

2025 olive cotton award
for photographic portraiture

CELEBRATING
20 YEARS

16 August – 2 November 2025





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for photographic portraiture

Acknowledgement of Country

We wish to acknowledge the Ngandowal and Minyungbal speaking people of the Bundjalung Country, in particular the Goodjinburra, Tul-gi-gin and Moorung – Moobah clans, as being the traditional owners and custodians of the land and waters within the Tweed Shire boundaries.

We also acknowledge and respect the Tweed Aboriginal community's right to speak for its Country and to care for its traditional Country in accordance with its lore, customs and traditions.

Front cover:

2025 Olive Cotton Award finalist
Paula Mahoney
Seb, Portrait of a Young Gentleman (detail) 2025
pigment print

Previous spread:

2025 Olive Cotton Award finalist
Ali Tahayori
Broken Dreams (Untitled 44) (detail) from *Archive of Longing* series 2025
UV print on glass, silicone on aluminium
Represented by THIS IS NO FANTASY, Melbourne

Back cover:

2025 Olive Cotton Award finalist
Alex Frayne
Portrait of Joshua Campton (detail) 2024
C-type print on fine art matte

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Dedicated to the memory of one of Australia's leading twentieth century photographers, the Olive Cotton Award is a $20,000 biennial national award for excellence in photographic portraiture. Launched in 2005 and funded by Olive Cotton's family, the exhibition is a significant opportunity for photographers who live and work across Australia. Boasting a large acquisitive biennial prize, the Award attracts entries from both established and emerging photographers across the country and has grown and gained national recognition over the years. The winning work is selected by guest judges, including professional photographers, curators, gallerists, artists and academics, and is then acquired for the Gallery's collection.

In this 20-year anniversary of the Award, the Gallery would like to acknowledge and thank art dealer Josef Lebovic, along with Sally McInerney, Olive Cotton's daughter, for their ongoing support. We look forward to working together to continue to highlight the work of contemporary photographers as well as the enduring legacy of Olive Cotton.

The Gallery also wishes to acknowledge the Friends of Tweed Regional Gallery and Margaret Olley Art Centre Inc. who fund $4,000 for the acquisition of portraits chosen by the Gallery Director for the collection, as well as the $1,500 'People's Choice Award' for the most popular portrait as voted by visitors to the exhibition.



Olive Cotton

During childhood, Olive Cotton (1911–2003) discovered the art of photography and was devoted to the practice for the rest of her life. First gaining an Arts degree, she went on to work as a successful photographer at Max Dupain's Sydney studio until the end of World War II. She was married to Dupain from 1939–41 and then, in 1944, married Ross McInerney and moved to a farm near Koorawatha, NSW, where they raised their two children.

Despite having no access to darkroom facilities for 20 years, Cotton continued taking photographs. She opened a small studio in Cowra in 1964, and then in 1985, after a 40-year absence, re-emerged with her first solo exhibition at the Australian Centre for Photography in Sydney. She then focused on rediscovering and printing her life's work. In 2000, the Art Gallery of New South Wales showed *Olive Cotton*, a major retrospective of Cotton's work, curated by Helen Ennis, then lecturer at the Australian National University, School of Art & Design.

In 2016–17, Cotton was featured in the National Gallery of Australia's (NGA) touring exhibition *Max & Olive: The Photographic life of Olive Cotton & Max Dupain* curated by Shaune Lakin. The NGA's *Olive Cotton and her contemporaries*, curated by Shaune Lakin and Anne O'Hehir, is on tour until 2026.

Olive Cotton (1911–2003)
Only to taste the warmth, the light, the wind 1939 (detail) printed 2000
silver gelatin print, 19.5 x 17.5 cm
Gift of the Josephine Ulrick and Win Schubert Foundation for the Arts, 2002
Tweed Regional Gallery collection
© Courtesy of the McInerney family and Josef Lebovic Gallery, Sydney

2025 Judges

Sally McInerney
Photographer and daughter of Olive Cotton

A highly accomplished exhibiting photographic artist, Sally has 11 solo exhibitions and numerous group exhibitions and publications to her credit. Sally was the inaugural Olive Cotton Award Guest Judge.

Olive, my mother, during the years when deprived of a darkroom (we lived on a rather isolated farm without 'mod cons'), continued to photograph things, knowing that eventually she'd be able to print her work again. She was always attracted to patterns of light and shadow, to nature in its grandeur and intricacies, and to portraiture as a study of human nature, where the physical look of people may, with care, reveal their inner life, their soul.

In 2005, at the behest of Tweed Regional Gallery, I was the sole judge of the first Olive Cotton Award. The photographic entries were mostly black and white, printed in darkrooms, delivered by postal mail and carefully placed on tables in the gallery for the judge to walk around and look at. This time was very different. The four judges convened online, discussing, appraising, advocating, politely yet strenuously arguing, with the aim of making an excellent short list. The whole process was very enjoyable, despite the familiar necessity of rejecting some good contenders while hoping that they'll be undaunted.

