

Alternative cultures help artist to look at subjects from different angles

Hilton Owen is a young Tasmanian artist with big plans. After winning the RACT Insurance Tasmanian Youth Portraiture Prize, he's setting his sights on national, and – in the years to come – even international exhibitions.

Hilton's *Self-Portrait with Cow* was the winning entry in the inaugural RACT Insurance Prize, which is aimed at supporting emerging Tasmanian artists under the age of 30.

Hilton beat more than 40 other entries from around Tasmania to win \$5,000 and a trip for two to Sydney to see entries in the Archibald Prize for Portraiture. "Winning this prize has been a great confidence booster, and the money will go a long way towards supporting me in my artistic work, given the high cost of art materials," said Hilton. "Winning the prize has really made me feel I want to go on and develop a real career as an artist."

Educated in Hobart, 19-year-old Hilton comes from a family with a strong artistic background. Even his grandmother was a painter. "I became interested in painting at the age of 16. I've put a lot of time and effort into my painting over the last two years, and I see the RACT Insurance Prize as a reward for hard work."

Hilton already has three solo exhibitions to his credit, and a number of his paintings were recently selected for inclusion in the Melbourne Art Fair.



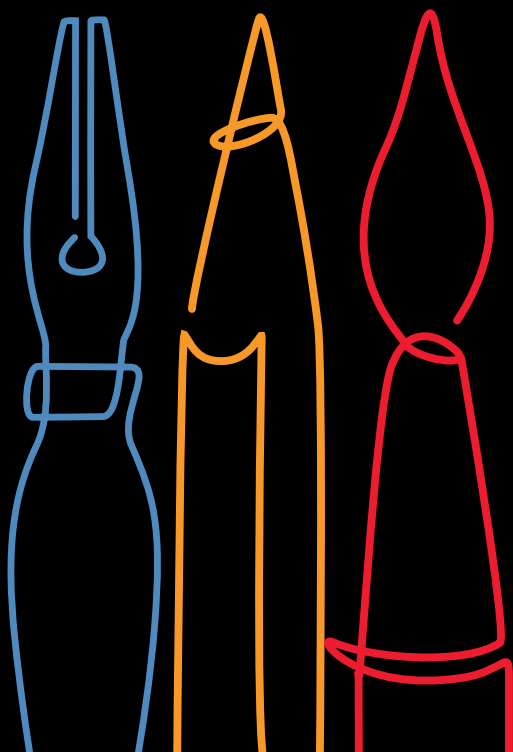
Hilton Owen, winner of the RACT Insurance Tasmanian Youth Portraiture Prize

"I started by painting portraits, but developed from there to include in my portraits images that captured events, moments, and the things that were happening around me. I'm fascinated by images. I love putting images together in my work and then trying to give them meaning."

Hilton was educated at The Hutchins School and Rosny College, where he developed his love of painting. His first exhibition was

about the retailing clothing industry. "I was interested in what fashions we bought and why we bought them, and I was partly inspired by my interest in punk culture."

"Of course, punks get a bad press, especially in the wake of the Sex Pistols. But even though I see myself as a normal guy, I'm fascinated by the punk culture and its attitude to dress. They make a statement saying that there are other ways to look at



Self-Portrait – Susannah Hart, runner-up



Self-Portrait with My Hand – Jacob Leary, Sponsors' Award

things, and I think I often reflect that in my painting."

Hilton supports his painting – sometimes several days non-stop a week – with a casual supermarket job. He's also the recipient of a scholarship to study graphic design, and arts supplier *Artery* has given him sponsorship as well.

"Between my painting, my work, and my efforts to finalise a fine arts degree, I love bodyboarding, socialising, and getting around with my girlfriend. I show her my latest works and I'll ask her what

she thinks. She's full of praise if she likes it, but if she just gives a little smile, I know she doesn't like it."

Following his win in the RACT Insurance Youth Portraiture Prize, Hilton says he's keen to keep developing his artistic skills. "I love painting. I just want to keep going, and pushing harder."

As Tasmania moves into winter, Hilton is hard at work in his Rose Bay studio preparing for an exhibition at the *Handmark Gallery* in Hobart in September.



Nadia Mahjouri, Alex Palmer and Skye Targett look through the catalogue of works at the cocktail party announcing the winner (photo courtesy of *The Mercury*).



Nicole Bryant, Leah Tierney and Ralph Doedens enjoy the awards night where the winner was announced (photo courtesy of *The Mercury*).



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