

Portia Geach Memorial Award

2009 Judges' Report

The 2009 Portia Geach Memorial Award attracted submissions of 328 works – one of the largest in the history of the Award – from which 51 works were selected.

The judges were impressed by the diversity and freshness evident in this year's entries. In determining the 2009 selection, the judges favoured authenticity and originality in self expression over technical proficiencies.

The judges remarked on the difficulty in making a final selection for display because of the number of competitive entries evident in the lively and engaging approaches taken by so many of the artists.

The judges felt that three paintings in particular stood out from the field. Interestingly, these three were all self portraits.

This year's winner is Christine Hiller for her work titled *The Old Painter*. The powerful composition and the robust, painterly qualities of her work particularly struck the judges. The artist contrasts the stark materiality of her own situation with the comfort offered by belief in earlier, perhaps simpler, times. Hiller's faith in the communicative power of art is apparent in the painting. Indeed, the conviction that drives the artist to portray herself in a search for inspiration and transcendence is central to the painting.

The judges highly commended Louisa Antico's *That Special Place: Self Portrait* and Grace Costanzo's *Split*.

Louisa Antico was a strong contender with her jewel-like painting that literally depicts the artist in the womb of a burgeoning nature. The lush colour and organic composition graphically illustrates Ludwig Wittgenstein's statement "I am my world".

In complete contrast, Grace Costanzo's self portrait uses a muted palette and subtle tonality. The artist pictures herself alone against a plain background, fractured in time and space.

The judges appreciated the high standards of the entries and would like to thank all the artists for their support of the award.

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Michael Desmond
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