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Kayt Hughes wins Woon Foundation Art Prize 2015

Kayt Hughes has been announced as the winner of this year's prestigious Woon Foundation Art and Sculpture Prize.

Kayt was awarded the £20,000 first prize last night at an award ceremony hosted by Northumbria University and held at BALTIC 39, a contemporary art hub on High Bridge in Newcastle city centre.

Jeremy Woon with first prize winner, Kayt Hughes

A Nottingham Trent University graduate, Kayt won over the prestigious judging panel with her winning piece, entitled 'Study Scores, 2nd Movement'.

The winning piece is comprised of wood, emulsion, filler and pencil. Additional prizes of £9,000 and £6,000 were awarded to Jacob Watmore and Queenie Clarke. A £5,000 judges' discretionary prize was split between Martin Darbyshire and Jadé Fadojutimi.

The combined £40,000 competition prize, supported by the Woon Foundation is equal in value to Britain's biggest art award, the Turner Prize. The Woon Prize was created by Northumbria University law graduate and philanthropist Mr Wee Teng Woon along with his three brothers who together make up The Woon Foundation.

Mr Woon's son, Jeremy, was guest of honour at the award ceremony and presented the first prize to the winner.

Kayt said: "I'm still in shock – the fact that I have won is still sinking in. This is the most incredible thing that could happen to me.

"It's so important for Northumbria University to continue to support the arts, and for pursuing art to be recognised as a legitimate career path."

Describing her work, Manchester-born Kayt added: "The sculpture was inspired by a piece of music I improvised on saxophone. I kept playing some wrong notes and drew a scale of these notes using maps, lines and colours, which was the foundation for the work.

"Being an artist is such an important thing for society. I feel very proud that my life is now dedicated to that and that I've followed my heart and I'm doing something that I love.

"I plan to stay in the North East as it's a really exciting and creative place to be. I'm going to grasp this chance with both hands and focus more than ever on my work. I want to keep developing and make the very most out of this chance."

Having won, Kayt will have access to dedicated space in the BxNU institute at BALTIC 39 for the duration of the Fellowship as she works toward a solo

exhibition and publication.

Kayt will also receive critical and professional development support from a mentor. BxNU at BALTIC39 is the result of a collaborative partnership between BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art and Northumbria University, which has been in place for several years. She will also receive critical and professional development support from a mentor.

Mr Wee Teng Woon, said: “We are delighted that the Woon Foundation Art & Sculpture Prize has now entered its third year and continues to inspire final year art students from across the UK to achieve academic excellence in their chosen discipline – we congratulate this year’s winner Kayt Hughes, and hope this prize inspires her as she progresses to the next step in her career.”

Since its launch, the competition has attracted some of the UK’s most exciting artists and this year was no exception, with an impressive range of entrants from across the country.

The finalists were 12 of the most talented emerging artists in the UK, studying at some of the nation’s leading art establishments.

This year’s judging panel was comprised of Jenni Lomax, Director of Camden Arts Centre, Fiona Bradley, Director of the Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh and Laurence Sillars, Chief Curator of BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art.

Professor Christine Borland, Northumbria’s BALTIC Professor and Turner Prize-nominated artist who facilitated the judging panel, said: “The selection of this open submission prize; with all the judges making nominations, means we see a unique cross-section of undergraduate painting and sculpture, exhibited in the beautiful spaces at BALTIC 39. The prize-winning works this year look outstandingly strong, congratulations to all of the artists, this is a great start to their careers.”

Professor Keith McIntyre, Head of Department of Arts at Northumbria University, said: “This is the third year that Northumbria University has been hosting the Woon Foundation competition and once again the quality of the submissions is of an extremely high standard. Staging the exhibition in BALTIC 39 here in Newcastle establishes the Woon Prize as the leading UK graduate event profiling the best emerging contemporary artists.”

Godfrey Worsdale, BALTIC Director, said: “We were delighted to host the Woon Prize at BALTIC39. Now in its third year, it has already established itself as an important prize for those making the transition from art student to a career as a practising artist. Working in partnership with Northumbria University, the prize enables BALTIC to deepen its commitment to emerging practice.

“By being part of the selection process and curating the exhibition of short-listed artists, we look forward to raising the profile of the work of an exciting group of young graduates, and introducing them to the vibrant and thriving art scene here in the North East of England.

“It is only with the very generous patronage of Mr Woon and the Woon Foundation that we are able to offer this fantastic opportunity and we thank him for his continued support of BALTIC, the University and of contemporary art.”

Work by the shortlisted artists will remain on display at BALTIC 39 until 2 August.

The inaugural winner was artist Holly Hendry, who completed her Fellowship in September 2014. The current Fellow is Ramona Zoladek, who holds the Fellowship until this September.

Northumbria offers a range of courses across the Arts. For more information go to www.northumbria.ac.uk/arts

For full details of the artists’ work got to www.baltic39.com

Northumbria is a research-rich, business-focussed, professional university with a global reputation for academic excellence. To find out more about our courses go to www.northumbria.ac.uk

If you have a media enquiry please contact our Media and Communications team at media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk or call [0191 227 4571](tel:01912274571).

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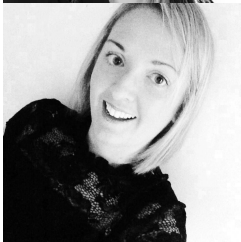


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