Glenn Iseger-Pilkington
(Nhanda Yamatji and Noongar peoples)
Director of Content, Strategy & Partnerships for the Aboriginal Cultural Centre project, WA

Glenn has held curatorial roles at Walyalup Fremantle Art Centre, South Australian Museum, WA Museum Boola Bardip, and the Art Gallery of Western Australia, and has exhibited nationally in photography and printmaking.

The works comprising this year's Olive Cotton Photographic Award reflect many realities, experiences, interpretations and imaginings, each image taking us into a moment between subject and photographer. Acts of love and kindness and of grief and despair feature prominently within the selection, reminding us of the cycles of life and death, of the fragility of the human experience and of our own mortality. These sit in tension alongside works that embody youth, hope, joy and naivete.

Staged photographs with complex and layered intent sit alongside documentary images that capture the fleeting, the everyday. Together they reflect the breadth and diversity of image makers, the worlds they exist within, and the worlds they seek to capture and generously share through their creative practices.

Angela Connor
Senior Curator, Museum of Australian Photography (MAPh), VIC

Angela oversees exhibition programs which contribute to art scholarship and photography advancement. These include, Izabela Pluta and Kiron Robinson: *Hollow* 2024 and Murray Fredericks: *The salt lake* 2023. In collaboration with PHOTO 2024, Angela curated Edward Burtynsky: *Extraction*.

The strength of this year's entries speaks to the vitality of portraiture in Australia right now. The works selected reflect our shifting understanding of our sense of self, community and visibility. They remind us that while the face and body remain central to the form, it is what lies beneath the surface — emotion, history, tension — that gives the image its true weight.

Amid the constant stream of images, the photographic portrait remains a powerful and deliberate act. It asks not only who is being seen, but how, why and by whom. Contemporary portraiture resists easy interpretation. Artists today explore identity not as a fixed truth but as something fluid, contextual and deeply layered. The portrait is no longer simply a likeness; it is a negotiation between subject and photographer, a site of exchange and often a space for reclaiming agency.

Shaune Lakin
Senior Curator, Photography at the National Gallery of Australia, ACT

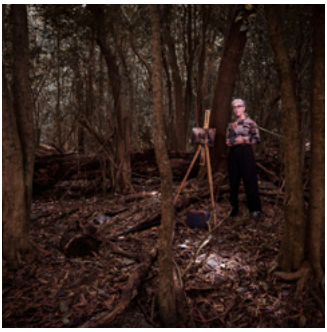
Shaune's curatorial projects are often collaborative and tend to focus on the histories of feminist photography in Australia, and include work by Olive Cotton, Peter Maloney and Carol Jerrems. Shaune was the Olive Cotton Award Guest Judge in 2017.

A friend used ChatGPT to create a portrait of her white cat as a pope, the day after President Trump circulated an image of himself as Pope Donald. I am not sure about the immediate implications of OpenAI for an award like this but, for me, this context sat behind the judging process.

An aspect of this was sharing the experience with three other people who each came to the process with their own positions and preferences. The conversations that supported the judging process were often very personal. We were all driven by, and in a way represented, our political and stylistic sensibilities, and our specific connections to photography. Rather than polishing all these vagaries out — as OpenAI might — they were heightened by the process. I hope others will feel this too, in the wildness of the shortlist, and in the way it makes an argument for what good photographic portraiture can look like.



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1 **Effy Alexakis** b.1957
Lives and works Gadigal / Sydney NSW
Ken 2024
pigment print on cotton rag

2 **Riste Andrievski** b.1973
Lives and works Wollongong NSW
Anne Zahalka (figures in appropriated historical landscapes) 2025
archival inkjet print

3 **Caleb Arcifa** b.1996
Lives and works Gadigal / Sydney NSW
Sonant Autograph of Joini (If I Ain't Got You) 2023
silver gelatin print

4 **Narelle Autio** b.1969
Lives and works Tarndanya / Adelaide SA
Philomela (the silenced) 2024
archival pigment print on cotton rag
Represented by Hugo Michell Gallery, and Michael Reid Sydney

5 **Andrew Babarczy** b.1971
Lives and works Naarm / Melbourne VIC
Connection 2025
digital print on cotton rag

6 **Adam Bailey** b.1995
Lives and works Ocean Shores NSW
Louth Races 2023
pigment print on cotton rag

7 **T W Baker** b.1990
Lives and works Helensburgh NSW
Out on the patio 2024
gelatin silver print

8 **Ramak Bamzar** b.1980
Lives and works Naarm / Melbourne VIC
The Mad Woman Between 2024
digital print on foamcore

