

MEDIA RELEASE

20 October 2020

Winning artists from 45th Rio Tinto Martin Hanson Memorial Art Awards draw inspiration from variety of sources

Bundaberg artist Marlies Oakley has taken out the top prize at the prestigious 45th Rio Tinto Martin Hanson Memorial Art Awards held at the Gladstone Regional Art Gallery and Museum (GRAGM) on Saturday, 17 October.

Marlies won the coveted Rio Tinto Martin Hanson Memorial Art Award for her artwork *Physical Distancing*, taking home the top prize of \$15,000 in the process.

The 45th Rio Tinto Martin Hanson Memorial Art Awards took a different approach in 2020 due to the ongoing COVID-19 health emergency, with attendance at the usually packed O'Connell Gallery at GRAGM scaled back in size.

However, a lack of physical attendance was made up with a large online following with the event live streamed via the GRAGM Facebook page with viewership peaking at 133 viewers with 1041 unique viewers watching the stream within 36 hours of its airing.

Twelve awards were announced across four sections – Easel Paintings, Works on Paper, Three Dimensional & Fibre Works and Digital Works – with a further six awards in the overall category.

The 45th Rio Tinto Martin Hanson Memorial Art Awards judge, Sue Smith said *Physical Distancing* perfectly represented how the world has been “turned upside down” in 2020 as a result of COVID-19.

“Our world has been turned upside down this year as Marlies suggests in her original interpretation of the impact of the global pandemic,” Ms Smith said.

“It is a work with a strong visual impact and a wealth of intricate detail that invites close inspection.

“The individual elements – cut outs from vintage sources – have been judiciously chosen to offer both contrast with each other and yet also blend into a cohesive whole.

“The hand-cutting and assembling of this work was no doubt a time-consuming process and the theme is ultimately sobering, but the work has small touches of humour throughout and reminds us of earlier good times which we certainly hope will return.”

Marlies, who was entering the Rio Tinto Martin Hanson Memorial Art Awards for a 10th year, said she initially forgot when the Awards were on, which drastically cut down her time to work on a piece for submission.

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"I nearly forgot about the Martin Hanson Awards because this year has been so upside down with COVID I only started work with two weeks to go," Marlies said.

"So over four days I put my collage together – it was spur of the moment."

Marlies said her inspiration for her collage grew as the work evolved.

"I love architecture, so I started off with European-inspired cityscapes and then thought I'd turn it around and have a mirror image and just do Australia, so it's like the northern and southern hemispheres," she said.

"I collected the Australian images that happened to be in black and white from vintage books and magazines.

"I thought that it looked like the northern and southern hemispheres with different time zones, day and night, and then the black glittery area separating those hemispheres represented social distancing where we can't really get to see each other – I can't see my father in Germany because I'm stuck in Australia.

"The idea came together really well and it was so much fun to do because I got the chance to put my little quirks in there as well.

"It was fun to not be too serious, especially in the times we're living right now."

Marlies said she would save her \$15,000 prize money and use it to visit her father in Germany once travel restrictions are lifted.

Gladstone Region Mayor Matt Burnett praised all those involved who made the Awards come to fruition given the circumstances surrounding COVID-19.

"There were challenges to deliver this prestigious event in 2020 due to concerns regarding COVID-19, but sincere thanks must go to all the sponsors, artists, GRAGM and Council employees, and of course judge Sue Smith, for making these awards a success," Councillor Burnett said.

"It was great to see an audience in attendance and I want to also give special thanks to them, and those watching on from home, for their great interest in the arts."

Gladstone Region Councillor and Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF) chair Glenn Churchill said all 183 entries were winners in his eyes.

"These artists are all winners because they are all participating," Councillor Churchill said.

"We should be proud and honoured that we have such a wonderful community of art, not only in the Gladstone Region, but in Central Queensland and the whole of Australia."

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Cr Churchill reminded people to vote in the QAL People's Choice Awards between now and 26 November and that all artworks would be on display at GRAGM until 30 January 2021.

"It's now time for the public to have their say on what they believe is the best artwork from the 45th Rio Tinto Martin Hanson Memorial Art Awards by voting in the QAL People's Choice Awards," he said.

"The voting kiosks at GRAGM will be open between now and 5pm on Thursday, 26 November so please take the time to fill out your entry and vote for who you believe should win one of four QAL People's Choice Awards."

Please visit <http://gragm.qld.gov.au/art-awards> for more information on the Martin Hanson Memorial Art Awards.

The 45th Rio Tinto Martin Hanson Memorial Art Awards winners list:

OVERALL

- The Rio Tinto Martin Hanson Memorial Art Award (\$15,000) Marlies Oakley *Physical Distancing*
- The Pamela Whitlock Memorial Acquisitive Award Sponsored by Gladstone Regional Council (\$5000) Elena Churilova *Wild Swans (Bajool Weir)*
- The Pieter Groen-int-woud Memorial Young Emerging Artist Award Sponsored by Multitrade (\$1500) Katie Hovelroud *Plants and Humans*
- The Local Murri Artist Award Sponsored by Elizabeth & Leo Zussino (\$1250) Wendy McNeil *Carnival of Flowers*
- The Gail Sellers Local Artist Award (\$1000) Irene Sparks *After the Rain*
- The Installers Choice Award Sponsored by Laureen Tkacik (\$500) Andrea Farrow *Plucky Pelicans*

SECTION 1: EASEL PAINTINGS

- The Gladstone Area Water Board Award (\$2000) Suyee Clifford *Harbour City 2020*
- The Gladstone Regional Council Award (\$1000) Andrea Chapman *The Race Plan*
- The Helmut Breckwoldt Award Sponsored by Gladstone Picture Framing and Art Materials (\$500) Genoveva Verity-Armero *Lara*

SECTION 2: WORKS ON PAPER

- The Australia Pacific LNG Award (\$2000) Doug Spowart *HOME*
- The Natalia Muszkat Award (\$1000) Carmen Beezley-Drake *Outback Road*
- The Creative Gladstone Region Inc. Award (\$500) Victoria Cooper *Being Present*

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SECTION 3: THREE DIMENSIONAL & FIBRE WORKS

- The Queensland Energy Resources (QER) Award (\$2000) Veronika Zeil *Echo Forest–Black Summer*
- The Classic Hits 4CC Award (\$1000) Janette Strudwick *mid-summer-meltdown*
- The CQUniversity Award \$500 Andreia Pereira *Persephone*

SECTION 4: DIGITAL WORKS

- The Newprint HRG Award (\$2000) Luke Graham *Chasing Gold*
- The Southern Cross Austereo Award (\$1000) Emma Thorp *“0 to 10”*
- The Crow Street Creative Award \$500 Christine Krebs *Don’t Leave Earth Without It.*

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