



MEDIA RELEASE

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Prestigious art prize honours refugee artists

AMES and Multicultural Arts Victoria are excited to announce the seven winners of the 2013 *Heartlands Refugee Art Prize*, who were honoured at a special exhibition at fortyfivedownstairs in Flinders Lane last night.

Three primary prize-winners, a newly arrived prize, an artist in residence prize and two highly commended entries have shared a total prize pool of over \$20,000.

The Prize is an important way for artists from a refugee background to contribute and tell their story. 70 entries were received and artists from 16 countries are represented in the artworks that were shortlisted.

This year first prize has been awarded to two outstanding painters, Sutueal Bekele and Minh Phan. The judges, equally divided between both entries, decided to share the first and second prize places amongst the two individuals, with each of the artworks displaying particular strengths and preferences.

Sutueal Bekele's painting *Fall of Destructive Energy*, combines scenes connected to Ethiopia's past with aspects of Melbourne's architectural history to win the shared first prize. Arriving from Ethiopia in 1999, Sutueal says his work draws inspiration from the traditions of narrative and history painting, infused with aspects of surrealism and imagination. Using oil paints on canvas, the artist has posed his three young daughters against the backdrop of historical conflicts and tensions showing a moment of tenderness and family, speaking directly to the theme of 'I wish to see...!'

The other first prize-winner, artist Minh Phan, has also captured the subject of family life using oil paint on copper with a piece titled *Two Views*. The artist has created exacting impressions of recent and past family photographs, painted on pieces of brightly polished and scratched sheets of copper. Originally from Vietnam, Minh has been living in Australia since 1980 and says his work speaks to the idea of cultural and personal change, following the recent birth of his twin daughters bringing to mind a desire for peace and family safety.

The third prize was awarded to Idil Abdullahi for her striking photographic work *Hand of Hawa*, featuring a poem painted in henna on the hand of the artist's daughter. Idil arrived from Somalia in 1993 and her artwork alludes to a proud tradition of Somalian women activists dating back to the country's colonial past.

Hayatullah Nader was awarded the newly arrived prize for his photograph titled *Boat*. Hayatullah came to Australia in 2011 from Afghanistan.

This year's Artist in residency prize was won by Neda Daryabar for her powerful mixed photography work called *I wish to see no execution in the world*. Neda arrived in Australia from Iran in 2007.

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REFUGEE ART PRIZE 2013

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Heartlands' Prize curator and judge, Damian Smith, said this year's *Heartlands Refugee Art Prize* collection continues to foster the vibrant, multifaceted work of artists who have settled in Australia under the Federal Government's refugee resettlement program.

"Things common to us all, like food and music, story telling and art and the need to feel safe and secure are what binds us together as people and this is what the Heartlands Prize reveals," said Smith.

"To us as its fortunate viewers, Heartlands is an opportunity as well; an occasion to loosen old assumptions, to see beyond the cultural stereotypes and to learn more deeply about the newest members of our community," he said.

The 40 shortlisted entries, including all the winning artworks, will be on display at the *Heartlands Refugee Art Prize Exhibition* held at fortyfivedownstairs in Flinders Lane from **18-29 June 2013** in the lead up to Refugee Week, at Walker Street Gallery in Dandenong from **4-27 July 2013** as part of the Emerge Festival and The Homestead at Werribee Park from **1-14 September 2013**.

Now in its fourth year, the *Heartlands Refugee Art Prize* is presented by AMES and Multicultural Arts Victoria in partnership with Parks Victoria, VicHealth and the Victorian Multicultural Commission.

Heartlands Refugee Art Prize Exhibition

Fortyfivedownstairs

45 Flinders Lane, Melbourne

18-29 June 2013

Walker Street Gallery

Cnr Walker & Robinson Streets, Dandenong

4-27 July 2013

The Homestead Werribee Park

320 K Road, Werribee

1-14 September 2013

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