



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Australian Centre Awards 2018

Judges Report

School of Culture and Communication



Kate Challis RAKA Award

This award for Indigenous creative artists has been made available through the generosity of Bernard Smith. The 2018 Kate Challis RAKA Award is for an Indigenous visual artist. Award value: \$20,000.

Yhonnies Scarce for Remember Royalty

A feature of this round of the RAKA Award was the strength of emerging artists, and also that there was a clear winner: Yhonnies Scarce. A Kokatha/Nukunu woman born in Woomera, since graduating with an MFA from Monash University in 2010 the Melbourne-based Scarce has made an impressive start as an artist in the difficult and crowded contemporary art world. Working in the medium of blown glass, which is rarely seen in contemporary art practice, the judges were impressed with her wide-ranging explorations of the mutable nature of her medium, which can be at the same time hard and fragile, sensuous and haunting, transparent and reflective. Equally striking was the range of expressive forms, scales (from the intimate to the monumental) and media that Scarce had engaged to create rich allegorical installations for her ideas. Evocative of the tragic histories that have shaped the contemporary world, her art opens a moving space in which we the living can reflect on our inherited debts.

Judges: Ken Gelder (chair),
Kate Challis, Elizabeth Heathcote,
Greg Lehman, Ian McLean,
Hannah Presley.



Peter Blazey Fellowship

Fellowship to honour the memory of Peter Blazey for a work-in-progress in the non-fiction fields of biography, autobiography and life-writing. Award value: \$15,000 plus residency at the Australian Centre.

Sanaz Fotouhi for Journey of Hope

In this extract, Sanaz Fotouhi writes about her journey to Afghanistan to make a film about the marriage of a young couple at a place called Mahboba's Promise Hope House, an Australian non-profit organisation that provides help and support for local widows and orphans. She also interviews some of the young orphans there, the children: which leads her to recall her own childhood in Tehran in the 1990s in the wake of the war between Iran and Iraq. This evocative and touching memoir turns back to Fotouhi's father to chronicle his struggles with education, in particular his determination to learn English 'which expanded his world'. Eventually, her father becomes global and diasporic, working in New York, Los Angeles, Japan and Hong Kong. Returning to Tehran, her family is part of a cosmopolitan Iranian middle class. But then her father leaves for a banking job in Kabul in Afghanistan, ruined after Soviet occupation and Taliban rule. This is a beautifully written memoir about local traumas and predicaments, pitching them - often uneasily - against global movement and an increasingly cosmopolitan self-awareness.

Judges: Ken Gelder (chair), Penny Blazey, Zoe Dzunko, Jeanine Leane.



Dinny O'Hearn Fellowship

Established to honour the memory of Dinny O'Hearn for an emerging writer in the fields of creative writing, poetry, or scriptwriting. Award value: \$5,000 plus residency at the Australian Centre.

Eda Gunaydin for A Rock is a Hard Place

Sydney writer Eda Gunaydin's outstanding short story collection in progress, *A Rock is a Hard Place*, contributes to the broader tradition of diasporic literature. The writer engages uniquely Turkish migration histories, reflecting on Turkish people's roles as guest workers, their changeable relationship with whiteness and complex histories of Turkish ethnonationalism. Other themes touched on include immigrant attitudes to work and sexuality, Anzac myths, and the way multicultural societies render Muslims Other. The judges warmly congratulate Eda for a story collection that nuances, and makes complex, stereotypes of multicultural urban experience. Gunaydin's tales of cultural, social and economic survival are dramatised with exhilarating parodic wit and pathos, providing a distinctly original, often comic, perspective on Turkish diasporic experience. The relevance of the writer's themes and compelling character treatments also made this submission stand out.

Judges: Ken Gelder (chair), Amanda Johnson, Odette Kelada.