

## Winner of prestigious \$20,000 Olive Cotton Award announced *Tweed Regional Gallery hosts biennial award for photographic portraiture*

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Saturday, 13 July 2019

**Belinda Mason has won the \$20,000 overall prize for the 2019 Olive Cotton Award announced this evening at an official opening and presentation ceremony at Tweed Regional Gallery in Murwillumbah.**

Belinda Mason's *Taken* has been selected as the winning portrait in the 2019 Olive Cotton Award for photographic portraiture. Ms Mason is the tenth artist to win this award, which first began as an annual award in 2005. She is one of 79 Finalists, including emerging and established photographers from around Australia.

This year's Judge is Marian Drew, one of Australia's most influential and significant photo-media artists. Ms Drew commented on the high standard of works, taking over two hours to make her final decision. Her choice was influenced by the photographic object and its ability to engage the viewer with its subject.

"In the context of screen culture the photographic object is far more visceral and sensual than its screen counterpart, through a mutual gaze one is transported long enough to forget oneself, or rather see oneself in the 'other'," Ms Drew said.

Ms Drew believes that rather than lose its power through the millions of photos produced on screen every day, a photographic portrait exhibition such as the Olive Cotton Award, "gives us time to really think and feel about our connection to other people, reviving our sense of empathy". This is particularly apparent in the winning portrait whose subject is a survivor of childhood trauma.

Marian also **Highly Commended** works by Brett Moffatt, Dave Carswell, Michael Corridore, and Sam Scoufos.

Thanks to the generosity of the Friends of the Gallery, Petrina Hick's *Cleopatra* was acquired for the Gallery's collection with Director Susi Muddiman OAM awarding it the **2019 Director's Choice**. Further - and with unanimous support from the Foundation Board - the portrait *Tim Fairfax* by Russell Shakespeare was acquired for the Gallery.

Ms Muddiman described Hick's work as "provocative, mysterious, suggestive and a little eerie".

"Petrina is an artist I continue to find surprising. Her work is always beautifully executed with a strong narrative. Petrina also has a long association with the prize since its early days as the then Josephine Ulrich Photographic Prize. The Gallery's collection plays an integral role in my selection, and I am thrilled that this work, and the Russell Shakespeare portrait of Tim Fairfax AC, whose humility and gentlemanly nature have been captured so beautifully, will join the collection," Ms Muddiman said.

Ms Muddiman also singled out the work of Jacqui Stockdale, Craig Tuffin, Brett Moffatt and Gary Grealy as deserving special attention.

Visitors to the exhibition can cast their own vote in the People's Choice Award for the duration of the exhibition. The exhibitor with the most votes receives \$250, donated by the Friends of the Gallery.

A strong showing of 432 entries were received this year for the biennial award, which is funded by Olive Cotton's family in memory of Cotton, who was one of Australia's leading 20th century photographers.

A full list of finalists is available on the Gallery's website at <https://artgallery.tweed.nsw.gov.au/PrizesAndAwards/OliveCotton>. The Olive Cotton Award exhibition will run until Sunday 22 September. The Gallery is open Wednesdays to Sundays from 10am to 5pm (closed Mondays and Tuesdays). Entry to view the exhibition is free.

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