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First \$50,000 Bennett Prize goes to Tampa artist Aneka Ingold *Prestigious prize raises profile of women figurative realist painters*

MUSKEGON, Mich. – Aneka Ingold, a painter whose work explores women’s experiences across time, culture and history, has been named the winner of the first [Bennett Prize](#), the largest ever awarded solely to women painters.

The announcement was made at the “Rising Voices: The Bennett Prize for Women Figurative Realist Painters” exhibition, which opened this evening at the [Muskegon Museum of Art](#) in Muskegon, Michigan.

The Prize is meant to propel the careers of women figurative realist painters from across the country. In the exhibition catalog, the four-member jury praised Ingold’s paintings for powerful and expressive representations of femininity.

“Aneka Ingold’s mixed media paintings delve directly into her experience as a woman, addressing biology, social constructs, history and how she sees the world,” said Art Martin, a Bennett Prize juror and also director of Collections and Exhibitions/senior curator at the Muskegon Museum of Art. “Her figures are so skillfully rendered that their flesh defines a unique physical being, an independent agent outside of the influence of the viewer.”

Ingold was one of 10 women figurative realist painters named last fall as finalists for The Bennett Prize, from among 647 entrants nationwide. Her work, along with the work of the other nine finalists, is on exhibit at the Muskegon Museum of Art from May 2 - Sept. 8, 2019. The museum was chosen as the inaugural venue for The Bennett Prize due to its commitment to both women artists and realism.

Ingold will receive \$25,000 annually for two years, a total of \$50,000, allowing her to devote the time necessary to create new work for a solo exhibition, which will open at the Muskegon Museum of Art in 2021 and then travel the country.

In her [artist statement](#), Ingold described her creative process: “I look for ways to show a female perspective in the making of history and try to imagine what the past would be like if seen through the eyes of women. Making these images is not only a way for me to understand the woman that I am, but the woman that I want to become...My artmaking process thrusts me into a place where I can truly realize and celebrate the growth and progress made by women.”

Art collectors [Steven Alan Bennett and Dr. Elaine Melotti Schmidt](#) of San Antonio, Texas, established The Bennett Prize in 2016, endowing a \$3 million fund at The Pittsburgh Foundation to ensure that The Prize will be awarded every two years in perpetuity.

The response to the call for entries surpassed the Bennetts' and museum officials' expectations, and highlights the number of talented women realist painters throughout the U.S.

"All of the artists chosen for recognition in this competition take the concept of figurative realism further and show us the gamut of possibilities for this genre, from the relatively straightforward to the whimsical to the surreal and beyond," said Bennett. "Their realism is infused with a variety of visions, all of which captivate the viewer and challenge each of us to step beyond our own boundaries."

Schmidt and Bennett are among the country's top collectors of figurative realist art. They are committed to highlighting the work of women artists who are or seek to become full-time painters but have not yet reached full professional recognition. They also hope The Prize will allow the public to learn more about the creative vision of talented women painters in the increasingly popular style of figurative realism.

Maria Tomasula and Andrea Kowch, two renowned realist artists, were also on the jury with Martin and Bennett. They selected the winner, and the nine other finalists, who each received \$1,000.

In addition to the winner, Ingold, the nine finalists are:

- Dorielle Caimi, Santa Fe, NM
- Jennifer R. A. Campbell, Washington, D.C.
- Kira Nam Greene, Brooklyn, NY
- Mary Henderson, Philadelphia, PA
- Stefanie Jackson, Athens, GA
- Rebecca Leveille, Amherst, MA
- Jenny Morgan, Brooklyn, NY
- Daniela Kovačić Muzio, Evanston, IL
- Carrie Pearce, Peoria, IL

The Pittsburgh Foundation oversees the Bennett Prize Fund which funds The Prize on the Bennetts' behalf. "The Bennett Prize is among the most creative and exciting examples of how our Foundation and its Center for Philanthropy works with donors to turn their ideas into tangible, innovative projects," said Pittsburgh Foundation President & CEO Maxwell King. "We are hopeful that this award program will inspire other philanthropies to develop permanent funding streams for individual artists, particularly women artists and artists of color, whose unique perspectives are needed now more than ever."

To download images of Aneka Ingold, her artwork and other Bennett Prize-related artwork, please visit [here](#). Click [here](#) for more information about The Bennett Prize. Click [here](#) for more information about the *Rising Voices* exhibition.

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