

Portia Geach Memorial Award

2004 Judges' Report

This year's Award attracted a submission of 315 works which is the highest ever achieved. From this, an exhibition of 60 works has been selected showing the extraordinary breadth of styles and approaches to portrait painting.

The judges remarked on the prevalence this year of a cool pictorial realism that refers to photography. The two outstanding works that were selected for the prize and high commendation shared this character. They were Nerissa Lea's "The Sheik & Me, Self Portrait with Imagined Portrait of Chad Morgan after Frida Kahlo" and Catherine Fox's "Face 3 (Self Portrait)".

The judges appreciated that these weren't mere copies of photographs but works which had impressive painterly qualities and a strong personal, imaginative aspect.

Nerissa Lea sets up confrontation in a studio interior between a po-faced female artist (self portrait) and the renowned Australian country music singer with a madcap grin. There is almost a Vermeer-like clarity of detail and texture which makes the strangeness all the more compelling.

Judges commended Self-portrait by Catherine Fox. Once again the judges admired its painterly craft and freshness of colour. The sensitivity and skill of the execution accentuated the vulnerability and introspection of the character portrayed.

The judges would also like to pay their respects to all of those who contributed to a large and excellent submission of works. They have made every effort to preserve the diverse character of the original submission.

13 September 2004

Terence Maloon
Wendy Sharpe
Jane Watters