

# News Release

Wednesday 19 April 2017

## NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY ANNOUNCES SHORTLIST FOR *BP PORTRAIT AWARD 2017*



(from left): *Double Portrait* by Thomas Ehretsmann (c) Thomas Ehretsmann; *Breech!* by Benjamin Sullivan (c) Benjamin Sullivan; *Emma* by Antony Williams (c) Antony Williams

Three artists have been shortlisted for the *BP Portrait Award 2017* at the National Portrait Gallery, London, which will be presented on 20 June 2017, it was announced today, Wednesday 19 April 2017. The shortlisted portraits, all featuring female sitters, were selected from 2580 entries from 87 countries, submitted for judging by a panel which included broadcaster Kirsty Wark and artist Michael Landy.

The three portraits in the running for the First Prize are *Double Portrait*, by French painter and illustrator, **Thomas Ehretsmann**, depicting his pregnant wife Caroline; *Breech!* by Suffolk based artist, **Benjamin Sullivan**, which captures his wife Virginia breastfeeding their eight month old daughter; and *Emma*, **Antony Williams's** portrait of model turned friend, Emma Bruce, completed in his studio in Chertsey.

It is the first time Thomas Ehretsmann and Antony Williams have been shortlisted for First Prize in the *BP Portrait Award*. Williams has been selected seven times for previous *BP Portrait Award* exhibitions and Ehretsmann was selected for exhibition in 2016. Benjamin Sullivan, also shortlisted for this year's First Prize, was awarded third prize for *Hugo*, his portrait of the poet Hugo Williams, in 2016, and has been selected 12 times for previous *BP Portrait Award* exhibitions.

The *BP Portrait Award*, one of the most important platforms for portrait painters, has a first prize of £30,000, making it one of the largest for any global arts competition. The winner also receives, at the Gallery's discretion, a commission worth £5,000 (agreed between the National Portrait Gallery and the artist). The second prize winner receives £10,000 and a third prize of £8,000 is also awarded. The *BP Young Artist Award*, with a prize of £7,000, goes to one selected artist aged between 18 and 30.

2017 will mark the Portrait Award's 38<sup>th</sup> year at the National Portrait Gallery and 28<sup>th</sup> year of sponsorship by BP. This highly successful annual event is aimed at encouraging artists over the age of eighteen to focus upon, and develop,

the theme of portraiture in their work. The prize winners will be announced on the evening of Tuesday 20 June 2017. The *BP Portrait Award 2017* exhibition will run at the National Portrait Gallery, London, from Thursday 22 June to Sunday 24 September 2017.

#### Shortlisted artists:

**Thomas Ehretsmann** (06.07.1974) for *Double Portrait* (300 x 400mm, Acrylic on board).

Born in Mulhouse France, Ehretsmann gained a degree in illustration from the Ecole des Arts Décoratifs, Strasbourg. His work as an illustrator has been featured in the *New Yorker*, *Rolling Stone* and *Elle Magazine*. His portrait *Vacuum 2* was selected for the *BP Portrait Award 2016* exhibition.

*Double Portrait* captures a moment when the artist was walking in the park with his wife, Caroline.

Ehretsmann was struck by the light on Caroline's face which he said reminded him of the work of naturalist painters Jules Bastien-Lepage and Emile Friant. The artist used multiple layers of semi-transparent acrylic paint in order to mix a fragile instant with something more timeless, a technique often used in his art. The title, *Double Portrait*, suggest the passage from one state of being to another as Caroline was eight months pregnant at the time.

**Benjamin Sullivan** (10.05.1977) for *Breech!* (820 x 400mm, oil on canvas).

Grimsby-born, Benjamin Sullivan, who lives in Suffolk, gained a BA (Hons) in Drawing and Painting from Edinburgh College of Art. Benjamin's work has been seen regularly in the Royal Society of Portrait Painters exhibition and he has previously been selected twelve times for the *BP Portrait Award* in 2002 and between 2006 and 2016 when his portrait *Hugo* was awarded third prize. His portrait of the cosmologist and astrophysicist Professor Martin Rees was commissioned by the National Portrait Gallery in 2008.

