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Call for entries opens for \$50,000 Bennett Prize for women figurative realist painters

PITTSBURGH – Talented women painters looking to take their figurative realist work to the next level are invited to apply for the \$50,000 Bennett Prize, the largest offered solely to women painters.

The call for entries runs from April 16 - Oct. 16, 2020. Details are at www.thebennettprize.org Entry is online at www.callforentry.org

More than 600 artists entered the competition two years ago, exceeding expectations.

“The first call for entries revealed a deep vein of exceptional talent that runs across this country, and we are eager to see an even more extensive range of original work in this second call,” said Steven Alan Bennett, of San Antonio, Texas, who co-founded the prize in 2016 with Dr. Elaine Melotti Schmidt. They are among the country’s top collectors of figurative realist art and have established a \$3 million fund at The Pittsburgh Foundation to ensure that The Prize will be awarded every two years in perpetuity.

“We are committed to ensuring that talented women painters are duly recognized, and the overwhelming response to the first competition reveals just how warranted this support for women painters is,” Bennett said. “Their work deserves to be seen, and the public deserves to see it.”

Tampa-based artist Aneka Ingold won the first Bennett Prize last year. She is currently creating new work for her Bennett Prize solo exhibition, which will be presented across the country in 2021 along with the work of the 10 finalists in this second call for entries. The exhibition will first be held at the Muskegon (Michigan) Museum of Art from May 20 - Sept. 5, 2021.

Ingold's paintings are noted for their powerful, expressive representations of femininity, exploring women's experiences across time, culture and history.

“Women figurative realist painters have so many important stories to share and their voices need to be heard,” Ingold said. “As the inaugural recipient of The Bennett Prize, my artistic voice has been amplified and my career empowered in ways I never dreamed.”

The Bennett Prize is designed to propel a woman painter's career to broader recognition. The winner receives \$25,000 each year for two years, so she has needed time to create her solo show. The Prize helps [level the playing field](#) for women artists. Works by women artists are collected and shown less frequently by galleries and museums and, when they are purchased, the prices paid are typically far less than those paid to artists who are men.

“Through our Center for Philanthropy, our Foundation has been involved with The Bennett Prize from its inception. It has been a great privilege to see how The Prize has elevated the profile of women artists by funding their work and creating opportunities for the public to experience the talents and creativity

of women figurative realist painters,” said Lisa Schroeder, Pittsburgh Foundation president and CEO.

The Bennett Prize is awarded by a four-member jury, which this year is comprised of Patrick Moore, director of the internationally renowned Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh; painters Alyssa Monks and Katie O’Hagan, both of New York; and Bennett, co-founder of the prize. The jury will select 10 painters from among the entrants and ultimately one winner.

“In hosting The Prize, we’re able to bring new voices and stunning artworks to our audiences, advance women painters around the country, and present challenging new potentials for the use of the figure in contemporary art,” said Art Martin, director of collections and exhibitions/senior curator at the Muskegon Museum of Art, and a former Bennett Prize juror.

“As the first exhibition of Bennett Prize finalists' work travels the country, we expect this second call for entries to attract more entries, more individual styles, more traveling venues and more people eager to see this work,” said prize co-founder Schmidt. “We hope to see women painters from every area of the country, every demographic and every flavor of figurative realism competing for this coveted recognition.”

The Prize is not open to hobbyists or students, or to artists whose work has been sold for \$25,000 or more, or who have received an award, prize or other recognition for their art in that amount.

In recognition of the extraordinary circumstances we are facing in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting economic hardship, The Pittsburgh Foundation, Muskegon Museum of Art, and Prize founders Dr. Elaine Melotti Schmidt and Steven Bennett have made the decision to reduce the fee for entry by half, to \$25.

In addition to the first round winner, Ingold, the nine finalists were:

- 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 Léveill e, Amherst, MA
- Jenny Morgan, Brooklyn, NY
- Daniela Kovačić Muzio, Evanston, IL
- Carrie Pearce, Peoria, IL

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