

News Release

TUESDAY 5 MAY 2020

Self-Taught Artist wins *BP Portrait Award 2020*

Jiab Prachakul's prize winning portrait is displayed online in National Portrait Gallery virtual exhibition



Night Talk by Jiab Prachakul, 2019 © Jiab Prachakul

Visit the online exhibition here: www.npg.org.uk/bppportrait

Jiab Prachakul has won the prestigious first prize in the *BP Portrait Award 2020* it was announced today, Tuesday 5 May, on the National Portrait Gallery's social media channels. Prachakul's winning portrait, *Night Talk*, which depicts her close friends in a bar in Berlin, is displayed in the *BP Portrait Award 2020* exhibition, which has opened online on the National Portrait Gallery's website, while the Gallery in London is temporarily closed due to the current Coronavirus pandemic.

The winning portrait was selected from 1,981 entries from 69 countries. The judges thought the work was 'an evocative portrait of a fleeting moment in time, giving us a glimpse into someone else's life that is beautiful, mysterious and alive. It is loosely painted and the bold composition makes clever use of contrasting shapes.'

Prachakul wins £35,000 and a commission, at the National Portrait Gallery's Trustees' discretion, worth £7,000 (agreed between the National Portrait Gallery and the artist). Born in Nakhon Phanom, in northeast Thailand, in 2006 Prachakul relocated to London where she realised that she wanted to be an artist after attending the David Hockney exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery. Entirely self-taught, her work has been seen in solo exhibitions in the UK, Germany and France. This is the first time she has been selected for the *BP Portrait Award* exhibition.

The second prize of £12,000 went to Russian artist, **Sergey Svetlakov** for *Portrait of Denis: Actor, Juggler and Fashion Model*. The judges said the work 'was a timeless study showing devotion to detail and a connection between painter and subject. Tenderly observed, and unfussy, the thickly applied, re-worked paint skilfully describes the passage of time throughout the painting's gestation.'

The third prize of £10,000 went to **Michael Youds**, a gallery attendant at the National Galleries of Scotland, for his portrait *Labour of Love* depicting Tommy Robertson, the owner of an independent music store in Edinburgh. The judges thought that his portrait was 'both poignant and funny. It definitely struck a chord as an allegory for a time and place that already feels nostalgic.'

The BP Young Artist Award of £9,000 for the work of a selected entrant aged between 18 and 30 has been won by Dutch artist **Egbert Modderman** for *Restless* which depicts the Old Testament figure of Eli. The judges said the portrait was 'highly accomplished. It combines the strong and striking composition with a surprising sense of immediacy. The thinly applied paint, with the interesting brushed effect, gives a sense of depth, while the use of a simple palette and monumental structure creates a compelling and mature work.'

All 48 works selected for the *BP Portrait Award 2020* exhibition are on display in a virtual gallery space that replicates the rooms of the National Portrait Gallery, enabling online visitors to view the portraits collectively, read the labels and get insights from the artists, as well as exploring each individual work in more detail. The popular Visitor's Choice feature, which offers the public the opportunity to vote for their favourite portrait will also run online.



BP Portrait Award 2020 Virtual Exhibition

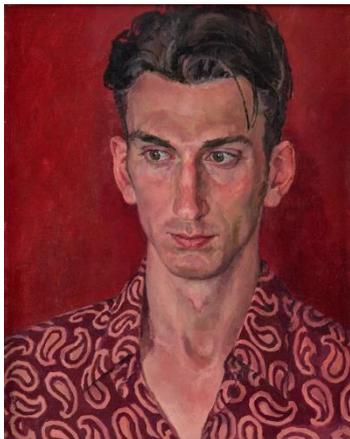
First Prize

Jiab Prachakul for *Night Talk* (1000 × 1000mm, acrylic on canvas)

Jiab Prachakul was born in 1979 in Nakhon Phanom, a small town on the Mekong River in northeast Thailand. She studied filmography at Thammasat University before working as a casting director at a Bangkok production company, finding talent for advertising campaigns. In 2006, Prachakul relocated to London where she had the 'instant realisation' that she wanted to be an artist after viewing a David Hockney retrospective at the National Portrait Gallery. She moved to Berlin in 2008 and began selling her pictures at a local flea market and set up an online fashion brand, designing merchandise based on her artworks, which she continues to run from her current home in Lyon.