*Breech!* depicts the artist's wife Virginia breastfeeding their eight-month-old daughter Edith, at a time when Sullivan says 'a sense of calm descended after the usual period of disarrangement that new parents face.' The artist wanted to celebrate the love that had come into their lives and reflect on the worrisome time the couple faced during Edith's birth. The painting was made over four to five weeks in the artist's studio when Edith's cooperation was forthcoming.

**Antony Williams** (23.06.1964) for *Emma* (690 x560mm, Egg tempera on board)

Antony Williams studied at Farnham College and Portsmouth University. An established portrait artist, his work has been seen in solo exhibitions in London and Madrid and included in the Royal Academy of Arts *Summer Exhibition*, the Royal Society of Portrait Painters Exhibitions and previously in *BP Portrait Award* exhibitions in 1995, 1998, 2005, 2007, 2010, 2014 and 2015. His portrait of Amartya Sen was commissioned for the National Portrait Gallery Collection.

*Emma* features Emma Bruce who had been modelling for Williams almost continuously for eleven years in his studio in Chertsey. The artist's relationship with the sitter has developed over the years from that of being someone who was modelling for a painting to someone who has become a friend. Williams wanted to portray some of her vulnerability, but also the determination in her character where she is shown naked but at the same time is preventing the viewer from seeing her completely.

Dr Nicholas Cullinan, Chair of the Judges and Director of the National Portrait Gallery, London, says: 'It is always an enormous privilege to chair the judging panel of the *BP Portrait Award*, and to see at first hand the extraordinary depth and breadth of contemporary portrait painting internationally. I am delighted with this year's shortlist and the final selection of works for the exhibition, all of which provoked an immediate response from the judges – whether that be a reaction to the skill displayed by a particular artist, or a more visceral connection with the sitter, subject matter or the mood conveyed.'

Ms Des Violaris, Director UK Arts and Culture BP, says: 'BP are proud to be supporting the BP Portrait Award for the 28th year. Many congratulations to all of this year's selected artists. Once again, we have seen outstanding entries from around the world. BP's support for the arts is part of our wider commitment to the UK, and we look forward to the reactions of visitors to the exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery in London, and on tour to Exeter, Edinburgh and Sunderland.'

The prize winners and exhibition were selected by a judging panel chaired by **Dr Nicholas Cullinan**, Director, National Portrait Gallery. The full panel included **Camilla Hampshire**, Museums Manager and Cultural Lead, Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery, Exeter; **Michael Landy**, artist; **Kirsty Wark**, broadcaster; **Sarah Howgate**, Senior Curator, Contemporary Collections, National Portrait Gallery; and **Des Violaris**, Director, UK Arts & Culture, BP.

To enter, artists were invited to upload a photograph of their finished painting to the *BP Portrait Award* website, which were considered by the judges in the first round of the competition. 218 entrants were successful in this round and invited to hand-deliver or courier their work to a venue in London for the second round of judging. From this 53 works were selected for the *BP Portrait Award 2017* exhibition.

One of the 53 exhibited artists will receive the *BP Travel Award 2017*, an annual award of £6,000, which allows artists to experience working in a different environment on a project related to portraiture. The resulting portraits are shown in the following year's exhibition. The winner of the *BP Travel Award 2017* is announced at the award ceremony on Tuesday 20 June 2017.

### **BP TRAVEL AWARD 2016**

The *BP Travel Award 2016* was won by Lithuanian artist Laura Guoke for her proposal to travel to refugee camps in Ritsona, Greece. On her travels, Guoke took sketches, photographs and film in order to create large-format portraits of the most vulnerable refugees from Syria and the volunteers helping them. Her aim was to show migrants as people with names, faces and individual stories, using her work to convey personal themes which may otherwise be difficult to put into words. The resulting work will be displayed in the *BP Portrait Award 2017* exhibition.

### **CATALOGUE**

A fully illustrated catalogue featuring all 53 selected works will accompany the exhibition. The catalogue also includes an essay by Stella Duffy, an illustrated interview with the *BP Travel Award 2016* winner and interviews with the shortlisted artists. The catalogue, priced at £9.99 will be published on the 22 June 2017.

### **TOUR**

Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery Exeter (4 October – 3 December 2017); Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh (December 2017 – March 2018); Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens (March – June 2018.)

