

At the National Galleries of Scotland – BP Portrait Award

The 2018 *BP Portrait Award* exhibition, which opens at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery on 15 December, will feature 48 stand-out works including *An Angel at my Table* by Miriam Escofet, which took this year's first prize.

An Angel at my Table shows Escofet's elderly mother seated at her kitchen table surrounded by tea crockery. The painting suggests a sense of space, perspective and time which conveys the sitter's inner stillness and calm. Escofet says she was also conscious whilst painting that she wanted to 'transmit an idea of the Universal Mother, who is at the centre of our psyche and emotional world.'

A delightful and accomplished portrait by National Galleries of Scotland staff member **Laura Nardo** will also be displayed as part of this year's *BP Portrait Award* exhibition. The painting, titled *LTR Team A*, which features Nardo's fellow Security and Visitor Services colleague Vittorio Milazzo, was born out of a friendship between the two colleagues. Nardo and Milazzo share Italian heritage; Nardo was born in Turin and has lived in Scotland since 2013 while Milazzo, a second-generation Scots-Italian, has family connections to Cassino, and Marsala in Sicily.

The winning portrait was selected from 2,667 entries from 88 countries, submitted for judging anonymously by a panel which included journalist Rosie Millard and artist Glenn Brown. Commenting on the portrait, Rosie Millard said 'The crisp tablecloth and china are rendered so beautifully – and then you see that one of the plates and a winged sculpture on the table appear to be moving which adds a surreal quality to the portrait. It is also a very sensitive depiction of an elderly sitter.' The artist was presented with a £35,000 prize and a commission, at the National Portrait Gallery Trustees' discretion, worth £7,000.

The *BP Portrait Award* is one of the most important platforms for new and established portrait painters alike. Its first prize of £35,000 makes it one of the largest global arts competitions.

The second prize of £12,000 went to American painter, **Felicia Forte**, for *Time Traveller, Matthew Napping*, depicting her boyfriend Matthew asleep in bed. The judges were particularly impressed by the artist's bold use of colour, creating a painting that exudes atmosphere while also being distinctly intimate and personal.

The third prize of £10,000 went to Chinese artist, **Zhu Tongyao** for *Simone*, his portrait of his neighbours' child from his time staying in Florence. The judges appreciated how the work combined the tradition of Renaissance portraiture with the sitter's modern style that conveyed a compelling portrayal of a youth on the cusp of adulthood.

The *BP Young Artist Award* of £9,000 for the work of a selected entrant aged between 18 and 30 has been won by 28 year-old Suffolk based artist **Ania Hobson** for *A Portrait of two Female Painters* – a portrait of the artist with her sister in law. The judges liked the handling of paint and directness in this work, capturing an interesting air of mystery around the relationship of the two young women.

The winner of the *BP Travel Award 2018*, an annual prize to enable artists to work in a different environment on a project related to portraiture, was **Robert Seidel** for his proposal to travel along the route of the river Danube by train, boat and bike to connect with people and make portraits in the regions through which the river passes. The prize of £8,000 is open to applications from any of this year's *BP Portrait Award*-exhibited artists, except the prize winners.

The *BP Travel Award 2017* was won by **Casper White** for his proposal to create works about music fans in clubs and concert venues in Berlin and Mallorca, representing an often youth-related subculture that is not traditionally recorded in portrait paintings. The resulting work will also be displayed in the *BP Portrait Award 2018* exhibition.

2018 is the *Portrait Award's* 39th year at the National Portrait Gallery, London and 29th 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.



Artists from or working in Scotland featured in the exhibition include **Mark H. Lawrence** with *Mr & Mrs Cooper. Separated.* and **Laura Nardo** with *LTR Team A.*

Christopher Baker, Director of European and Scottish Art and Portraiture at the National Galleries of Scotland said: *"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. We are particularly pleased this year, to be displaying a painting by Laura Nardo from the National Galleries – the portrait she has made of her colleague Vittorio Milazzo is such an affectionate and engaging work. The BP Portrait Award exhibition and programmes around it will, I am sure, once again prove to be immensely popular."*

BP North Sea Regional President Ariel Flores said: *"BP's support for the arts is part of our wider contribution to society and we are proud of our long association with the prestigious BP Portrait Award. Promoting the very best in contemporary portrait painting, the BP Portrait Award remains an unmissable highlight of the annual arts calendar. We would*

like to congratulate the prize winners and indeed all who entered. The standard, as always, was of the highest calibre.”

15 December 2018 – 10 March 2019

SCOTTISH NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

1 Queen Street, Edinburgh, EH2 1JD

Free admission | [0131 624 6200](tel:01316246200)

#BPPortrait