

Geelong artist wins National Capital Art Prize

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Janne Kearney in her Geelong West studio. (Louisa Jones) 249059_07

Written by Ash Bolt

Geelong artist Janne Kearney claimed a little slice of history, taking out the open category at the first ever National Capital Art Prize. Ms Kearney's painting, *All Day Sucker*, was chosen by the eight judges as the most outstanding piece among the 121 shortlisted finalists and more than 1000 entries. A winner of more than 80 art prizes around the world, she said the National Capital Art Prize stood out for its "intensive" judging process.

"Every prize you win is an incredible feat ... [but] this one is special in the manner in which it's judged," she said. "It's judged by eight people, who are some of the finest minds we have, and they judge it all separately and anonymously before the scores are put together to find the winner. As far as I'm aware, there are very few art prizes that are judged like that so to win it was special."

Ms Kearney said her painting was part of a series called *Eye Candy* that explored women's freedom of expression. "It's about celebrating women being in control of their own sexuality," she said. "Women controlling their own sexuality is a taboo subject, this work teases the viewer's perception of sweetness and innocence through the subject's visual double entendre."

"Each of us has the right to exist without torment, exploring current pushes within gender politics, against a climate of sexual harassment and the right for each of us not to accept sub-par treatment, to be truly liberated and be ourselves." Unable to attend the awards in Canberra, Ms Kearney instead accepted the award virtually surrounded by friends. "I hadn't told anyone that I won, but I invited nine close friends around that night to watch it," she said. "When my pre-recorded acceptance speech popped up, it was really special to share that moment with my friends."

Ms Kearney said she had dedicated the win to her husband Mick, who passed away earlier this year. "He was my biggest fan and supporter and would have been the first to pop open the champagne," she said.

The National Capital Art Prize win came with a solo exhibition in Canberra, which Ms Kearney said she would spend the next 12 months working towards. "I have to put together a body of work for this exhibition, which will take me close to 12 months," she said. "It can take me up to four to six weeks on one painting, so it will be a big job."