



**media release - mosman art prize - winners announcement**

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## **David Fairbairn wins 2012 Mosman Art Prize**

Congratulations to DAVID FAIRBAIRN, winner of the 65<sup>th</sup> annual Mosman Art Prize

Announced today, 20 July 2012, at the official exhibition opening, David Fairbairn has won the 2012 Mosman Prize Art for his mixed media work, *Seated Figure J.B. with Orange Ground*, a portrait of artist James Barker. Fairbairn was awarded \$30,000 for his winning work that will be on display at the award exhibition at Mosman Art Gallery, 21 July - 26 August.

David Fairbairn is one of Australia's leading artists who predominantly works in mixed media. Winner of the 2002 Doug Moran Portrait Prize, the 2009 Kedumba Drawing Award and the 1999 Dobell Drawing Prize, Fairbairn was chosen from a finalist selection of 101 artworks, as judged by Anne Flanagan, Deputy Director, Art Gallery of New South Wales.

On selecting the Mosman Art Prize awards, Ms Flanagan commented that -

*Prizes have such a fascinating place in Australian art and Mosman Art Prize is no exception. The Mosman Art Prize is about painting. That might seem obvious - as it would have been to Lloyd Rees in 1947 - but in today's world of multi media it is actually a contentious question as to what is a painting.*

*The 2012 winner of the Mosman Art Prize is David Fairburn for his work Seated figure J.B. with orange ground. David Fairburn is a highly respected artist who pursues the act of painting with such remarkable intensity. He invests his paintings with energy, such raw energy that they seem to vibrate off the wall. Seated figure J.B. with orange ground is a powerful work where the line never seems to leave the paper until it has captured some intimate current between the artist and the sitter. David has worked on a series of portraits of artist James Barker over a long time and this painting is charged with intense intimacy. Framed by the architecture of the room the edgy portrait of J.B. hovers in the lower right of the painting and is mapped with a frenzy of lines. The inherent energy in this work comes from capturing the unique qualities of the sitter. In this portrait the very intensity of paint reveals a stillness in the sitter - it is a quiet, reflective image of a fellow artist. This is a remarkable portrait for the Mosman Gallery collection.*

David Fairbairn explains his 2012 winning work:

*The work included in this year's Mosman Prize is one of a series completed of James Barker over an eight month period in 2011. James is a painter of still life and landscape, who at age 80 continues to live and work in Sydney. A number of large scale works (210x183cm) - one of which is currently showing in the 2012 Archibald Prize - were completed alongside a number of medium size works (130x120cm) – one of which is now in the 2012 Mosman Art Prize.*

*My portraits are not only about the physical and psychological aspects of the sitter and the artist but also as much about the process of drawing and painting itself. I like to work with a variety of mediums, including acrylic, gouache, pastel, ink, etching, collage and charcoal which incorporate a kind of architectural approach, building one layer on top of another until a sustained image evolves. Ultimately all that really matters is the authenticity of the image.*

**AWARDS ALSO ANNOUNCED AT THE 2012 MOSMAN ART PRIZE:**

- The Allan Gamble Memorial Art Prize, (\$3,000), sponsored by Mosman Council, awarded to: JERZY MICHALSKI for *Time Study*
- The Henry Bucks Commendation Prize, (\$5,000), awarded to: JOHN BARTLEY for *Sirens Song*
- The Fourth Village Providore Young Emerging Artists' Award, for artists under 35 years, (\$2,000), awarded to: CLARA ADOLPHS, for *New Tricks*
- (Mosman Art Society Viewers' Choice Award for \$1,000 – to be announced).

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**2012 MOSMAN ART PRIZE – celebrating 65 years - on view from Saturday 21 July**

Where: Mosman Art Gallery, cnr Art Gallery Way & Myahgah Road, Mosman, NSW  
On view: 21 July to 26 August 2012  
Open: 7 days, 10am – 5pm  
Admission: Free  
PH: 02 9978 4178  
Information: [www.mosmanartgallery.org.au](http://www.mosmanartgallery.org.au)

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**PUBLIC PROGRAM: Meet Winning Artists - David Fairbairn and Clara Adolphs**

**Sunday 29 July at 10.30am**

**Free, morning tea included - Bookings: [www.trybooking.com/29509](http://www.trybooking.com/29509)**

David Fairbairn - Winner 2012 Mosman Art Prize - is a leading Australian artist working predominantly in mixed media to explore the psychological and structural nature of portraiture. David will discuss his artistic practice and his Mosman Art Prize winning work *Seated figure J.B. with orange ground*.

