

## Olive Cotton Award finalists offer a window into the lives of others

*Prestigious national photographic portraiture prize to draw crowds to Tweed Regional Gallery*

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Thursday, 4 July 2019

**The 79 finalists selected in this year's prestigious Olive Cotton Award for photographic portraiture provide a fascinating window into the lives of their subjects. The national Award will be on display from 12 July.**

A total of 432 entries were received for the 2019 Award, continuing a steady increase in submissions for the Gallery's nationally recognised, biennial competition.

2019 Guest Judge, Australian photo-media artist Marian Drew, shortlisted finalists that explore the issue of identity via the complex relationship of sitter, photographer and viewer. Of her approach to the judging process, Ms Drew said, "As a judge, I'm looking for something genuine, reflective, curious and fragile — ideas and images that lie at the edge, generating diversity and subtlety".

In her essay for the exhibition catalogue, Ms Drew said: "Fashioned into every portrait is the maker of the image. We may see them reflected in the expression of the person photographed or in the strategies, techniques and ideas that produce the photograph... looking at portraits, one holds a mirror to oneself."

2019 Prize Coordinator Meredith Cusack said that this year's Olive Cotton Award also invites viewers to consider the relationship between technology, photography, time and experience. Entries include a flattened 3D photogrammetric model made from 250 photographs and a series of overlaid hour-long exposures - both processes aiming to capture a sense of the subjects' experience of sitting for a portrait.

"Time and timing are present in many of this year's entries. Whether capturing a loved one at the beginning or end of their life, a chance fleeting moment or a prolonged sitting, it is easy to see why the 'frozen' image is so poignant. What better way to explore themes of transience, loss or in-between states?," Ms Cusack said.

Among the personal and politicised subjects are a number of well-known faces including Australian domestic violence campaigner and 2015 Australian of the Year, Rosie Batty AO, philanthropist Tim Fairfax AC and Australia's oldest dancer, 104-year-old Eileen Kramer.

Regional photographers continue to be well represented in the Award with Steve Bush, Francis Cloake, Justin Ealand, Natalie Grono, Brett Moffatt, Lisa Sorgini, Rob Scott-Mitchell, Marc Stapelberg and Craig Tuffin among the finalists. The finalists are also drawn from across Australia, including Ella Dreyfus, Stephen Dupont, Petrina Hicks, Damien Shen, Jacqui Stockdale, Greg Weight and Anne Zahalka.

The artists are vying for a \$20,000 prize for the overall winner, with Marian Drew announcing the winner at the opening function and awards night on Saturday 13 July from 5pm.

All 79 finalists will be on exhibition at Tweed Regional Gallery until Sunday 22 September.

For further information, visit <http://artgallery.tweed.nsw.gov.au> or call the Gallery on (02) 6670 2790. Tweed Regional Gallery & Margaret Olley Art Centre is open Wednesday to Sunday, 10am to 5pm.

### Image credits:

- Melissa Anderson, *Rosie Batty* 2018 silver gelatin print. Image courtesy: the Artist
- Gerwyn Davies, *Hedge* 2017 archival inkjet print. Image courtesy: the Artist

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The Gallery and Café is open from Wednesday to Sunday 10am – 5pm.