

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Friday, 20 July 2018**

**STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 6PM FRIDAY 20 JULY 2018**

**Tasmanian artist Neil Haddon wins the *Hadley's Art Prize 2018***

A Tasmanian artist and University of Tasmania lecturer, Neil Haddon, has taken out this year's *Hadley's Art Prize*, winning \$100,000 for his depiction of British author H.G. Wells cycling through a nominal 'Tasmanian' landscape.

Haddon's winning piece, titled *The Visit*, is a textural painting on contrasting surfaces, layered with meaning, alluding to Wells' infamous science fiction novel, *The War of the Worlds*, as well as colonial artist, John Glover, and French artist, Paul Gauguin, to explore contact history.

Mr Haddon said that while H.G. Wells visited Australia in the 1930s, he never made it to Tasmania.

Haddon, who has lived in Hobart for 22 years, was born in 1967 in Epsom, a market town in Surrey, England. It was in Surrey too, some 70 years earlier, that Wells found inspiration for his novel.

"Wells was a keen cyclist," Mr Haddon said. "As he rode, he planned *The War of the Worlds*, imagining the extermination of the human race by aliens.

"Wells also alludes to the attempted genocide of Aboriginal Tasmanians in the opening paragraphs of this book," said Mr Haddon.

"I grew up in the environs where *The War of the Worlds* is set. Now I live in Tasmania."

The *Hadley's Art Prize*, now in its second year, attracted an unprecedented 640 entries this year—almost double the submissions from its inaugural year—and is believed to be the world's most lucrative landscape art award.

This year the Prize was judged by a panel of three national art specialists – Curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Exhibitions and Collections at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Clothilde Bullen, Principal Curator of Art at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Jane Stewart and leading Australian artist, Michael Zavros.

Mr Zavros said the *Hadley's Art Prize*, and others like it, demonstrated the history of Australian art was still a history of landscape painting, from the art of the first peoples, to that of the colonists right through to contemporary Australian artists practicing today.

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“Our relationship to land has always been complicated, at times even fraught, and as such, the landscape as concept, as the subject of our art, remains constantly relevant,” Mr Zavros said.

Judge Jane Stewart said despite long deliberations, the judges were united in their decision to award Haddon the Prize.

“There is no doubt that his painting, *The Visit*, is a complex and accomplished painting that raises many questions about landscape, custodianship and contact history,” Ms Stewart said.

Judge Clothilde Bullen said the work had some intriguing elements.

“The blue targets hover like eyes gazing at the audience while simultaneously providing a portal into the landscape,” Ms Bullen said.

“The artist’s distinctive, refined technique indicates a point of resolution in his practice that is well worthy of the prize.”

Prize Curator Dr Amy Jackett said the exhibition this year was vibrant and celebrated many diverse approaches to landscape, featuring artworks from all around Australia.

“I encourage people to come and experience the work of these incredible contemporary Australian landscape artists, both established and emerging, and especially to have their say in deciding the People’s Choice Award,” Dr Jackett said.

The finalists’ exhibition, which opens to the public tomorrow, will be showcased in custom-designed gallery spaces, which have been fully fitted to accommodate contemporary art, while respecting the heritage of Hadley’s Orient Hotel.

Over the next month the space will play host to a number of related events, including floor talks by finalists and judge, Jane Stewart, as well as events in partnership with the University of Tasmania and the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra.

“There are some great events on offer to enrich people’s experience of the exhibition, most of which are free. Tickets can be booked on the Hadley’s Orient Hotel website,” Dr Jackett said.

Four Highly Commended Awards, worth \$2,250 each, were also presented to artists Jacobus Capone, Tjukupati James, Daisy Japulija and Betty Kuntiwa Pumani.

The acquisitive Hadley’s Art Prize is fast cementing itself as one of Australia’s most coveted art awards.

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**Media enquiries:**

Romany Brodribb – Timmins Ray Public Relations

Phone: 0438 368 079

Email: [romany@timminsray.com.au](mailto:romany@timminsray.com.au)

**List of winning artworks, images and background information attached.**

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HADLEY'S ORIENT HOTEL  
34 Murray Street  
Hobart, Tasmania, 7000  
Phone: +613 6237 2999  
[www.hadleyshotel.com.au](http://www.hadleyshotel.com.au)