Clara Adolphs - Winner of the Fourth Village Young Emerging Artist Award – Clara is inspired by the lives of people long forgotten, whose photographs she uses to produce her thick impasto portraits. Clara will talk about her inspiration and her journey to becoming a professional artist.

## Information for Editors:

### About David Fairbairn:

Born in Zambia in 1949, Fairbairn studied art in London before arriving in Australia in 1981. He has held over 20 solo exhibitions, been in more than 80 group exhibitions and won over 40 art prizes and awards. These include the 1999 Dobell Drawing Prize, the 2002 Doug Moran Portrait Prize and the 2009 Kedumba Drawing Award. His work has been selected for the Archibald Prize eight times. Fairbairn teaches at the National Art School, Sydney. He is represented in public and private collections including the National Gallery of Australia and the Art Gallery of New South Wales. A major survey show of Fairbairn's work, *Lineage: selected portraits 1999–2011* curated by Campbelltown Arts Centre, travelled to regional galleries across Australia in 2011 and 2012 (including Mosman Art Gallery). David Fairbairn is represented by Stella Downer Fine Art, Sydney and James Makin Gallery, Melbourne.

### About the Mosman Art Prize:

The Mosman Art Prize is now celebrating its 65th year. The Prize is an acquisitive award of \$30,000 sponsored by Mosman Council. The winning works form the core of the Mosman Art Collection. The significance of the Mosman Art Prize and its legacy, is that the winning paintings and resulting art collection present an overview of defining influences and developments in Australian painting over the past six and half decades. It's the longest running municipal art prize in NSW and indeed Australia. The Mosman Art Prize has pioneered local government support for the visual arts, created new opportunities for artists, incited artistic debate, and encouraged the broader appreciation of the arts within the Australian community.

The inaugural Mosman Art Prize was held in 1947 and attracted 51 entrants, vying for a prize of 50 guineas. The judge was Lloyd Rees and the winner was Margaret Olley. A remarkable line-up of Australian artists have followed as subsequent winners: Grace Cossington Smith, Weaver Hawkins, Douglas Annand, Francis Lyburner, Nancy Borlase, Lloyd Rees, Guy Warren, Alan Oldfield, John Caldwell, Frank Hinder, Elwyn Lynn, Roy Fluke, Margo Lewers, Peter Laverty, Earle Backen, Ken Reinhard, Jenny Sages, Noel McKenna, Dong Wang Fan, Elisabeth Cummings, Janet Dawson, Cressida Campbell, Tim Johnson, Guan Wei, Adam Cullen, Tom Carment, Nicholas Harding, Jasper Knight, Lucy Culliton, James Powditch and Craig Waddell. Kerrie Lester was awarded the Mosman Art Prize in 2011. David Fairbairn now joins this illustrious roll call.

While Mosman Council sponsors the major prize of \$30,000, the Commendation Prize of \$5,000 is sponsored by Henry Bucks, other sponsors include the Fourth Village Providore Young Emerging Artists' Award (under 35 years) \$2,000 and the Mosman Art Society Viewers' Choice Award for \$1,000.

In addition to the major prize, Mosman Council sponsors the Allan Gamble Memorial Art Prize. An accomplished architect and artist, and Mosman Councillor for 24 years, Allan Gamble was the founder of the Mosman Art Prize. Valued at \$3,000 (non-acquisitive), the prize is awarded to the best painting which explores the theme of 'the built environment'.

In 2009, Katrina Cashman (Mosman Art Gallery Senior Curator) organised the exhibition, *Controversy & Acclaim*, examining the history of the Mosman Art Prize and the important contribution it has made to visual arts in Australia since 1947. A substantial catalogue was published featuring full colour artwork reproductions, and text which forms a warts-and-all look at the Mosman Art Prize and the power, politics and machinations behind it. Copies are available from the Mosman Gallery Bookshop.

