



Media release

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George Kennedy wins 2019 RACT Insurance Tasmanian Portrait Prize

George Kennedy of Hobart has been crowned the winner of the 2019 RACT Insurance Tasmanian Portrait Prize (TPP), taking home \$10,000 to help kickstart his artistic career.

The winning portrait titled *Mongrel* was selected by RACTI Insurance TPP Judges Nicholas Harding, Dawn Oelrich and Tess Campbell from an incredible field of over 100 entries.

RACTI Insurance TPP Judge and Archibald Prize Winner 2001, Nicholas Harding said the judges were impressed by the calibre and high quality of works as well as the refreshing diversity portrayed in the artwork.

“The judges’ final decision was a very unanimous one, and we were all were struck by both the vulnerability and the self-awareness of George’s portrait,” Mr Harding said.

“All of the judges were drawn to *Mongrel*, not only for its beautiful aesthetic balance but also to the story behind the artwork which speaks of George’s journey to transform his gender identity.”

The annual competition invites Tasmanian artists aged 30 and under to produce a portrait of a living Tasmanian who is important to them.

This year’s runner up was announced as Chas Hughes for his painting titled *A night at the buffet*. Chas received \$2,000.

Joshua Andree also received \$500 for taking out the Sponsors’ Choice award with his entry *Self Portrait with Overturned Wheel Barrow*.

RACT Insurance CEO Trent Sayers said the prize had become an invaluable contributor towards Tasmania’s burgeoning creative sector.

“RACT Insurance is honoured to be associated with this award which was established to foster the development of emerging Tasmanian artists and provide an opportunity for the public to appreciate their talents,” Mr Sayers said.

“Picasso famously said ‘Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life’, and as the only Tasmanian based insurance company, we are privileged to be able to support local initiatives such as the TPP which contribute so much to the state’s vibrancy.

“Now in its 12th year, the competition has seen more than \$100,000 go towards ensuring top young Tasmanian artists can continue to follow their creative pursuits and we are looking forward to continuing our partnership for years to come.

“Each finalist’s pieces are also exhibited across the state, providing wonderful exposure within the art community, as well as the opportunity to sell their works to the public.”

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The exhibition, showcasing the works of all 33 finalists will be on display at the Long Gallery in Hobart from Saturday, 12 October to Sunday, 27 October, before travelling to the Queen Victoria Museum Inveresk in Launceston from Friday, 1 November to Saturday, 17 November, and the Paranapel in Devonport from Saturday, 23 November to Sunday, 19 January.

ENDS

For more information, Lucinda Szczypior, Font PR, 0455 913 371

NOTE: Images of all the winners' works are available on request.

WINNING ARTIST STATEMENTS

Winner: George Kennedy

In reflection of my 24 years, I have come to endearingly refer to myself as a mongrel, a hybrid of many opposing natures. Adventurous but anxious, competitive but soft, friendly but shy. I spent the first two decades of my life as a female. That version of myself remains a part of me, though I no longer see her when I look in the mirror, her appearance erased by hormones and surgery. She is my effeminacy, my discomfort around men, my affinity for brightly coloured clothes. She is my friendships with women, and my closeness with my mother.

As a child, I loathed all colours associated with girliness. The pink backdrop in the painting conveys my growing appreciation of the feminine side I once rejected, where I now find my compassion, strength, and kindness. Leaning forward in vulnerability, I hug my knees for comfort. My relationship with the outside world remains tense, as a powerless entity in a population which debates my rights and questions my sanity. Conversely, my gaze suggests a calmness. I am finally at ease with the individual facets of my identity and I embrace their un-orthodoxies.

Runner up: Chas Hughes

Aysha Buffet. Hobarts preeminent Drag Queen.

Working on a long term project with this Queen has opened up a new world of fashion and makeup that I was unaware existed. There is a meditative routine to this preparation. As the Queen slowly enters Drag the confident and sassy veil begins to appear.

Sponsors Choice: Joshua Andree

Self Portrait with Overturned Wheel Barrow.

Figures in red, strangers in an unknown world. Memory and identity are closely linked, yet memory deceives, is broken and reconstructed. This self-portrait explores the middle ground between experience and memory and the fugitive nature of remembering and its role in picturing the "self". Layered imagery works to evoke memories of a childhood, with the possibility of a disturbance and incongruity written between the lines.

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While being a reflection on memory and the reconstruction of identity, this is also a portrait of myself and my twin brother. Experiences of a childhood spent together fuse lyrically, where the almost seen acts as a burst of memory. The inquiry into this relationship becomes a layered paradox of the intentional and unintentional, based on a personal investigation into moments of perceived, yet unclear remembered experiences.

My approach to portraiture in this sense deliberately eludes the clear representation of self or identity, and focuses on what falls between, and the struggle to create identity in both a changing world, and in relation to another.