Night Talk portrays Prachakul's close friends Jeonga Choi, a designer from Korea, and Makoto Sakamoto, a music composer from Japan, who are pictured in a Berlin bar on an autumn evening. The portrait explores notions of individual identity and how perceptions of selfhood can change over time. 'Our identity is dictated to us from the moment we are born, but as we grow up, identity is what we actually choose to be,' she says. 'I do believe that our circle of friends is what makes us who we are. Jeonga and Makoto are like family to me. We are all outsiders, Asian artists living abroad, and their deep friendship has offered me a ground on where I can stand and embrace my own identity.'

Second Prize



Sergey Svetlakov for *Portrait of Denis: Actor, Juggler and Fashion Model*

(508 × 407mm, Oil on canvas) © Sergey Svetlakov

Sergey Svetlakov was born in 1961 in Kazan, the capital city of what is now the Republic of Tatarstan in the Russian Federation. He graduated from the Kazan Art School, one of the oldest in Russia, before studying set design at the Theatre Academy in St Petersburg where he continues to live and work. His early career was spent designing sets and costumes for operas and stage productions. In the early 1990s, he gave up working in theatre to devote all his energies to his portraiture, nude studies and still life, and he has since exhibited widely across Europe, the US and Japan.

Svetlakov finds many of his sitters on the internet, including Denis, the subject of his entry in the 2020 *BP Portrait Award*. An aspiring actor, Denis had recently arrived in St Petersburg and placed an advertisement on a social network site offering his services as a model in order to earn extra money. 'My sitters are usually ordinary people with various types of social backgrounds,' says Svetlakov. 'Because Denis is an actor, he is very emotional and his face constantly changes depending on his

mood. When I painted him he was desperately searching for work and I found it interesting to convey his intense ambitions and doubts. His face is an explosive fusion of his Ukrainian, Russian, Greek and Tatar genes.'

Third Prize



Michael Youds for *Labour of Love* (1400 × 1000mm, Oil on canvas) © Michael Youds

Born in 1982 in Blackburn, Lancashire, Michael Youds gained a first-class degree in Fine Art from Lancaster University before moving to Edinburgh in 2006. Youds works as a gallery attendant at the National Galleries of Scotland, he is also an award-winning artist in his own right and devotes most of his free time to painting portraits and still lifes at his studio in the city. His work has been selected for exhibitions at the Royal Scottish Academy and the Royal Society of Portrait Painters. In 2019, he won first prize in the Scottish Portrait Awards for a painting of him and his twin brother David, who is also an artist.

The subject of his entry in the 2020 *BP Portrait Award* is Tommy Robertson, the owner of an independent music store in Edinburgh. The store has been in business for more than three decades, selling second-hand records, instruments and video games, and Youds wanted to celebrate its eclectic individuality. 'It's a very detailed painting,' he says, 'I wanted the viewer to feel like they are inside the shop and maybe a little overwhelmed, not knowing what to focus their attention on. Visually, Tommy is engaging and the background is equally interesting. You could probably find something different in the painting each time you looked at it.' The title *Labour of Love* refers to the UB40 album cover in the bottom left hand corner of the painting. It also reflects Tommy's passion for music and the time Youds spent working on the painting.

BP Young Artist Award



Egbert Modderman for *Restless* (940 × 1220mm, Oil on board) © Egbert Modderman

Born in Heerenveen, the Netherlands, in 1989, Egbert Modderman studied at the Minerva Art Academy and Visual Arts in Groningen. He started painting professionally four years ago after being invited by the city's Martinikerk (Martin's Church) to paint a depiction of Saint Martin. Modderman was raised in a Reformed family and his Christian heritage provides the foundation for his large-scale oil paintings portraying characters and stories from the Bible.

Restless depicts the Old Testament figure of Eli, a high priest punished by God for failing to restrain his wayward sons. 'Eli is one of the Bible's more tragic figures,' Modderman says. 'He is unable to sleep because he is so tormented. I wanted to show that tension in his face and create an emotion that lies somewhere between regret, fear and sorrow.' Modderman recruited a local bricklayer, Oetze Veenstra, to pose as his model after he spotted him working in his neighbourhood. 'I try to find the model that gives me the right feeling, whether it's a friend or a stranger,' he explains. 'Oetze had the weary look that I sought as the emotional baseline of the figure.'

The *Portrait Award* is an annual event aimed at encouraging artists to focus on and develop the theme of portraiture in their work. One of the most important platforms for portrait painters, the competition is open to everyone aged eighteen and over, in recognition of the outstanding and innovative work currently being produced by artists of all ages.

