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£40,000 student art competition names finalists

Ten graduating artists have been shortlisted for a major national art prize run by Northumbria University, Newcastle.

The second annual Woon Foundation Painting and Sculpture Art Prize, launched by Northumbria graduate and philanthropist Wee Teng Woon in 2012, gives final year fine art students in the UK the chance to win £40,000 in prizes.

The competition package, sponsored by law graduate and art collector Mr

Woon, is equal in value to Britain's biggest art award, the Turner Prize.

The shortlisted artists come from art schools and universities across the country and their art work encompasses a wide range of themes and mediums, including sculpture, photography, collage and animation. From greenery growing out of concrete to explorations of life and death, each piece of work has impressed the competition's prestigious judges.

The finalists are:

Ana Gold, Central St Martins;

Anna Hughes, Dundee School of Art;

Catherine Ross, Gray's School of Art, Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen;

Eleni Odysseos, University of Leeds;

Emilie Atkinson, Slade School of Fine Art, University College London;

Emily Motto, Ruskin School, Oxford University;

Helen McCartney, University of Sunderland;

Lisa Evans, Coleg Sir Gar, School of Creative Arts;

Ramona Zoladek, Anglia Ruskin, Cambridge University; and

Sam Baker, Kingston University

Art work by the ten finalists – fine art students who graduated this summer – is currently on exhibition in Northumbria University's Gallery North, Sandyford Road. They will be judged at the end of this month, with the winners being announced in September.

The Woon Foundation Painting and Sculpture Art Prize was established to provide opportunities for students to develop their fine art practice, offering

direct links with the cultural sector through Northumbria's partnership with BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art in Gateshead.

Holly Hendry, a graduate of London's Slade School of Art, walked away with first prize – the Woon Tai Jee Memorial Prize – in last year's competition. The prize is named after Mr Woon's late father and earns the recipient a £20,000 bursary, use of the Woon Tai Jee studio space in the BxNU Institute of Contemporary Art at BALTIC 39 and mentoring from Baltic Professor and Turner Prize-nominated artist Christine Borland.

The second prize, worth £9,000 is named after Mr Woon's late mother Lim Ai Fang, and the third, worth £6,000, is named after his father's late second wife Cheong Kam Hee. Judges can bestow additional consolation prizes worth a total of £5,000.

Mr Woon, who graduated with a law degree from Northumbria's predecessor institution Newcastle Polytechnic, said: "This prize is one way that I can give back to the region and help to nurture talented new artists. The North East has a vibrant cultural and artistic energy and this competition enhances the standing of the region in the arts world."

Finalist Helen McCartney, University of Sunderland, said: "I think the Woon Art prize represents the greatest opportunity for final year arts students in this country. It attracts talent to the North East. I was born in the North East of England, in Durham, so it's important to me that this area gets the recognition that it deserves nationally."

Sam Baker, Kingston University, said: "I believe a Woon Tai Jee fellowship is an extremely prestigious prize that would provide me with a fantastic springboard for my practice beyond the walls of art school and into the art world. This opportunity will also allow me to expand my artist's network, opening up an exciting chance for critical discussions with a new and diverse range of professional individuals as well as the freedom to live and work in a new city."

And Ana Gold, Central St Martins, added: "I think it's a really exciting opportunity to carry on my education without being in an institution. Working with currently practicing artists and having access to workshops and your own studio is very important."

Holly Hendry, last year's winner, will complete her Woon fellowship this summer but she credits the prize for providing her with a unique opportunity and platform to develop her practice. Since winning the prestigious award and studio space in BALTIC 39, the 24-year-old has exhibited work in Northumbria's Gallery North, and will present her solo show there in September. Her work has also been displayed at The Royal Standard in Liverpool, The Bank Gallery in Whitechapel, London, and by the Sharjah Art Foundation in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates.

Holly, a Slade School of Art graduate, offers advice to the artist who will win this year's competition, saying: "Work ambitiously, make the most of the opportunity of having the amazing studio space, the time to create and the people around you."

All of the shortlisted artworks are currently on display at Gallery North, Northumbria University, Sandyford Road, until September 19th.

The winner will be announced on September 16th.

For more information about The Woon Foundation Painting and Sculpture Art Prize, visit www.northumbria.ac.uk/woonartprize.

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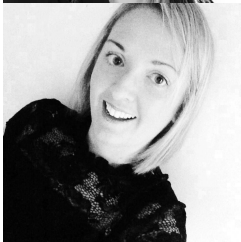


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