

Wai Tang Commissioning Award and Smith & Singer People's Choice Award recipients announced!



Images: Janelle LOW **Untitled III (from the family archives)** 2021 from the series *Disintegrate* pigment ink-jet print, 24k gold leaf 18.0 x 12.0 cm courtesy of the artist and **THIS IS NO FANTASY** (Melbourne) and Andrea FRANCOLINI **Read my lips** 2022 chromogenic print 105.0 x 66.0 cm courtesy of the artist

MGA and the MGA Foundation are delighted to announce that the Wai Tang Commissioning Award has been granted to artist Janelle Low to present an exhibition of work at MGA in 2023. Andrea Francolini has been awarded the 2022 Smith & Singer People's Choice Award for his work 'Read my lips' (2022).

Over the last 17 years, the William and Winifred Bowness Photography Prize has emerged as an important annual survey of contemporary photographic practice in Australia and one of the most prestigious prizes in the country. Every year MGA invites artists to submit photo-based media including analogue and digital photography created over the last year for consideration.

Acclaimed artist Rosemary Laing and Director of Agency and Senior Curator, Museums and Collections at University of Melbourne, Hannah Presley joined MGA Director Anouska Phizacklea to curate a shortlist of 54 exceptional works that form the 2022 edition of the Bowness Photography Prize. Melbourne artist Amos Gebhardt was awarded \$30,000 for their winning work 'Wallaby' (2022) and the work will be acquired into MGA's nationally significant collection of Australian photographs.

Wai Tang Commissioning Award

The Wai Tang Commissioning Award has been established by Wai Tang's husband, Kee Wong, to recognise and honour her significant impact on the arts and preserve her legacy within MGA's collection and exhibition history. The \$10,000 award will contribute meaningful assistance for an artist to present an exhibition that will coincide with the 2023 Bowness Photography Prize exhibition season, with one work acquired into MGA's significant collection of Australian photographs in honour of Wai Tang's legacy.

Wai Tang served on MGA's Committee of Management from 2018 until she passed away in 2020. Her expertise included more than 30 years of experience in the retail and wholesale manufacturing industries where she held senior executive roles and non Executive Director's role in public and private companies. Her commitment to the visual and performing arts was demonstrated through her leadership roles and philanthropic support.

Janelle Low states that her work in the Bowness Photography Prize 'belongs to an ongoing series exploring familial ties, cultural loss and the nature of memory. Reworking archival family photographs, the processes used oscillate between taking control and letting go of control to evoke a sense of intimacy while simultaneously embodying distance as well. Side by side the works create a 'family album' of sorts, and reflect upon the space between my cultural heritage, Western upbringing and deeply rooted feelings of filial piety.'

Low has exhibited nationally and internationally and her works are held in both public and private collections. In 2013 she became the second female and youngest winner of the National Photographic Portrait Prize presented by the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra, and was selected as a finalist in the Bowness Photography Prize in both 2017 and again in 2022. Low is represented by THIS IS NO FANTASY (Naarm/Melbourne) where she launched her second solo show in 2021.

'The Wai Tang Commissioning Award enters its second year and we can see from the attention received in 2022 what an impact the award can have in deepening audiences' engagement with shortlisted Bowness Photography Prize artists. We recognise the difference a solo show can have on an artist's career and we are looking forward to seeing what Janelle Low has in store for us.' – Anouska Phizacklea, MGA Director

'I am honoured to be selected for the Wai Tang Commissioning Award. This opportunity has come at what feels like a significant point in my practice and I am grateful and excited for this opportunity to realise a body of work I've been thinking about for a long time.' – Janelle Low

'I am delighted to continue to support Wai's passion for supporting an emerging artist in photography through the commissioning award in her name.' – Kee Wong

Smith & Singer People's Choice Award

Smith & Singer (previously Sotheby's Australia) became the proud sponsor of the People's Choice Award in 2018. Smith & Singer is Australia's premium fine art dealership facilitating the purchase and sale of important historical, modern and contemporary Australian and international art. Their significant philanthropic support of the Bowness Photography Prize is a reflection of the national and historic importance of this prize. The Smith & Singer People's Choice Award was voted by the public during the exhibition period with the recipient receiving \$5,000 to support their practice. The winning work, 'Read my lips' (2022) by Andrea Francolini challenges the conventions of portrait photography while drawing attention to the mechanics of photographic production. The work

claimed 14% of the vote making it a clear favourite. Thames & Hudson generously donated book prize packs to three lucky voters.

'We warmly congratulate Andrea Francolini on receiving the Smith & Singer People's Choice Award for the 2022 Bowness Photography Prize. 'Read my lips' is a striking image that is simultaneously engaging and perplexing, literally challenging the viewer to question preconceived notions of speech and the dissemination of information and ideas. Living in an age of anxiety, where 'fake news' has firmly entered our media landscape, 'Reads my lips' assumes a complex and startling presence that haunts the viewer in its meaning and technical virtuosity. We are proud to continue our support of the People's Choice Award for the Bowness Photography Prize and its support of excellence and originality in Australian photography.' – Geoffrey Smith, Smith & Singer Chairman

'I was already over the moon to have been selected as a finalist in this year's Bowness Photography Prize exhibition. Then to see my image used on a banner was even more overwhelming. Of course one enters a competition – especially of this calibre – hoping to win or at least be selected as a finalist. To win the People's Choice Award was really special. I was a bit speechless when I received the call and am so honoured due to the calibre of the other images which made the final selection. Congratulations to everyone else and hopefully see you next year.'
– Andrea Francolini

Please contact bowness@monash.vic.gov.au for further information, images and interview opportunities