

PRESS RELEASE: UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 22:00, 14.09.09

Sheila Wallis wins the £25,000 Threadneedle Prize

Artist Sheila Wallis, 36, has won the £25,000 Threadneedle Prize for her unusual, delicate and sensitive self-portrait, naked, curled-up on rumpled sheets. The Prize was awarded this evening by Lauren Laverne (host of BBC 2's *The Culture Show*), following a public vote held online and at the Mall Galleries.

The Threadneedle Prize is the largest art prize in the UK awarded by a public vote. Over the last two weeks, thousands of visitors to the Mall Galleries took this opportunity to vote for their choice of one of seven artists shortlisted by the selectors.

Sheila was born in Derry, Northern Ireland. Born at the height of the troubles, her work is partly inspired by themes of internal and external conflicts and the vulnerability and exposure of the existential human condition. She has chosen to express these themes by painting the naked body.

She wants her paintings to:

“convey the vulnerability of exposure without being exploitative or cruel... [the subject] is aware of the scrutiny, but is not subjugated, objectified, nor dismissive of it. Essentially alone, all objects and paraphernalia other than the body and the surface it rests upon are removed, presenting a small, naked creature, not the classic ‘nude’.”

Also announced at this evening's special Awards event was the winner of the £5,000 Federation of British Artists' Emerging Artist Prize, for artists ages 18 – 28. The Prize was awarded by the selectors to Aishan Yu for her stunning painting ***Beck at the table***.

Aishan Yu studied at Sichuan Fine Arts Institute, China, and the Slade School of Fine Art. She won the Chinese New Generation Artist Award in 2004 and exhibited in last year's Threadneedle Prize exhibition. Her recent paintings:

“focus on a balance of photographic realism and non-representational textures. I explore the field of portraiture through this combination of realism and abstraction to express people's inner thoughts.”

The Threadneedle Prize is exclusively open to artists living or working in the UK, and has proved a massive hit with artists attracted by the £25,000 – which makes it the most valuable competition for a single work of art in the UK.

Shelia Wallis' work **Self-portrait** and Aishan Yu's **Beck at the table** can be seen at the Mall Galleries, The Mall, London SW1 (near Trafalgar Square) until 5pm on Saturday 19 September.

The Threadneedle Prize for Painting and Sculpture

Mall Galleries

The Mall (near Trafalgar Square)

London SW1

Nearest Tube: Charing Cross

Tel: 020 7930 6844

www.threadneedleprize.com

www.mallgalleries.org.uk

Open 2 - 19 September 2009, 10am-5pm daily, and 10am-9pm every Friday during the exhibition.

Admission £2.50, Concessions £1.50 (Free to Friends of the FBA, Art Fund Members, Westminster Res-card holders and Under 16s).

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Alternatively log in to the press area which is now available on The Threadneedle Prize website for access to high-res press images.

Notes

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Source: Threadneedle as at 30.06.2009.