

PRESS VIEW: Thursday 10 December, 11.30 am – 1.00 pm



Michael Gaskell, *Tom*
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BP PORTRAIT AWARD 2009

12 December 2009 - 21 February 2010

**THE DEAN GALLERY, SCOTTISH NATIONAL GALLERY OF MODERN ART,
Belford Road, Edinburgh**

Admission free

A stunning group of fifty-six paintings selected for the *BP Portrait Award 2009* will be shown at the Dean Gallery in Edinburgh this winter. Organised by the National Portrait Gallery in London, this prestigious annual award attracts entrants from around the world, and carries a first prize of £25,000. Now in its thirtieth year, and twentieth year of sponsorship from BP, the award promotes the best in contemporary portrait painting, by encouraging artists to focus upon and develop the theme of portraiture in their work. Peter Monkman, a 44-year-old art teacher from Surrey, has won the 2009 award with a haunting portrait of his daughter Anna, titled *Changeling 2*.

This hugely popular exhibition, which will be shown at the National Galleries of Scotland for only the third time in its history, will bring together the cream of this year's submissions. The judges for 2009, who had the difficult job of choosing from a record field of 1,901 entries, included James Holloway, Director of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery; Sandy Nairne, Director of the National Portrait Gallery, London; and the artist Gillian Wearing. Among the works on display will be the prize-winners, who were announced in June: Peter Monkman's *Changeling 2*; Michael Gaskell's *Tom*, which was awarded the second prize of £8,000; *Manuel* by Annalisa Avancini, which won the third prize of £6,000; and *Benfica Blue* by Mark Jameson, who received the £5,000 *BP Young Artist Award*.

Other highlights will include Dan Llewelyn Hall's striking portrait of Harry Patch, who, until his death in July, at the age of 111, was the last surviving British soldier to have fought in the

trenches during World War I, and Edinburgh artist James Metcalfe's thoughtful, though topless, portrait of Gregor Fisher, the actor celebrated for his portrayal of Rab C. Nesbitt.

Reflecting the international profile of the competition, the *BP Portrait Award 2009* includes the work of artists from Russia, South Africa, Spain, the USA, Israel, Canada, the Czech Republic, South Korea, Belgium, Ireland, Italy and the UK. Also on show will be a series of exquisite portraits by Emmanouil Bitsakis, winner of the *BP Travel Award 2008*, who used his £5,000 bursary to visit north-west China where he sketched and painted the Uigur people, a Muslim minority. (*The BP Travel Award 2009* has gone to Isobel Peachey, who will travel to Belgium and Switzerland to depict enthusiasts taking part in historical re-enactments).

Closer to home, the exhibition encompasses a broad range of talent, from young artists fresh from college to established portraitists with an international reputation, from self-taught painters to retired academics. Artists over the age of 40 have been able to enter the competition since 2007, but it remains a powerful springboard for the careers of exceptional young painters (the renowned Scottish artist Alison Watt won the award in 1987).

Scottish artists selected for this year's exhibition include Glasgow-based Jennifer Anderson, with an ethereal portrait of her sister, titled *White Linen*; Isle of Lewis-born Donald Macdonald, whose touching portrait of his future father-in-law, shows the sitter recovering from open-heart surgery; and Jennifer McRae, a well-established portrait painter, whose work has appeared in the BP Portrait Awards on many occasions since 1995.

Nicola Kalinsky, Deputy Director of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery and co-ordinator of the exhibition said: "It's tremendously exciting to be welcoming back the BP Portrait Award, but this time in new surroundings - we will be using the beautiful rooms of the Dean Gallery whilst the Portrait Gallery in Queen Street is closed for its refurbishment. This year's selection is full of variety, demonstrating a range of painterly techniques, from flawless photo-realism to rich, expressive handling, and depicting a wide range of sitters, from children still unformed and new to the world, to those whose faces embody a lifetime's experience."

Tim Smith, External Affairs Director for BP in Scotland said: "We are delighted to bring the prestigious BP Portrait Award 2009 to the Dean Gallery in Edinburgh for its only Scottish showing. This year's awards attracted a record number of entrants and the quality and variety of entries shows that portraiture continues to thrive in the UK and internationally. The exhibition is free to attend and I would encourage you to go along to see the 56 fascinating and diverse portraits selected by the judges."

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For further information and images, please contact the National Galleries Press Office on 0131 624 6325/ 332/ 314 /247; pressoffice@nationalgalleries.org
www.nationalgalleries.org

Notes to editors

- The *BP Portrait Award 2009 and Travel Award 2008* opened at the National Portrait Gallery, London, where it was on show from 18 June until 20 September 2009. The exhibition will tour to Southampton City Art Gallery, from 2 October to 22 November, and the Dean Gallery, Edinburgh, from 12 December 2009 to 21 February 2010.
- The competition was judged from original paintings by this year's panel: James Holloway, Director, Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh; Charlotte Mullins, art historian and critic; Sandy Nairne, Director, National Portrait Gallery, London (Chair); Des Violaris, Director, UK Arts and Culture, BP; and Gillian Wearing, artist.
- This year's winner, Peter Monkman (b.1964) was shortlisted for the first time this year, having been included in the *BP Portrait Award* exhibition in 1999, 2001 and 2003. Currently Director of Art at Charterhouse School, Surrey, Monkman studied visual arts at the University of Lancaster, John Moores University Liverpool and the University of London. His painting *Changeling 2* is part of a series of portraits of his daughter which explore the concept of the changeling, a child substituted for another by a supernatural force. The winner also receives a commission.
- Second Prize-winner Michael Gaskell (b.1963) lives in Sheffield and won Second Prize in the *BP Portrait Award* in 2003 and was commended in both 2001 and 1999. He studied at St Helen's College of Art and Design and Coventry Polytechnic and has been exhibiting his work for over twenty years. Gaskell's portrait of his son, *Tom*, was begun when the sitter was 17, and was inspired by the artist's admiration for the work of Botticelli and Holbein.
- Third Prize went to Annalisa Avancini (b.1973) for her painting *Manuel*. Avancini, a painter and design teacher from Italy, studied at the Arts High School of Trento and the Marangoni Institute in Milan. She was attracted to her subject, whom she has painted on three occasions, by the way 'his story shines through his face. Despite his young age his life is rich in experience.'
- The recipient of the *BP Young Artist Award* is chosen from among entrants aged between 18 and 30. Now in its third year, the £5,000 award has gone to Mark Jameson, who submitted a compelling portrait of his sister, Lyndsey, titled *Benfica Blue*. Painted in their parents' Durham home, the highly accomplished portrait was completed in less than a month. The 29-year old Jameson graduated from Sunderland University with a degree in Fine Art in 2003.