

## MEDIA RELEASE

4<sup>th</sup> of November 2011

### In Margaret Olley's honour: the inaugural Harper's Mansion Art Prize



**Harper's Mansion Art Prize 2011 Prize winner  
"The Glass Vase" by Bill Nix**

Bill Nix has been announced as the winner of the inaugural National Trust Harper's Mansion Art Prize.

The artist, from Sydney's Baulkham Hills, works in the engineering industry but has always harboured a passion for sketching, painting and sculpture.

Bill will now receive a prize of \$5000, to be presented at a special luncheon at the Gibraltar Hotel in Bowral in the Southern Highlands today (Friday the 4<sup>th</sup> of November).

The prize, in its first year, has been dedicated to former National Trust Living Treasure and iconic Australian artist Margaret Olley AC.

Together with her long-standing friend Barry Pearce, Margaret was expected to judge the prize, honouring her long relationship and support for the National Trust but sadly Margaret passed away in her Sydney home on the 26<sup>th</sup> of July this year.

Her art dealer, a key figure in the Australia art market and a man who was also her long-standing friend, Philip Bacon, stepped in to take over in her honour.

He judged the prize alongside Emeritus Curator at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Barry Pearce, an art expert and author who is soon to publish a new book on the work of Margaret Olley, to be released next year.

Philip Bacon said both he and Barry agreed that the winning entry encompassed all that Margaret loved about Australian art.

"It is always comforting when, as one of the two judges, your first instinct about a painting is corroborated by your colleague. And this happened when Barry Pearce and I both were drawn to Bill Nix's 'The Glass Vase'".

"This is an assured and painterly work, interesting in its texture and perspective. Margaret was always on the lookout for an artist who had his (or her) own handwriting. I think in Bill Nix we have such an artist" he said.

Barry Pearce added "The prize-winning painting by Bill Nix stood out clearly for its natural painterly language through which an arrangement of flowers in a glass vase has been brought to life."

"Each flower, each petal, has been painted with its individual edge and character. To achieve this, to preserve the sense of diversity of shapes and at the same time pull the composition together,

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requires both savvy and an instinct for painting that would meet the approval of Margaret Olley if she could have been here to judge this competition” Mr Pearce said.

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### Harpers Mansion Art Prize 2011

[www.harpersmansion.com.au/artprize](http://www.harpersmansion.com.au/artprize)

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| <b>Winner</b>           | Bill Nix “The Glass Vase”                  | Bill is from Baulkham Hills in Sydney. He says of his artistic inspiration: “I am an artist mainly working with oils, charcoal and ink. I am a social realist and sympathise with the plight of people enduring hardships in their life and I try to reflect this in my art. My Father was a Balmain boy in the early 1900s and he partly inspired my series of work that was dedicated to the working class men in the ship building industry. Through him I gained a respect for their skills which I went on to document. Most recently, my wife Doula’s enthusiasm for gardening has spilled over on to my canvas, resulting in a real appreciation for the exquisite beauty of all things floral. Still life painting is more than flowers, there is a beauty in everything natural or man-made, we just to have to observe, and what better way, than to depict what we see around us.” |
| <b>Highly Commended</b> | Geraldine Parsons “Garden Cull”            | Geraldine is from Sydney’s Woollahra. She says of her artistic inspiration: “Vegetables, like all living things, are transient and I enjoy trying to catch their beauty in the fleeting stages of growth and decay. I use a watercolour glaze technique: building up and working back into the washes for pattern, light and texture. I hope this helps engage with the picture”.   |
| <b>Highly Commended</b> | Jane Guthleben “Tea and Rich Tea Biscuits” | Jane is from Sydney’s Castlecrag. She says of her artistic inspiration: “I am interested in the rhythms and routines of daily living, and for me, Still Life captures these moments. I like to paint the way we live in all its unadorned glory, including teabags, barbecue tongs or glasses of wine on the table. I paint Still Life in oils almost exclusively, from bras and underpants to takeaway food. These everyday things say a lot about how we live and I want to represent them that way, rather than a polished version of how we might want to outwardly present ourselves.”   |

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