



Judge's Report

Michael Rolfe

Chief Executive Officer, Museums & Galleries NSW

I have long considered the *Mosman Art Prize* to be one of the most recognised and highly anticipated art awards offered. Such is its lure, many established and up and coming artists regularly compete for the acknowledgement it bestows. As a previous director of the gallery I was honoured to be invited back to judge this year's competition. And what a task it proved to be. With around 850 entries to consider most weren't selected, but nonetheless all played an important part and I feel compelled to acknowledge every artist who entered.

As noted in last year's Judge's report by Felicity Fenner, the process of selection for the *Mosman Art Prize* echoes that of the Archibald, Wynne and Sulman Prizes at the Art Gallery of NSW: each and every work is held up by art handlers for examination by the judge, for as long as is needed. A final selection was then made and winners were chosen towards the end of a long and exhausting day.

First prize was awarded to Alan Jones. His work has always interested me for its discordant approach to colour, shapes and texture used. But more than that I find his painting quite distinctive and representative of a way of seeing that gives me confidence in his picture making. *Painting 131 (North Coogee)* will prove to be a strong addition to the Mosman Collection. Jones has been quoted as saying 'some paintings can happen in half an hour', but obviously that's not always the case. For me judging usually takes a while, but not in this instance. I knew I had found the winner as soon as I saw the work.

Andrew Tompkins won the Henry Bucks of Mosman Commendation Prize with his work *Safe from the rising tide*. This award was more difficult to decide. There were a few contenders. In the end Tompkins's experimental materiality stood out from the others. Being burnt, forcefully composed and lace like in form, his work deserved this award if only by way of encouragement to take more risks with the playfulness he obviously enjoys.

During my time in Mosman I recall having met Allan Gamble on several occasions. He was obviously a man of passion and he carried a certain distinction as an architect and painter of

some note. In this instance I connected what I knew of him to the work of Kevin McKay, an artist I first met at Hazelhurst, where he exhibited during my time there. In awarding the Allan Gamble Memorial Art Prize (Built Environment) to McKay, for his work *Barangaroo observations*, I feel confident that Gamble would approve, but more so for me it's deserved recognition of McKay's skills as a painter and for his careful observation of a public housing neighbourhood under threat from gentrification.

The Fourth Village Emerging Artist Award went to Natasha Walsh for *Aeon's breath*, an almost not there portrait hiding on a waxed ply surface which for me was itself almost sufficient to acknowledge. As a recent graduate from the National Art School, Walsh's CV suggests her enthusiasm for being an artist will be well encouraged by this success.

I'd like to acknowledge Mosman Council for ongoing and substantial support given to the visual arts, over many years now. Mosman Art Gallery is stronger now than it has ever been, matching a cultural legacy generally associated with post European settlement, to contemporary programs that powerfully acknowledge Aboriginal ownership and cultural histories of the Sydney Basin and North Shore.

Thanks go to Gallery Director John Cheeseman, Senior Curator Katrina Cashman, as well as Martin Tokarczyk and Judi MacLaren. Indeed all the Mosman Art Gallery staff and those who assisted in the selection process.

Congratulations to all.

Michael Rolfe
Judge, 2015 Mosman Art Prize
Executive Officer, Museums and Galleries NSW