



## \$30,000 Geelong Contemporary Art Prize awarded to Travis MacDonald

Embargoed until Friday 9 August at 7.30pm



Travis MacDonald  
*The top of the pond* 2024  
oil on linen  
Courtesy of the artist and Niagara Galleries,  
Melbourne

Travis MacDonald has been awarded the 2024 Geelong Contemporary Art Prize for his painting *The top of the pond*.

This is the first work by the Melbourne-based artist to enter Geelong Gallery's collection.

*The top of the pond* is an exemplar of MacDonald's refined painterly touch, luminous colouration, and the suggestive, enigmatic narratives he composes in his paintings.

The judges included José Da Silva, Director of UNSW Galleries, Jane Devery, Senior Curator, Exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, and Jason Smith, Director & CEO of Geelong Gallery.

The judges commented:

'We initially wish to thank the finalists in the 2024 Geelong Contemporary Art Prize. We acknowledge and honour their commitment to art practice and vital contributions to contemporary culture.'

It is a commonplace for selectors or judges to say that choosing one work from many as the recipient of an award is challenging, but it is frustratingly and heartbreakingly true!

Having spent several hours looking at and discussing each work in the exhibition, we were unanimous in our emotional and intellectual responses to a final work. We were simultaneously intrigued and grateful that our individual feelings for that work were so aligned and in sync with each other.

We are delighted to announce that the recipient of the 2024 Geelong Contemporary Art Prize is Travis MacDonald, for his painting *The top of the pond*.

We were all drawn into this picture's

enigmatic space, lyrical figuration, and beautifully refined aesthetic. It emanates a beguiling sense of calm, absorbing the viewer into a luminous, dynamic space of contemplation and possibility. The figure invites empathy and intimacy and evokes the peace found in solitary reverie and the restorative power of nature. Technically, the painting is quietly energised and deftly controlled through a confident yet still light, exploratory painterly mark and gesture. *The top of the pond* is a painting that asks us to give it time—to slowly meditate on what we are looking at and what feelings, memories, and desires it conjures. MacDonald's painting is a romantic, emotive panacea—a thing of beauty—in a world flooded with images of the banal and the horrific.

We congratulate all the shortlisted artists. The high calibre of works in this year's prize and exhibition made the judging process both challenging and very rewarding. Collectively, they reflect the excellence and vitality of contemporary Australian painting.'

Of the award-winning painting MacDonald stated:

'*The top of the pond* is the final iteration of an ongoing study of public fountains, specifically the circular spraying pond model. They are an affordable solution to a public beautification project and citizen relaxation. No statues, just water from water, liquid and light. Light travels in straight lines, enters water, water follows a path of least resistance. A tricked-out Monet idea. The parable load of the fountain—of youth, of fertility/libido, knowledge, of rest and restlessness—is traversable. What squirts is a random digit generator, white noise. Like a number of radios stuck between stations, too much matter squeezed through a nozzle, a polite



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and mundane disorder. At Princes Park on route to the studio, there are two of them. They turn them off at night in the winter.'

The official announcement will be made by Geelong Gallery on Friday 9 August at 7.30pm.

Geelong Gallery wishes to thank the Dimmick Foundation for generously sponsoring this signature event. The Prize is acquisitive and assists the ongoing growth of the Gallery's collection.

### About the artist

Travis MacDonald is an artist and musician based in Melbourne. His deliberately understated works often feature a subdued palette and subjects that bridge the mundane to the absurd. They offer an idiosyncratic take on the more traditional genres of figuration and landscape painting. He draws upon his interest in art history, music and world events to present a memory: blurred, twisted and suggestive of a greater narrative, merging the personal and the universal.

Travis MacDonald was born in Bunnythorpe, New Zealand and currently lives and works in Melbourne. He completed a Bachelor of Fine Art at the Victorian College of the Arts in 2011 and has been exhibiting since 2009. He has been awarded the Gary Grossbard Drawing Prize and the Lionel Gell Foundation Drawing Scholarship. His work was featured in the 2018 Melbourne Art Fair and in 2016, MacDonald's work was exhibited in *Painting. More Painting* at Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne. He held his first solo exhibition at Niagara Galleries in December 2016.

Artist bio drawn from Niagara Galleries.

### Exhibition partner

Dimmick Foundation