

# At the Scottish National Portrait Gallery – the BP Portrait Award

## BP PORTRAIT AWARD

16 December 2017 – 11 March 2018  
SCOTTISH NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY  
1 Queen Street, Edinburgh EH2 1JD  
Free admission | 0131 624 6200  
#BPPortrait

An Edinburgh College of Art graduate's prize-winning entry in a prestigious, worldwide portrait competition will go on show in Scotland for the first time this winter.

The 2017 [BP Portrait Award](#) exhibition, which opens at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery on 18 December, will feature 53 stand-out works selected from 2,580 entries, by artists from 87 countries, including *Breech!* by Benjamin Sullivan which took this year's first prize.



*BP Portrait Award* is one of the most important platforms for new and established portrait painters alike. Its first prize of £30,000 makes it one of the largest global arts competitions.

The 2017 first prize winner of *BP Portrait Award* is **Benjamin Sullivan** (b. 1977), whose painting *Breech!* is a tender depiction of his wife Virginia breastfeeding their eight-month-old daughter. It took Sullivan less than five weeks to create the intimate painting, which reflects on the worrisome time the parents faced during Edith's birth, and celebrates their love for their new child.

The prize judges, including broadcaster Kirsty Wark and artist Michael Landy, were particularly struck by the warmth and emotion present in Sullivan's composition, which evokes Madonna and Child paintings through the ages and the depth of the maternal bond. The artist was presented with a £30,000 prize and a commission, at the National Portrait Gallery Trustees' discretion, worth £5,000.

Grimsby-born, Suffolk-based Sullivan holds a BA (Hons) in Drawing and Painting from Edinburgh College of Art. Sullivan was previously awarded the third prize for *Hugo* in 2016, a portrait of the poet Hugo Williams. Sullivan's work has been selected for display 12 times for *BP Portrait Award*, in 2002 and every year from 2006 to 2015.

The French artist **Thomas Ehretsmann** (b. 1974) won the second prize of £10,000 for *Double Portrait*, a painting of his wife Caroline. Ehretsmann was inspired by a walk the couple was taking in a park and the way the light shone on Caroline's face, which he said reminded him of the work of French naturalist painters. In order to infuse the ephemeral moment with something more timeless, the artist used multiple layers of semi-transparent acrylic paint, a technique which he often employs in his work. The title suggests the passage from one state of being to another, and hints at Caroline's pregnancy.

Born in Mulhouse, France, Ehretsmann gained a degree in illustration from the Ecole des Arts Décoratifs, Strasbourg. His work as an illustrator has been featured in the *New Yorker*, *Rolling Stone* and *Elle Magazine*. His portrait *Vacuum 2* was selected for the *BP Portrait Award 2016* exhibition.

The third prize of £8,000 went to **Antony Williams** (b. 1964) for *Emma*. The painting is named after the sitter, Emma Bruce, who modelled for Williams almost continuously for over a decade, during which the relationship between the two developed into friendship. Although Emma is shown naked, her crossed arms prevent the viewer from seeing her directly;

Williams wanted to portray both her vulnerability and determination.

Williams studied at Farnham College and Portsmouth University. An established portrait artist, his work has been seen in solo exhibitions in London and Madrid and included in the Royal Academy of Arts Summer Exhibition, the Royal Society of Portrait Painters Exhibitions and previously in *BP Portrait Award* exhibitions in 1995, 1998, 2005, 2007, 2010, 2014 and 2015.

The £7,000 *BP Young Artist Award*, which goes to a selected entrant aged between 18 and 30, was won by New Zealander **Henry Christian-Slane** (b. 1990) for *Gabi*, a portrait of his wife. Christian-Slane studied graphic design at Auckland University of Technology; this is the first time the artist and illustrator has been selected for the *BP Portrait Award* exhibition.

Also on display in the exhibition is the work of Lithuanian artist **Laura Guoke**, the winner of the *BP Travel Award 2016*, a £6,000 annual prize enabling artists to work in a different environment. Guoke travelled to refugee camps in Ritsona, Greece where she sketched, photographed and filmed some of the most vulnerable refugees from Syria, as well as the volunteers helping them. Guoke's powerful, large-scale portrait shows migrants as individuals with names and faces, and conveys their unique stories.

**Casper White** won the *BP Travel Award 2017* for his proposal to portray music fans in clubs and concert venues in Berlin and Mallorca. White aims to represent an often youth-related subculture that is not traditionally recorded in portrait paintings. White's work will be displayed in *BP Portrait Award* in 2018.

2017 marks the Portrait Award's 38<sup>th</sup> year at the National Portrait Gallery, London and the 28<sup>th</sup> year of sponsorship by

BP. This extremely popular annual exhibition which always proves to be a great success when shown in Scotland aims to encourage artists over the age of 18 to focus upon and develop the skills of portraiture in their work.

Other works on show in *BP Portrait Award* range from informal depictions of friends and family, to revealing images of famous faces, with a broad variety of styles and approaches to contemporary painted portraiture. As well as first prize-winner Sullivan, Scottish-based artists include Fiona Graham-Mackay, Ross McAuley and Angela Repping.

Scots-born **Fiona Graham-Mackay** was commissioned by BBC Radio 4 to paint the British writer, poet and broadcaster Lemn Sissay. Graham-Mackay is known for her portraits of the British royal family; her portrait of Sir Andrew Motion was included in the BP Portrait Award 2016.

Canadian artist **Ross McAuley**, now based in Glasgow, has had works featured in group exhibitions in Toronto, Glasgow and London including the Sky Arts Portrait Artist of the Year, 2017. His brightly coloured painting *Self-Portrait with Pear* shows the artist wearing a vintage sports jacket.

Dutch artist **Angela Repping** gained a BA (Hons) in fine art from Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and lives in Scotland. Her work has been seen in exhibitions at the Royal Glasgow Institute, the Royal Scottish Academy and the Paisley Art Institute. Her work *Profile* is a portrait of her friend Kim.

Christopher Baker, Director of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, commented: *"We are delighted to welcome back to Edinburgh and the National Galleries of Scotland the BP Portrait Award. It encompasses a wealth of artistic talent and demonstrates in such an inspiring way the vitality and variety of contemporary painted portraiture. The exhibition and programmes around it will I am sure once again prove to be*

*immensely popular."*