

News Release

Wednesday 26 July 2017

NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY COMMISSIONS NEW PHOTOGRAPH OF *THIS IS ENGLAND* AND *SKINS* ACTOR JACK O'CONNELL AS PART OF THE *JOHN KOBAL NEW WORK AWARD*



Jack O'Connell by Tereza Červeňová, 2017 © National Portrait Gallery, London

A striking newly-commissioned photograph of actor Jack O'Connell has been commissioned by the National Portrait Gallery, it was announced today, Wednesday 26 July 2017, coinciding with his West End starring role in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* with Sienna Miller opening this week.

The portrait, taken by photographer Tereza Červeňová, was commissioned through the *John Kobal New Work Award*, a prize awarded annually to a photographer under thirty-five whose work is selected for display in the *Taylor Wessing Photographic Portrait Prize* exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery.

The London-based Slovakian photographer Tereza Červeňová won the *John Kobal New Work Award* commission following her selection as part of the *Taylor Wessing Photographic Portrait Prize 2015* exhibition, and was invited to photograph the actor Jack O'Connell in March 2017.

Červeňová's photograph of Jack O'Connell was taken at his family home in Derby, and challenges the 'angry youth' image associated with acting roles such as his film debut as the blue-collar teenager Pukey Nicholls in the 2006 coming-of-age drama *This is England*, a young murderer in the British horror *Eden Lake*, a drug addict in *Harry Brown* and James Cook in the teen drama *Skins*.

Shown with a hint of vulnerability and wearing a tee-shirt in a garden, O'Connell is reflected through a window as Červeňová creates a semi-abstracted composition playing with light and lines as the actor's torso apparently emerges intertwined with panels of a wooden fence.

Tereza Červeňová says: 'In portraiture my aim is always to manage to unveil what lies beneath the surface and meet the real person behind it and thanks to Jack's openness, seeing through the 'actor's shield' was both natural as well as effortless. Jack was very generous not only with his time but also with his thoughts and stories. It was great to have the full support and trust of the National Portrait Gallery and the John Kobal Foundation when it came to the execution and choice of the final portrait, which for me shows the juxtaposition of strength and vulnerability in a setting where the boundaries between the interior and the exterior are blurred and Jack emerges interlaced in both.'

Born in Derby, England, Jack O'Connell, the half-English, half-Irish actor had his big break when he was cast in 2006's *This is England*, a part written for him by director Shane Meadows. His career has gone from strength to strength, winning the EE BAFTA Rising Star Award and the New Hollywood Award in 2015.

Recent film credits include Angelina Jolie's *Unbroken*, the critically acclaimed prison drama *Starred Up*, for which he was nominated for a British Independent Film Award for Best Actor, Belfast thriller '71 and last year he co-starred with George Clooney and Julia Roberts in *Money Monster*, directed by Jodie Foster.

Other credits include the successful British teen drama *Skins*, for which he won a British TV Choice award for Best Actor, British horror film *Eden Lake*, crime thriller *Harry Brown* opposite Sir Michael Caine and *300: Rise of an Empire*.

Jack O'Connell is currently starring at the Apollo Theatre in London's West End as Brick in the Young Vic Production of Tennessee Williams's *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, alongside Sienna Miller as Maggie. Upcoming later this year is the new Netflix TV series *Godless*.

As winner of the *John Kobal New Work Award* in 2015 for her portrait of her friend Yngvild, taken the day before they attended a wedding together at Holland's Veluwe National Park, Tereza Červeňová received a commission to photograph a sitter connected with the UK film industry for the National Portrait Gallery Collection. Jack O'Connell was chosen for his outstanding contribution to British cinema, theatre and television.

Slovakian born Červeňová moved to London in 2011 to study Photography at Middlesex University. After graduating with a BA Hons 1st, she embarked on a MA at the Royal College of Art (completing 2018). Her work now focuses on portraiture and fine art photography. She is the recipient of numerous awards including this year's Bloomberg New Contemporaries, D&AD Yellow Pencil (2014) and Daniel Blau Gallery's 5 UNDER 30 Award (2013) as well as nominations for MACK First Book Awards. Her work has appeared in publications including *The New Yorker*, *Telegraph Magazine* and *PORT Magazine* as well as international exhibitions.

