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Entertainment & Arts

Taylor Wessing prize for Johannesburg schoolboy photo

16 November 2016 | Entertainment & Arts

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Eighteen-year-old Katlehong Matsenen features in the portrait by Claudio Rasano

A photograph of an 18-year-old Johannesburg schoolboy has won the Taylor Wessing Photographic Portrait Prize.

The image by Swiss-Italian photographer Claudio Rasano is part of a series of photographs entitled Similar Uniforms: We Refuse to Compare.

The pictures focus on "issues of preserving individuality in the context of school uniforms", he said.

Rasano was awarded the £15,000 prize at a ceremony in London on Tuesday night.

It is the third time he has featured in the Taylor Wessing prize exhibition, having previously had work shown in 2011 and 2013.

'Rebel against uniforms'

The photograph of teenager Katlehong Matsenen was shot outdoors in front of a plain white paper background.

Rasano explained the idea behind his series of images, saying: "Children themselves have been known to rebel against uniforms, especially as they approach the awkward age characterised by the need to fit in and the desire to stand out, all at the same time.

"Some experts too have spoken against school uniforms on the grounds that they suppress individuality and diversity."

It is the second year that photographers have been encouraged to submit works as a series, in addition to stand-alone portraits.

For the first time this year the rules also allowed photographers to submit images on different support layers such as glass, plastic film, paper, or resin-coated paper, to encourage the demonstration of a range of different photographic processes.



Surfers Thea Adler and Maxwell Schultz feature in Joni Sternbach's photograph, which won second prize

The second prize was awarded to American artist Joni Sternbach, who uses early photographic processes to create contemporary landscapes and environmental portraits, centring on man's relationship to water.

She was awarded £3,000 for her portrait Thea+Maxwell, from her series of photographs called Surfland.

Sternbach said of the image of two surfers: "For me, this photograph represents many of the challenging aspects of creating a portrait. I was in an entirely new location and faced with people I'd never met before.

"In this spectacular environment, I aimed to create a dynamic complexity within the picture that was both unique to that person and also understandable to others."

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Shimi Beitar Illit is from the series Bei Mir Bistu Shein

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Tilly and Itty Beitar Illit is also from the series

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The third prize of £2,000 went to Kovi Konowiecki for his photographs Shimi Beitar Illit and Tilly and Itty Beitar Illit, part of a series of inkjet prints of Orthodox Jews.



The American artist said when he set out on the project "it was an attempt to both

strengthen my ties to my family's history and shed light on the traditions of a people that seem strange to modern society".

The former professional footballer started by contacting members of the Jewish community from Long Beach, California, where he grew up.

It evolved into travels across the world "to capture Orthodox Jews who, although they live thousands of miles apart, are bound together by history, tradition and a set of values that serve as the cornerstone of the lives of many who live in today's society".

The colours and floral background "create a painting-like quality, highlighting the mysticism of the subjects and their association with a history that many may find unfamiliar".



JOSH REDMAN

It was the first serious photo shoot for the 83-year-old woman

The John Kobal New Work Award for photographers under 35 was won by Josh Redman for his portrait, Frances.

Frances, a photograph of an 83-year-old woman Redman found via Facebook, is from a series of studio portraits.

The untitled project of nude sitters, taken with identical lighting and backgrounds, is an attempt to "understand portraiture", the British photographer said.

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The £5,000 prize also includes a commission to photograph a sitter connected with the UK film industry for the National Portrait Gallery's collection.

The winning portraits will be on display at the gallery from 17 November to 26 February 2017.

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