

Portia Geach Memorial Award

2007 Judges' Report

The 2007 Portia Geach Memorial Award attracted submissions of 316 works from which 55 works were selected.

During this year's selection process, the judges were pleased to see a diversity of approaches towards the genre of portrait painting, which at its best traditionally balances the central criteria of "likeness" with the more abstract or formal qualities of painting. The judges also responded to a sense of painterly integrity and inventiveness used by many of the artists in capturing the presence of the subject.

Commenting on the selection, the judges took precautions to protect the breadth of styles and approaches to portrait painting, and to include what they believed to be the best of the submitted works.

This year's winner, Marianne Coutts' work *Melbourne*, is distinguished by a sense of honesty and directness, as well as an integrity of form and content which is the mark of a gifted artist. Her work balances the particularities of observation demanded by representation, with a painterly touch which is both vigorous and sensitive. The centrally placed figure gives an initial impression of simplicity which belies the spatial complexity of the composition. The work presents a profoundly satisfying integration of interior and exterior space and light which links the subjective space of artist's studio to the world outside, and by implication, to the psychological space we occupy as viewers.

The judges highly commended Kim Shannon for her work *Self Divided*. Like the winning work, this painting also reflects an honesty and integrity of conception. The work strongly articulates in a particularly original way, a balance of the tension between figurative and formal properties, and between representation and abstraction.

The judges would like to thank all of those who contributed to a large submission of works and for their continued support of portraiture as an important aspect of contemporary painting.

18 September 2007

Barry Pearce
Jude Rae
Jane Watters