitters include twin sisters from pop duo The Veronicas, popular WA premier Mark McGowan, and Dr Helen Haines MP. Other works are of family members, inspirational men and women, past sporting greats and indigenous elders.

This year's Main Awards Pre-Selection Panel members were Tom Müller, Emilia Galatis, Helen Turner, Isobel Wise and Jim Cathcart. The Pre-Selection Panel members 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).

Panel member Helen Turner said: "we can define portraiture as 'an artwork that tells a person's story, evoking a sense of connection between viewer and subject.' This years' portrait selection is convincingly human, personal, emotional and reveals a part of the life and story of each individual.

The panel felt the weight of responsibility and the innate difficulty of narrowing the selection of finalists, down to 5.33% of all entries. However, decisions were cohesive and with consensus and robust debate ensued when opinions varied.

The artists are all to be congratulated for demonstrating their skill and creativity, and giving us a 2021 Lester Prize of never ending fascination for the human condition, represented in it's very many stages and phases of life".

The Lester Prize

The Lester Prize is one of the nation's most recognised and prestigious fine art prizes. Thanks to the generosity of prize partnerships with the Lester Group, Tony Fini Foundation, Minderoo Foundation, Baldock Family, Ashurst and the Barton Family Foundation, the prize pool available to professional, emerging and young artists is now worth over \$100,000, including the main prize of \$50,000.

"We are again overwhelmed at the response of entries to the 2021 The Lester Prize and the quality of works submitted. It is so pleasing to see a number of emerging artists amongst the finalists, which clearly demonstrates the goal of providing an avenue for all artists to have their works exhibited.

We are lucky to be supported by so many corporates and private foundations that allow the prize pool to be one of the largest in Australia. I personally am excited about the new initiative this year of including the \$5000 Barton Family Foundation Installers' Prize in the main prize pool – this is another way to engage with and reward our finalist artists," said Annie Silberstein, The Lester Prize Executive Director.

Also announced today were the 30 Youth Award finalists selected from High Schools across the country.

The Prize has had nearly 7,000 artwork entries submitted and showcased more than 1,600 finalists from across Australia since its inception. Over the last fifteen years, more than 3.25 million visitors have attended its exhibition season events and activities.

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: lesterprize.com

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 \$100,000, it is now one of the nation's most recognised and prestigious art prizes.

The Lester Prize pool includes \$50,000 cash, \$15,000 Tony Fini Foundation Artist Prize (selected by artists' peers), the \$10,000 People's Choice Prize kindly donated by the Baldock Family (selected by the general public), the \$10,000 Minderoo Foundation Spirit Prize (selected by the Minderoo Foundation), the \$5,000 Ashhurst Emerging Artist prize (selected by our judges), \$5,000 Barton Family Foundation Installers' Prize (chosen by AGWA's installation team) and two Highly Commended Prizes which will be awarded \$2,000 cash, a \$550 domestic art transport voucher, \$500 framing voucher and \$250 art supplies voucher each.

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 finalists artworks at AGWA's historic Centenary Galleries 16 Oct– 29 Nov 2021
- Big Screen Displays at various locations around Perth including Northbridge Piazza and Myer Forrest Chase runs Oct – Nov 2021
- Virtual Gallery, online events and creative resources
- Youth Exhibition of finalist artworks at Brookfield Place Tower 2 (123-125 St Georges Tce, Perth) runs from 18 Oct – 12 Nov 2021
- Outdoor Community Exhibitions at Perth Cultural Centre and Brookfield Place runs until 29 Nov 2021

KEY DATES

2021 Exhibition Season at the Art Gallery of Western Australia (AGWA), Brookfield Place, Perth Cultural Centre, Yagan Square & various locations around Perth CBD	16 Oct– 29 Nov 2021
2021 Barton Family Foundation Installers' Prize announced	8 October 2021
2021 Adult Winners (Main Awards) announced	15 Oct 2021
2021 Youth Winners (Youth Awards) announced	27 Oct 2021
2021 People's Choice Prize (Adult) Winner & winning voter announced	2 Dec 2021

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