

RSW's Open Annual Exhibition – the winners

An eye-catching painting of a fish by an 18-year-old student has scooped a prize worth £3000 at a prestigious Scottish art exhibition in Edinburgh

Gabriela Wysocka from Glasgow is one of the youngest ever winners of the Alexander Graham Munro Travel Award for artists under 30 at the RSW's 144th Open Annual Exhibition.

The show, which is in the RSA Upper Galleries in Edinburgh until 5 February, brings together over 300 paintings by some of the best artists in Scotland and beyond working in water-based media.

Gabriela's painting, 'Veiltail', which was inspired by a visit to an aquarium while on holiday in Gran Canaria, is her biggest painting to date and the first to be selected for a national exhibition.

She says: "I really couldn't believe it. I had to read the email five times. Just having my painting accepted by such a renowned exhibition was amazing, to win this is more than my brain could conjure up.

"I've loved drawing and painting all my life. It gives me immense satisfaction to bring a work to completion, to pick up a piece of paper and create something where there was nothing before."

RSW President Anthea Gage said: "Gabriela's work was a clear

winner. It's such a dramatic painting, and for someone of her age it is incredibly skilled and shows enormous potential.

"Our hope with this award is always to encourage painting. Many young artists choose to focus on installations and electronic media and it worries me that skills such as painting might get lost. If we can encourage it in any way, we would like to do that."

Meanwhile, a botanical artist who spent more than a year completing a meticulously detailed painting of a sprig of bramble has won the exhibition's top prize.



RSW Watercolours Winning Artists

Pictured are RSW Watercolours award winning artists with RSW President Anthea Gage (front left, wearing chain and medal).

Front row from left: Flora Lu, Anthea Gage (RSW President), Jenny Martin and Gabriela Wysocka.

Back row from left are: Rosina Gavin, Peter Quinn, Fiona Strickland, Duncan Lamont, Shona Barr, Rhona Kirkpatrick and Morag Thomson Merriman.

PHOTO – Colin Hattersley Photography

Fiona Strickland, from Falkirk, has been named as the winner

of the W Gordon Smith and Mrs Jay Gordonsmith Award which is worth £4,000.

Her painting, 'Bramble', took more than a year to finish and was made by building up layer upon layer of transparent colour with a tiny no.1 brush.

Fiona, a former principle teacher of art at Bannockburn High School in Stirling who took up botanical painting when she took early retirement, has exhibited her work in the USA and Europe, and has won the prestigious Gold Medal for botanical art awarded by the Royal Horticultural Society.

However, she says this prize means the most to her. "Here I'm not up against people who paint in the same kind of style, there are lots of different styles. Winning the award was a big surprise – I'm really humbled."



Fiona Strickland, a former principal teacher of art at Bannockburn High School in Stirling who took up botanical painting when she took early retirement, has exhibited her

work in the USA and Europe, and has won the prestigious Gold Medal for botanical art awarded by the Royal Horticultural Society.

The award is worth £4000.

PHOTO Colin Hattersley Photography

She says she prefers ordinary plants to rare and exotic specimens. "It's the overlooked things I find particularly beautiful. We tend to recognising something like a bramble or a daffodil so we might not stop to look at a painting. I want the painting to say, 'Look at me! Have you not noticed this about this plant before?'. "

RSW President Anthea Gage says: "This is a magnificent example of how powerful the traditional approach to watercolour can be, and to make a painting with such detail on such a large scale is an incredible feat.

"Art is not a competitive sport. Everyone who has a picture on the wall in this show has done really, really well, especially non-members who have gone through the open selection process. However, it is lovely to be able to support artists with prizes and recognise excellent work."

Gabriela and Fiona are among 13 artists to receive awards at the exhibition which recognises excellence in a wide variety of approaches to water-based paint.



Gabriela is pictured with her painting "Veiltail"
PHOTO Colin Hattersley Photography