

MY BROTHER JACK AWARDS 2021

SHORT STORIES AND POETRY

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Open Poetry

Judge's Report – Alicia Sometimes

2021 has been another year with so many moments of uncertainty and one where we all have so much to express. Numerous poems displayed innovatively crafted themes on helping others, humanitarian causes, loneliness, exuberance, friendships, caring for the planet and reaching out to those we love. It can't be overstated how many entrants submitted high quality work. It does make the judging harder but rewarding when you read a poem over and over again. Just know, that if your poem wasn't chosen, there's a strong chance it was on the shortlist I came back to multiple times. It is inspiring to know that so many people are communicating with poetry.

Congratulations to all the wonderful poets who entered the *My Brother Jack Awards* this year and much praise and glitter to those incredible writers who won!

First Prize

Gerhard Richter Works

by Alexandra Phelan

'Gerhard Richter Works' is harrowing in its deeply complex narrative of a painting called 'Grey'. How does a poet respond to a painting that in itself was a response to unforgiveable atrocity? This is where the poet has made the reader stop and listen to contemplate the reality of the past and also consider the possibility, if we don't take notice, history can be silenced or repeated. This is a powerful poem in its layered storytelling and one that is difficult to forget.

Second Prize

The Geometry of Winter

by Gab Doquile

Third Prize

Small Rider

by Sharon Rockman

Highly Commended

Dictionary of Beautiful Words

by Gayelene Carbis

Highly Commended

Dialogue of Modernity

by Sandra Lanteri

Open Poetry – *First Prize*

Gerhard Richter Works

by Alexandra Phelan

(after Gerhard Richter's *Grey [and Birkenau]* 2017-18 Exhibition, QAGOMA).

After inspecting *Birkenau*
its layers, its smears
Grey
could have been
something to walk past
nothing to look at
nothing to discover
nothing to discuss

But
there it hangs
a blot on a white-washed wall
frameless lonely
it disturbs our understanding
of complexity
lures us
into the depression
of its flatness
compels a wide-eyed
entry
into a new dimension

engulfs us breathless
in its smoke
suffocates with the need
to weep

for all the times
we have seen nothing
said nothing
done nothing

made grey possible

<https://blog.qagoma.qld.gov.au/five-things-to-know-about-gerhard-richter/>

Should you wish to look the painting is under the heading FREEDOM, and is titled Grey 397, 1976

Open Poetry – *Second Prize*

The Geometry of Winter

by Gab Doquile

Knowing the importance of physical activity

I will myself up

It's one straight line to Caulfield Library

I block out the cars

And the kids

I walk

My head swivelling

But not noticing

My surroundings

The captain has left the bridge

The ship is unmanned

There is a hush

In the library

The light is gentle

In the stacks

My heart goes back to normal

I choose the third row

Running my fingers along the spines

Reading each title

Crouching down

Standing up

Sitting on the step stool

The books are sentries

A shield

Back to bed

Tick, job done

Here's my old friend Scaredy

Back to torment me

I devour the pages

But the stories are lost,

Just glimpsed through the fog

Pills at night

Help me sleep deeply

So that I can forget

I am not in charge

But I am hanging on

It's one straight line

To Caulfield Library

Open Poetry – *Third Prize*

Small Rider

by Sharon Rockman

I was knocked flat
by a bike rider
outside the
grocery store.

She was small,
maybe 10 or
thereabouts.

I found myself
proffering thin
wedges of comfort
from the vantage
of pavement-

She was
welded by fear
and I heard
her silent pleas for
absolution
which I granted
to her kneecaps.

‘I’m fine really,
off you go now’.

But I wasn’t even
upright yet
and I resigned
myself to the
cold concrete-
because Covid,
is a divisive time.

But people are

more than the sum
of fear
and a spate of
hands
(no sanitiser
mind)
hauled me to
uncertain feet.
And in
that instant
I was
wondrously
clean
and light.

Open Poetry – *Highly Commended*

Dictionary of Beautiful Words

by Gayelene Carbis

I am learning a new word every day and have even more sympathy for my students and friends learning English as an Additional Language.

Unless you're regularly using them, you say, of course it's hard.

It's almost impossible when they're not beautiful words:

isopolity, epigone, contextomy – we don't go around

saying these things. You need to keep in your mind

a dictionary of beautiful words. Like lovely places

you can always return to.

Open Poetry – *Highly Commended*

Dialogue of Modernity

by Sandra Lanteri

Clarice Beckett, Painter (1887-1935)

In that hollow space between
nightmare and reality
the storm claimed her,
and like Cezanne
Beckett understood her destiny

tossed by wind and rain
her brushes flew like arrows
piercing the lightning sky

poetic pearls of paint, pink and grey
bled into canvas of luminous beauty
as the wheels of her flimsy art trolley
zigzagged out of control
along Beach Road

the familiar disappeared
as sea, sky, road merged
and Beckett's singular, enduring voice
then ridiculed, now celebrated
was silenced
caught in the crossfire
of a more important, finite dialogue