

AMES and MULTICULTURAL ARTS VICTORIA present

HEARTLANDS



Presented in partnership with:

REFUGEE FINE ART PRIZE 2012



MEDIA RELEASE

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Prestigious art prize honours refugee artists

AMES and Multicultural Arts Victoria are excited to announce the 12 winners of the *Heartlands Refugee Fine Art Prize*, who were honoured at a special exhibition opening at fortyfivedownstairs in Flinders Lane last night.

A total prize pool of \$15,000 has been shared by three primary prize-winners, a new arrival prize, a youth prize and seven honourable mentions. First prize is \$5,000 plus a solo exhibition and artist in residence opportunity.

The Prize is an important way for artists from a refugee background to contribute and tell their story, with 78 entries received and artists from 15 countries represented this year.

Minela Krupic, took out first prize for her etching *Kolekcija*. Arriving from Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1997, Minela says her artwork, a series of etchings and digital prints, focuses on the experiences and changes of her migration to Australia from war-torn Bosnia. Minela explores themes of people whose childhood has been marked by the war, refugee experience and exile and looks for a path that may lead to peace, forgiveness and reconciliation in her work.

Originally from Vietnam, Minh Phan, won second prize for his oil on plastic card and canvas artwork called *Brimanger Diptych*, a piece about self-portrayal and identity. It demonstrates how significant events in history burden the individual with its personal impact.

An oil on canvas piece called *Puzzeling In, Puzzeling Out* by Sutueal Bekele secured third prize. Originally from Ethiopia, Sutueal has been living in Australia since 1999 and says that whilst his composition denotes a regular game designed to test one's ingenuity, the reality is it depicts a mindset. "The minute one fathoms what it feels like to have your head held under the water while trying to keep your children's head afloat - then one can begin to appreciate the tale of refugees," Sutueal said.

The newly arrived prize was awarded to Nasrullah Qannadian and his glass engraving called *Australia Day*. His work represents Australia's history with England. Princess Diana was a kind mother and beautiful person to people around the world. Nasrullah wants her to be remembered for all her goodness and because her life ended too soon. Nasrullah moved to Australia from Afghanistan two years ago.

The Youth prize was awarded to 17 year old Ayel Arot for her oil on acrylic titled *The past War in Sudan*.

Heartlands' judge and Curator of Australian Art at the National Gallery of Victoria, Elena Taylor, said this year's *Heartlands Refugee Fine Art Prize* collection is definitely a triumph of the human spirit.

"This show is an affirmation of how important art is in everybody's lives - this is a way to express themselves and connect with others, to tell stories, to become part of a new country," Ms Taylor said.

"The standard and creativity displayed in this year's entries has been outstanding," she said.

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Jane Clark, Research Curator at the Museum of Old and New Art, Tasmania said the quality was extraordinarily high, with techniques ranging from quite traditional to digital.

“I’m very impressed with the professional skill and talent. It’s universal thought on this human experience that transcends their individual stories. Even the non prizewinning works have a lot to say,” Ms Clark said.

More than 40 shortlisted entries, including all the winning artworks, will be on display at the *Heartlands Refugee Fine Art Prize Exhibition* held at fortyfivedownstairs in Flinders Lane from **6-16 June 2012** in the lead up to Refugee Week, with selected works from the exhibition then on display at Walker Street Gallery in Dandenong from **6-28 July 2012**.

Now in its third year, the *Heartlands Refugee Fine Art Prize* is presented by AMES and Multicultural Arts Victoria in partnership with VicHealth, Parks Victoria and the Sidney Myer Fund.

Heartlands Refugee Fine Art Prize Exhibition

fortyfivedownstairs

45 Flinders Lane, Melbourne

6-16 June 2012

Selected works from the exhibition on display at Walker Street Gallery

Cnr Walker & Robinson Streets, Dandenong

6-28 July 2012

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