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VISUAL ARTS

Review: BP Portrait Award 2017, National Portrait Gallery

22 JUN 17 – 24 SEP 17, 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM

Husband's portrait of breast-feeding wife wins first prize at
the annual BP Portrait Award at the National Portrait
Gallery

10 CW readers are interested



Breech! by Benjamin Sullivan (c) Benjamin Sullivan

Breech! by Benjamin Sullivan is 2017's winner of the prestigious BP portrait award.

The judges were particularly struck by the tenderness of Sullivan's composition, which depicts his breast-feeding wife during a moment of calm. While the title nods to the traumatic nature of his daughter's birth, the composition is soothing, capturing the intimacy of the maternal bond. Judge Kirsty Wark said: 'The woman is tired. She is in love. Her life has changed forever.' Sullivan, who has been shortlisted for the winning prize 13 times, takes home £30,000 and a National Portrait Gallery commission worth £5,000.

The second prize of £10,000 was awarded to French painter and illustrator Thomas Ehretsmann (also selected for exhibition in 2016) for *Double Portrait*, which depicts his wife Caroline walking in the park. Third prize was awarded to Antony Williams' portrait *Emma*, depicting model-turned-friend Emma Bruce in his studio.

Portraiture is not the buzziest of art forms. Seen lately as high-minded and serious, it can be oddly joyless. Smiles are rare, while wizened geriatrics and disenchanted, hard-faced youths abound. But the two galleries dedicated to the 53 exhibited paintings are lined with an engaging selection of sitters, of all ages and races. It is certainly not ground-breaking in its curatorial layout, but a good number of the exhibited portraits convey stories that intrigue you enough to make you stop and think.

Look out for *Society!* by Oxford graduate Khushna and *86 (Rhyming Slang for Worth Nix)* by Jane Kearney, both in the back gallery. Kearney masterfully captures the beams of streaming light and the

stealthy shadows lingering in the corners of the run-down car-park. The atmospheric composition draws you into the frame while the sitter's piecing, sultry gaze forces you to question the fabric of her life story. Why is she sitting in an abandoned car-park? Why is she alone? Why does she feel worthless as the title suggests?

Now in its 38th year, the award aims to promote and support emerging and existing global talent. The exhibition, in which 53 portraits are displayed at the National Portrait Gallery, always draws a variety of responses to the portraiture remit, with intensely human stories at the heart of the works.

This free exhibition in London is expected to attract more than 300,000 visitors, so go and decide for yourself who your favourite is at this summer's eclectic showcase of portrait paintings.

WHAT	Review: BP Portrait Award 2017, National Portrait Gallery
WHERE	National Portrait Gallery St Martin's Place, London, WC2H 0HE MAP
NEAREST TUBE	Leicester Square (underground)
WHEN	22 Jun 17 – 24 Sep 17, 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM
PRICE	£Free
WEBSITE	Click here for more details

WE RECOMMEND NEARBY

TERROIRS

The sort of wine bar/restaurant you never want to leave, this place has two separate floors depending on whether you fancy something bustling or more chilled. The French menu features both small plates and charcuterie alongside plats du jour that might include gilt head bream, monk's beard, broad beans and rouille.

- Book
- Map

SHORYU

Shoryu makes lip-smacking Hakata tonkotsu ramen, inspired by Southern Japan. Shoryu prides itself on using rich bone broth which has been cooking for 12 hours, and soft-boiled Burford Brown eggs, to produce a silky, satisfying soup. Their ramen portions are generous enough at lunchtime, but the gyoza are also a tempting addition to a meal. Shoryu also prides itself on the introduction of hirata buns to the UK - for which we are very grateful!

- Book
- Map

- Portraits
- Award
- Paintings
- National Portrait Gallery

You might like



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Michelangelo & Sebastiano review, National Gallery

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