The John Kobal New Work Award Commission was launched in 2012 by the John Kobal Foundation and represents a significant achievement for young photographers, particularly as each commissioned portrait becomes part of the Gallery's Collection. The first commission saw the American photographer Matthew Niederhauser take a striking portrait of Andrea Riseborough, who had recently portrayed Wallis Simpson in the film *W.E.* (2011). The 2013 Award recipient, the Czech photographer Hana Knizova, photographed Olivia Colman reclining in an elegant tuxedo in a disused Victorian house in Stoke Newington. The 2014 Award recipient Laura Pannack photographed *Star Wars* actress Felicity Jones for her commission.

Dr Nicholas Cullinan, Director of the National Portrait Gallery, London, says: 'In sponsoring this award the John Kobal Foundation offers a young artist a great opportunity to photograph a sitter connected with the UK film industry. We are delighted that in an innovatively composed photograph by Tereza Červeňová, Jack O'Connell now joins Felicity Jones, Olivia Colman and Andrea Riseborough in this exciting series of portraits commissioned from selected photographers in the *Taylor Wessing Photographic Portrait Prize*.'

Simon Crocker, Chairman of the John Kobal Foundation, and a judge of the *John Kobal New Work Award*, says: 'Jack O'Connell, one of the most talented actors to have emerged in the UK in the past few years, is a fitting subject for Tereza's painterly eye and she delivers a terrific portrait to mark the fifth year of our award.'

The *John Kobal New Work Award* is awarded to a photographer under the age of 35 selected for the exhibition. The winning photographer receives a cash prize of £5,000 to include undertaking a commission from the Gallery to photograph a sitter connected with the UK film industry.

Jack O'Connell by Tereza Červeňová will go on display in the National Portrait Gallery in 2018.

NPG x199780: Jack O'Connell
by Tereza Červeňová, 2017
C-type print
© National Portrait Gallery, London

IMAGE CAPTION: Jack O'Connell by Tereza Červeňová, 2017 © National Portrait Gallery, London

TAYLOR WESSING PHOTOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT PRIZE 2017

16 November 2017 – 4 February 2018

Admission £6 with donation (concessions £4.50) *Supported by Taylor Wessing*

For further Press information and image requests please contact: Neil Evans, Press Office, National Portrait Gallery
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National Portrait Gallery, St Martin's Place, London, WC2H 0HE. Opening hours Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday: 10am – 6pm (Gallery closure commences at 5.50pm) **Late Opening:** Thursday, Friday: 10am – 9pm (Gallery closure commences at 8.50pm) **Nearest Underground:** Leicester Square/Charing Cross **Recorded information:** 020 7312 2463 **General information:** 020 7306 0055 **Website:** www.npg.org.uk

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Jack O'Connell by Tereza Červeňová is the John Kobal New Work Award Commission awarded as part of the Taylor Wessing Photographic Portrait Prize 2015

- The *Taylor Wessing Photographic Portrait Prize 2015* was judged from original prints by **Dr Nicholas Cullinan**, Director, National Portrait Gallery; **Dr Phillip Prodger**, Head of Photographs, National Portrait Gallery; **Hannah Starkey**, Photographer; **Anne Lyden**, International Photography Curator, Scottish National Portrait Gallery; **David Drake**, Director, Ffotogallery, Cardiff; and **Tim Eyles**, Managing Partner, Taylor Wessing LLP.
- The First Prize winner received £12,000; Second Prize £3,000; Third Prize £2,000, Fourth Prize, £1,000. The winner of the *John Kobal New Work Award* received a cash prize of £5,000 to include undertaking a commission to photograph a sitter connected with the UK film industry for the National Portrait Gallery Collection. The *John Kobal New Work Award* was judged by Simon Crocker, Chairman of the John Kobal Foundation and Joanna Pitman, Trustee of the John Kobal Foundation.