The prize winners and exhibition were selected anonymously by a judging panel chaired by **Dr Nicholas Cullinan**, Director, National Portrait Gallery. The full panel included **Rosie Broadley**, Head of Collections Display (Victorian – Contemporary), National Portrait Gallery; **Ekow Eshun**, writer and curator; **Justine Picardie**, writer and **Benjamin Sullivan**, artist and former *BP Portrait Award* winner.

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. 265 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 48 works were selected for the *BP Portrait Award 2020* exhibition.

The *BP Portrait Award 2020* exhibition was originally due to open at the National Portrait Gallery on the 21 May 2020, but has been postponed following the Gallery's temporary closure to help prevent the spread of Coronavirus and ensure the safety and wellbeing of visitors and staff. It is not yet known if the exhibition will be able to be shown at the Gallery before building works begin on [Inspiring People](#), the Gallery's major redevelopment project, at the end of June. The exhibition is set to tour to Aberdeen Art Gallery towards the end of the year.

QUOTES

Dr Nicholas Cullinan, Director, National Portrait Gallery, London says: 'Congratulations to all the prize winning artists and those selected for the exhibition. Many people are turning to art and, in particular, portraiture during these challenging times and I am delighted that we are able to share some of the very best examples of contemporary portrait practise from artists across the world with audiences at home through our online exhibition. It is a privilege to chair the judging process and I would like to thank all the artists who entered the 2020 competition.'

Ms Des Violaris, Director UK Arts & Culture & Paralympics at bp, says: 'The announcement of the winner of the *BP Portrait Award* is always an exciting moment and this year is no exception, with an

even bigger audience able to view Jiab's fabulous portrait in the virtual exhibition online. Congratulations to all of this year's category winners, and indeed all of the artists selected to be shown in the 2020 exhibition.'

BP TRAVEL AWARD 2019

The winner of the *BP Travel Award 2019* was Manu Saluja for her proposal to create portraits of volunteers working in the vast communal kitchen at The Golden Temple in Amritsar, India. The resulting work will be displayed online in the *BP Portrait Award 2020* exhibition.

CATALOGUE

A fully illustrated catalogue featuring all 48 selected works will accompany the exhibition. The catalogue also includes interviews with all the prize winners, an essay Madeline Ward, Lead Curator, Art, at Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums and an illustrated interview with the BP Travel Award 2019 winner. The catalogue, priced at £9.99, will be published on 5 May and available from Waterstones and all good online booksellers.

BP PORTRAIT AWARD 2020

OVERALL FIGURES Total entrants 1,981 entries from 69 (UK Entries 917, International Entries 1,064)

EXHIBITION FIGURES (48 SELECTED FROM TOTAL ENTRY)

Country breakdown

UK – 33

Australia – 1

Belgium – 1

China – 2

Denmark – 1

France – 1

Italy – 2

Netherlands – 1

Norway – 1

Russia – 1

United States – 4

BP PORTRAIT AWARD 2020

From 5 May 2020 at npg.org.uk/BP

Admission Free

#BPPortrait

For further press information and images, please contact: Laura McKechnan, Head of Communications (Interim), Email: lmckechnan@npg.org.uk / press@npg.org.uk Tel: 07855 768750

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 and the Royal Opera House, represent one of the most significant long-term corporate investments in UK arts and culture.

www.bp.com/arts

LIST OF *BP PORTRAIT AWARD 2020* EXHIBITED ARTISTS

Thomas Arthurton	Vanessa Garwood	Jiab Prachakul
Tim Benson	Kristian Hagerup	Laura Quinn Harris
Robert Bosisio	Moses Hamborg	John Anthony Richardson
Simon Thomas Braiden	Christopher Hanson	Jamie Routley
Patricia Buckley	Steven Higginson	Liu Shuang
Martyn Burdon	Hongshu Lei	Papay Solomon
John Burke	Thomas Leveritt	Sergey Svetlakov
Steve Caldwell	Jennifer Mcrae	YangYu Wang
Clare Cepyrynski Ciekawy	Mary Millner	Britta Westhausen
Shona Chew	Egbert Vincent Modderman	Fiona White
Jamie Coreth	Sarah Jane Moon	Charles Williams
Gary Craig	Francis Mosley	Antony Williams
Kevin M.A. Cunningham	Charles Moxon	Barry Wilson
Parmen Daushvili	Stefan Nandancee	Richard Wilson
Mark Draisey	Gonzalo Orquín	Michael Youds
Peter James Field	Sara Pedigo	Haiyu Yuan