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*Portia Geach
Memorial Award*



Portia Geach, *Portrait of the Artist's Sister*, c.1915 (detail) 90 x 74.5cm

"... for the best portraits painted from life of some man or woman distinguished in Art, Letters or the Sciences by any female artist resident in Australia during the twelve months preceding the date fixed by my Trustees for sending in the picture and who has been born in Australia or was British born or has become a naturalised Australian and whose place of domicile is Australia."

JUDGES' REPORT

In spite of a diversity of style in the entries for this year's Portia Geach Memorial Award, the number of works which successfully addressed the challenge of portraiture was comparatively small. At the top end of the submissions were works which showed both competence and an intelligent resourcefulness. It would be encouraging to see more artists producing work of this calibre enter the award.

The winning work Maria Isabel Cruz's self portrait *Maria* is chosen for its direct strength. In examining identity through both physical appearance and name, Cruz has presented a simple but compelling work. Susan Dorothea White's *Me After Brain Surgery* is awarded a Highly Commended for its complex intensity in using a delicate technique to deal with a difficult subject matter with clarity and psychological insight.

In selecting the exhibition we chose to present a multiplicity of approaches and commend the work of Mary Moore, *Prima Facie*, an exploration of the way her child maps her face. Last year's winner, Su Baker's *The Way I Look and the Way I Feel* and Madeleine Winch's (1996 Highly Commended) witty *The Artist and the Muse* were both commended, as was Cecilia Yashiro's *Samuel*. Works chosen represented aspects of identity which were both specific and localised or were based on wider social and cultural history such as Julie Dowling's interesting work *Budimia: Broken Hearts*.

It is hoped that next year's Award will attract a variety of approaches, nulifying the stigma which used to separate traditional and contemporary responses. Artists willing to respond to the involvement of portraiture can both test the parameters of the genre and demonstrate the plurality which exists in contemporary art practice.

Christine France
Anne Graham
Terence Maloon
