



MEDIA RELEASE

15 October 2021 – embargoed until 8:30pm WST

NSW ARTIST WINS WA PORTRAIT PRIZE

NSW artist Sidney Tapia for his portrait of Siaosi Feiloakitau titled *Through You* has won the 2021 Richard Lester Prize for Portraiture, taking home the \$50,000 main prize. The winners of The Lester Prize – WA's premier portrait prize, were announced tonight at the Art Gallery of WA (AGWA) where the forty finalist's works are on display for six weeks.

Sidney's work is oil on a wooden board, and small in stature – 20.3 x 20.3 cm. Siaosi is a man that established artist Sidney often speaks with at the famous Pitt Street Mall. Sidney's work was also the recipient of the inaugural Barton Family Foundation Installers' Prize of \$5,000 that was announced earlier this week.

The works were judged by Alan Dodge, Clothilde Bullen, and Helen Carroll who unanimously agreed "this work 'Through you' was the standout portrait. The use of scale and tight composition was supported by the pristine surface, focus of the artist and the subject's character shines through. The rendering of the subject is incredibly sensitive and reveals the compassion of the artist towards the subject."

Sidney began learning how to cursive write at age 3. This fascination with mark making began his quest for drawing what fascinated him, such as people, cartoons and letters. After a career in skateboarding, he picked up painting again and is currently an internationally recognised artist with murals around the world and has exhibited paintings and illustrations in Australia, USA and Japan. He is also an ambassador/influencer for a number of brands.

He said "as a multi-disciplinary artist, I'm captivated by creation. I consider it a high privilege to collaborate with the subject of my works. I hope to compliment their beauty, imparting a wonderful reflection and appreciation to the viewer. On hearing the news of my win at first I felt very taken aback, literal shivers, shocked, elated, wowed, extremely thankful and very encouraged. I still feel that way now."

Other Lester Prize winners announced this evening included:

- \$15,000 Tony Fini Foundation Artist Prize (selected by the forty finalists) – TBC
- \$10,000 Minderoo Foundation Spirit Prize (selected by the Minderoo Foundation) Emily Song – *WA Dumplings*
- \$5,000 Ashurst Emerging Artist : Illyampi Victor Burton - *WA Mamu*
- Oxlades Highly Commended : Narelle Zeller – ACT *Brave new worker*
- Oxlades Highly Commended : Sally Ryan – NSW *Never again*

The Lester Prize

The Lester Prize is one of the nations most recognised and prestigious art prizes and is now in its fifteenth year. More than 750 artists from across Australia entered this prize. The Lester Prize prize pool is now valued over \$100,000.

The Lester Prize Executive Director Annie Silberstein said “Congratulations to Sidney – taking out the inaugural Installer’s Prize at the beginning of the week was a great start for him, leading onto the main prize tonight. This shows the impressive nature and admiration of his work – from both expert and amateur art lover alike. Despite another challenging year of COVID-19 restrictions, The Lester Prize has continued to grow with another record-breaking number of entries, and we have the ongoing support of all of our sponsors and suppliers allowing us to share our exciting portrait exhibitions for the next six weeks with the WA public.”

The next event to open is the Youth Portraiture Prize for high school students across Australia. These thirty finalist’s works will be on display in Brookfield Place in Perth CBD in October and November 2021, with winners announced on 26 October 2021.

The Baldock Family People’s Choice Prize will be announced on 2 December 2021.

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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.

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

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