## Judge's Report (in full):

### Mosman Art Prize - 65th Anniversary

**Anne Flanagan**  
**Deputy director**  
**Art Gallery of New South Wales**

The Mosman Art Prize has a long and cherished history - this year is the 65th anniversary of the Prize. Winning the Mosman Art Prize immediately places the artist within a history of Australian painting. Prize money matters but becoming the recipient of the Prize honours the artist. Most importantly the Prize is acquisitive - the selected work becomes part of the Mosman Art Gallery collection.

It has been a privilege and a pleasure to judge the 65th Mosman Art Prize. This year 736 paintings were delivered to the Gallery to be judged. It was an exhilarating to see, in one day, the extraordinary sweep of artistic activity and feel the pulse of contemporary studio painting today.

Prizes have such a fascinating place in Australian art and Mosman Art Prize is no exception. The Mosman Art Prize is about painting. That might seem obvious - as it would have been to Lloyd Rees in 1947 - but in today's world of multi media it is actually a contentious question as to what is a painting.

And what were the trends? Abstraction and figuration looms large on our artistic horizons no more so than in the 2012 Mosman Art Prize. There were landscapes rendered with alarming accuracy and others with disarming moodiness; there were many abstract works; there were humorous, quirky works that made one laugh and want to know more; there were personal stories where the artist's narrative was laid bare with such honesty it drew my breath; there were animals and birds that crept into or flew across the canvas with such technical skill; there were few portraits but they were good; there were smooth, beautifully rendered still life paintings and there were conceptually engaging works that forced you to stop still and engage more slowly more thoughtfully; and there were urban scenes filled with visual accuracy but others redolent with memory or absence or wonder.

The 2012 winner of the Mosman Art Prize is David Fairburn for his work *Seated figure J.B. with orange ground*. David Fairburn is a highly respected artist who pursues the act of painting with such remarkable intensity. He invests his paintings with energy, such raw energy that they seem to vibrate off the wall. *Seated figure J.B. with orange ground* is a powerful work where the line never seems to leave the paper until it has captured some intimate current between the artist and the sitter. David has worked on a series of portraits of artist James Barker over a long time and this painting is charged with intense intimacy. Framed by the architecture of the room the edgy portrait of J.B. hovers in the lower right of the painting and is mapped with a frenzy of lines. The inherent energy in this work comes from capturing the unique qualities of the sitter. In this portrait the very intensity of paint reveals a stillness in the sitter - it is a quiet, reflective image of a fellow artist. This is a remarkable portrait for the Mosman Gallery collection.

The 2012 winner of the Young Emerging Artist's Award is Clara Adolphus for her work *New tricks*. This large painting with thick impasto paint captures a woman's head using quickly applied layers of blue and grey paint. The blue paint is tantalizing and the profile is rendered with alarming simplicity. As you get close to the work the head dissolves but from a distance the profile emanates tenderness.

Many works were submitted within the emerging category that is for artists under 35. Painting has had a renaissance - younger artist like to paint and this Prize provides the opportunity to see their work.

The Commendation Prize goes to John Bartley for *Sirens song*. This large horizontal painting uses multiple paint layers that drift and then coalesce across the surface of the canvas. It is a painting that understands and plays with the fluidity of paint.

The winner of the Allan Gamble Memorial Art Prize for the theme of the built environment is Jerzy Michalski for *Time – study*. A lonely figure sits in an all too familiar transit space brilliantly lit with coloured panels. Here the figure is alone facing an indeterminate passage of time in a space designed to be animated by the flux of commuters. It is seductively painted to lure us into its emptiness, its formalism leaving us silent.

I thank all the artists for making the Mosman Art Prize so exciting, so relevant and so energetic. I thank the Mosman Gallery staff for making the Prize happen with such professionalism and care particularly John Cheeseman, Katrina Cashman and Julie Petersen and, the art handlers who took as much delight as I did in seeing the works. There was a little magic as the paintings were turned around to reveal the image - you never knew what the work would be and we all shared that moment.

- judges report ends

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**ENDS**

media information, selected images, interview & photo opportunities please contact:

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PH: (02) 9978 4186 (Curator and Public Programs Coordinator, Mosman Art Gallery)

image credit: DAVID FAIRBAIRN - *Seated Figure J.B with Orange Ground, 2011, mixed media, 130x120cm*

**2012 Mosman Art Prize Sponsors:**

