

MEDIA RELEASE

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Iranian artist wins Birchalls Tertiary Art Prize

Tasmania's largest art prize for a tertiary student has been won by Hobart fine arts student, Hiran Yousefpour.

The judges for the annual Birchalls Tertiary Art Prize, noted artists Raymond Arnold and Bala Starr, chose Hiran's oil on canvas, *Knock me not*, for its comment on memory and remembered encounters.

At the announcement of the winners at the NEW Gallery at the UTAS Newnham campus, Bala Starr, senior curator at the Ian Potter Museum of Art at the University of Melbourne, said Hiran's work demonstrated maturity and openness.

"This painting is about a mystery that leaves you wondering," she said.

The judges also awarded a high commendation to Machiko Ishikawa for her oil painting, *Portrait of an isolated woman*.

Ms Starr said that the exhibition of work by 23 finalists in the Birchalls Art Prize showed students' strong interest in landscape and the natural world.

"There is also comment on social and personal issues and a diversity of ethnic and cultural backgrounds in the entrants and works.

"I was also interested to see a relative lack of digital media work from entrants – only four photographs."

Hiran Yousefpour is in his third year of a Bachelor of Fine Arts at the UTAS School of Art in Hobart.

He said that *Knock me not* is the fascination of discovery of the unknown behind the closed door of childhood memories, the door knockers in the painting being a metaphor for his childhood curiosity.

Hiran's prize is \$2500, which he said he will spend on "more brushes and paints". A people's choice prize of \$750 will be awarded at the conclusion of the exhibition at the NEW Gallery.

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