



MEDIA RELEASE

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MEDITATIONS ON HUMANNESS, RITUAL AND A SPIRITUAL QUEST TAKE OUT THIS YEAR'S BLAKE PRIZE AWARDS FOR ART AND POETRY



EvelineKotai: *Writing on Air – Mantra* (triptych)



Fabian Astore: *The Threshold*

The 61st Blake Art Prize has this year been awarded to **two art works**; Sydney multi-media artist **Fabian Astore** with his DVD *The Threshold*, and Fremantle mixed-media artist **Eveline Kotai** with her triptych artwork *Writing on Air – Mantra*. **The 5th Blake Poetry Prize** has been awarded to West Australian poet, **Graham Kershaw**.

Fabian Astore has long been fascinated by the role of ritual in people's lives. In *Threshold* he's used the skilful use of digital media in forming multiple references that include trails of smoke suggestive of words that dissipate before identifiable letters appear. All of this takes place in a mosque, with all of its ambivalent associations: soaring architecture, subtle light and colours, an open space that is appropriated in particular ways.

Eveline Kotai's *Writing on Air – Mantra* combines technical intricacy with a subtle appreciation of the spirituality that lies beyond the edge of language. Buddhist scriptures have been cut up into the tiniest pieces and then carefully stitched together onto the panels of a triptych.

Graham Kershaw's poem, *Altar Rock*, addresses the mixed inheritance of white settlement in the Murchison district of WA. The actual Altar Rock, also known as Mass Rock, is where 1920's architect and priest, John Hawes, took communion to indigenous people who were reluctant to attend a church.

Hyun-Hee Lee has been awarded the **John Coburn Emerging Artist Award** for her work, *Homage*, which relates to her conversion from Buddhism to Catholicism and the respect and gratitude she has for both religions. Each panel contains texts of the New Testament translated into Korean. These texts were cut into strips and then folded and knotted into small bows and then attached in a complex overlay.

Saif Almurayati has received the **MUA Blake Prize for Human Justice** for his DVD *Unfolding History*. Entranced by listening to the Islamic chant, he's recaptured glimpses of his earliest memories; at his Grandmother's house, throughout refugee camps and his subsequent experiences in Australia. It's his personal story, the apparent loss of identity and the acknowledgement that the process of change is not unique.

Paddy Crumlin, National Secretary of the Maritime Union of Australia said, "Saif Almurayati's work is an outstanding expression of what many people, who are the refugees and economic and political diaspora throughout the globe, experience and feel. This stressful, and at times, tragic mobilisation, is often not of their own choosing, but a survival mechanism. Almurayati captures the challenge of how people search for their place in new cultures. The work reflects the patience and determination required to meet new demands, along with the flexibility and imagination to cope with constancy of change and movement."

Highly Commended artworks were: *The Veil* by Faridah Cameron, *Depart without Return* by Shoufay Derz, *Grace* by Janet Laurence's and *Hope* by Sue Saxon in collaboration with Jane Becker. Highly Commended poems were: *Celan* by Christopher Kelen and *Horseback* by Geoff Page and *Redemption* by Mick Ringiari a.k.a Patrick McCauley.



The Blake Society Ltd



The Blake Art Prize judges, A/Prof **Roland Boer**, **Felicity Fenner** and **Hossein Valamanesh** came to the winners easily and unanimously, describing the artworks as, "distinct in style, and yet tend towards the meditative in a world that has become increasingly grim."

The Blake Poetry Prize judges, **Martin Langford**, **Peter Minter** and **Amelia Walker** described *Altar Rock* as, "marking a place where understanding and forgiveness are oases amidst a maelstrom of doubt, where poetry presents the final word."


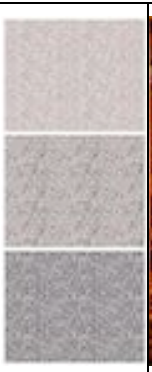


The Blake Art Prize has been awarded since 1951 and the Blake Poetry Prize since 2008. Artworks and poems must address a subject of religious or spiritual integrity. This pre-requisite is one that intentionally invites open responses from artists and poets and, as such, has drawn much discussion and debate over the past 61 years.

The Blake Art and Poetry Prizes received over 1,100 & 450 entries respectively this year. The 57 finalist works will be exhibited at S.H. Ervin Gallery from 9 November to 16 December 2012. The **Blake Public Program**, starting Sunday 11 November with an interactive talk with this years winners, includes five events held every Sunday throughout the exhibition.

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THE BLAKE PRIZE WINNING WORKS - 2012

<p>The 61st Blake Prize \$20,000, joint winners</p>		<p>Fabian Astore – <i>The Threshold</i> High definition video 6min 20 sec</p>	<p>Sitting at the threshold, the presence of childhood innocence renders complex boundaries to a moment of spiritual elevation.</p>
<p>John Coburn Emerging Artist Award \$5000</p>		<p>Eveinekotai <i>Writing on Air – Mantra (triplych)</i> Mixed media 120 x 270cm</p>	<p>I have created this work by combining my Buddhist practice with my artistic practice. Three different mantras are repeatedly written, then cut while saying each mantra, and re-cut and re-sewn while waying each mantra. It is a meditative ritual to generate mindfulness and compassion.</p>
<p>John Coburn Emerging Artist Award \$5000</p>		<p>Hyun-Hee Lee - <i>Homage</i> Pencil, ink, hanji paper, cotton thread, canvas, 153 x 153cm</p>	<p>Homage embodies three respect I have for the two religions, which have guided my life. Converting from Buddhism to Catholicism I was encouraged to write the first four books of new New Testament, this meditative and spiritual act I have repeated whilst paying homage to the Buddhist prayer ritual.</p>
<p>MUA Blake Prize for Human Justice \$5000</p>		<p>SaifAlmurayati – <i>Unfolding History</i> DVD 3min 51 sec</p>	<p>Long buried images of my childhood creep back, my cradle, my grandmother's touch, her prayers, fleeing across the Iraqi borders, my feet plunging in the mud, tumbling over cold bodies that lie silently, veiling themselves amongst the buses and discarded bullets. The hymn and chants continue, and I wake, confused and ask, who am I?</p>
<p>The Blake Poetry Prize \$5000</p>		<p>Graham Kershaw – <i>Altar Rock</i></p>	<p>'Altar Rock' addresses the mixed inheritance of white settlement in the Murchison district of WA, and by extension, a lot of elsewhere. It views the contemporary physical and social landscape in light of the aspirations and values of the first white people there, and in particular of John Hawes, an architect and priest active in the 1920's and 30's.</p>
<p>Highly Commended - Artists</p>			
<p>Faridah Cameron – <i>The Veil</i> ShoufayDertz – <i>Depart without Return</i> Janet Laurence – <i>Grace</i> Sue Saxon with Jane Becker – <i>Hope</i></p>			
<p>Christopher Kelen - <i>Celan</i> Geoff Page - <i>Horseback</i> Mick Ringlari a.k.a Patrick McCauley - <i>Redemption</i></p>			
<p>Highly Commended - Poets</p>			