**BP PORTRAIT AWARD: NEXT GENERATION** is an exciting project offering free opportunities for 14-21 year-olds to creatively engage with painted portraiture through the *BP Portrait Award*. For the eighth year, young people will be able to connect with past *BP Portrait Award*-winning artists, meet other young people interested in portraiture and create their own portraits through a series of programmes including Taster Sessions, Drop-in Drawing, three-day Summer Schools, the fifth after-hours Young People's Private View, an onsite display showcasing the project, and youth-generated digital content. *BP Portrait Award: Next Generation* has so far engaged over 3000 young people, onsite and regionally. More details of 2017 programmes [www.npg.org.uk/bpNextgeneration](http://www.npg.org.uk/bpNextgeneration)

### **BP PORTRAIT AWARD 2017**

**OVERALL FIGURES** Total entrants 2580 from 87 countries (UK Entries 1214, International Entries 1366)

### **EXHIBITION FIGURES (53 SELECTED FROM TOTAL ENTRY)**

England (25), Spain (7), United States (6), France (2), Australia (2), Italy (2), Scotland (2), China (1), New Zealand (1), South Africa (1), Wales (1), Israel (1), Slovakia (1), Turkey (1)

### **BP PORTRAIT AWARD 2017**

22 June - 24 September 2017 at the National Portrait Gallery, London [www.npg.org.uk](http://www.npg.org.uk)

Admission Free

[npg.org.uk/BP](http://npg.org.uk/BP) or 020 7321 6600 #BPPortrait

**Press View: Wednesday 21 June 2017 10.00-12.00**

**For further press information, please contact: Laura McKechnan, Senior Communications Manager, National Portrait Gallery, 020 7321 6620 [lmckechnan@npg.org.uk](mailto:lmckechnan@npg.org.uk)**

**For images, please go to: [www.npg.org.uk/press](http://www.npg.org.uk/press)**

**National Portrait Gallery, St Martin's Place WC2H 0HE, opening hours** Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday: 10.00 – 18.00 (Gallery closure commences at 17.50) **Late Opening:** Thursday, Friday: 10.00 – 21.00 (Gallery closure commences at 8.50pm) **Nearest Underground:** Leicester Square/Charing Cross **General information:** 0207 306 0055 **Recorded information:** 020 7312 2463 **Website** [www.npg.org.uk](http://www.npg.org.uk)

## Notes to Editors

BP support for UK Arts & Culture: In the UK, BP is a major supporter of the arts with a programme that spans over 50 years. BP's investment in long term partnerships with the British Museum, the National Portrait Gallery, the Royal Opera House, and the Royal Shakespeare Company represent one of the most significant long-term corporate investments in UK arts and culture [www.bp.com](http://www.bp.com)

## LIST OF *BP PORTRAIT AWARD 2017* EXHIBITED ARTISTS

Jorge Abbad-Jaime de Aragón  
Rupert Alexander  
Anne Ben-Or  
Lukáš Betinský  
John Borowicz  
Noah Buchanan  
Martyn Burdon  
John Burke  
Sopio Chkhikvadze  
Henry Christian-Slane  
Alan Coulson  
Daniel Coves  
Rowanne Cowley  
Éva Csányi-Hurskin  
Sinead Davies  
Estelle Day  
Claire Eastgate  
Thomas Ehretsmann  
Madeline Fenton  
Maryam Foroozanfar  
Silvestre Goikoetxea  
Fiona Graham-Mackay  
Raouf Haghighi  
Bao Han  
Ania Hobson  
Hero Johnson  
Janne Kearney  
Khushna  
Anastasia Kurakina  
Gary Lawrence  
Hannah Laws  
Ross McAuley  
Julian Merrow- Smith  
Jose Antonio Ochoa  
Mustafa Ozel  
Anastasia Pollard  
Laura Quinn Harris  
Simón Ramírez Restrepo  
Angela Repping  
Jesús María Sáez de Vicuña Ochoa  
Brian Sayers  
Iñigo Sesma  
Brian Shields  
Anca-Luiza Sirbu  
Paul P. Smith  
Emily Stainer  
David Stanger  
Lucy Stopford  
Benjamin Sullivan  
Richard Twose

Marco Ventura  
Casper White  
Antony Williams