9 **Chris Barry**
Lives and works Naarm / Melbourne VIC
Rosalyn Boko, James Boko and Gypsie, Larapinta Town Camp, Alice Springs (January 2025) from *CRUISING: A Journey into Culture series* 2015–present
digital print on aluminium

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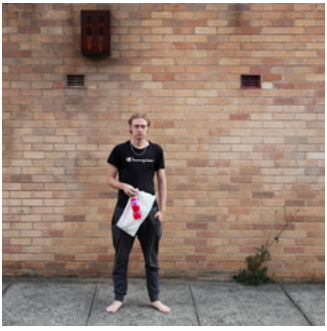
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10 **Roger Bartlett** b.1950
Lives and works Corinda QLD
Lester, still work in process 2025
digital print on metallic photographic fine art paper

11 **Dane Beesley** b.1978
Lives and works Meanjin / Brisbane QLD
I'm on Smoko 2025
archival pigment print

12 **Chris Bekos** b.1968
Lives and works Naarm / Melbourne VIC
Dad 2025
inkjet print

13 **Joel Benguigui** b.1978
Lives and works Suffolk Park NSW
Coffee, cigarettes and sweets 2023
giclée on photo rag

14 **Simon Bernhardt** b.1976
Lives and works Gadigal / Sydney NSW
Ashton – Here Nor There, 2025, Lithgow, Australia 2025
archival inkjet print

15 **Paul Blackmore** b.1968
Lives and works Byron Bay NSW
Peter Morton 2024
archival inkjet print

16 **Ben Brink** b.1983
Lives and works Dorrigo NSW
Bill 2023
giclée fine art print

17 **Chris Budgeon** b.1955
Lives and works Naarm / Melbourne VIC
John's Final Stand 2024
pigment ink archival print (diptych)
Represented by Photoplay

18 **Jane Burton** b.1966
Lives and works Naarm / Melbourne VIC
Portrait of Fee 2025
gelatin silver print
Represented by Bett Gallery, Hobart



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19 **Aletheia Casey** b.1980
Lives and works Callala Bay NSW / London UK
Waiting for a Bird; My mother and Ella 2023
C-type print

20 **Ryley Clarke** b.1999
Lives and works Naarm / Melbourne VIC
Lost in the thrill of it all 2023
pigment inkjet print

21 **Renato Colangelo** b.1976
Lives and works Naarm / Melbourne VIC
A Legacy of Squashed Green Olives 2025
gelatin silver print, hand coloured

22 **Aubrey Comben** b.1993
Lives and works Yuendumu, NT
Uncle Ned Jampijinpa Hargraves, Federal Election 2025
C-type print

23 **Michael Corridore** b.1962
Lives and works Gadigal / Sydney NSW
Ellen Dahl 2025
inkjet print on washi paper

24 **Teva Cosic** b.1994
Lives and works Cairns QLD
Rödfärg Hus (red colour house) 2025
inkjet print

25 **Tamara Dean** b.1976
Lives and works Cambewarra NSW
My Universe 2024
archival inkjet print on cotton rag
Represented by Michael Reid Sydney + Berlin

26 **Elise Derwin** b.1982
Lives and works Lismore NSW
Eviction Notice 2025
archival pigment print

27 **Yask Desai** b.1969
Lives and works Naarm / Melbourne VIC
Shweta the day before the temple was inaugurated 2024
digital print

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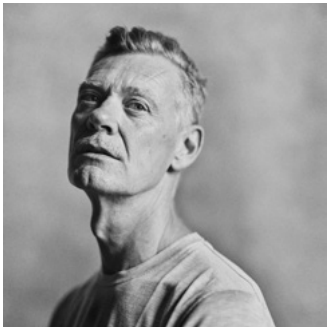
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28 **Ciara Di Florio** b.2006
Lives and works Naarm / Melbourne VIC
Untitled 2025
gelatin silver print

29 **Brett Leigh Dicks** b.1964
Lives and works Walyalup / Fremantle WA
Samuel at the Kellerberrin Hotel, Kellerberrin, WA 2023
digital print

30 **Jeremy Drape** b.1983
Lives and works Kamberri / Canberra ACT
Georgia 2024
digital print

31 **Ella Dreyfus** b.1960
Lives and works Currarong NSW
Liminal Body 2025
C-type print

32 **Chris Duczynski** b.1955
Lives and works Bulli NSW
Avery at the Thirroul Servo 2025
digital print on aluminium composite

33 **Glenda Fell Jones** b.1944
Lives and works Ocean Grove VIC
Prof Brenton at 93 in his Ocean Grove study 2025
giclée lustre print

34 **Alex Frayne** b.1975
Lives and works Tarndanya / Adelaide SA
Portrait of Joshua Campton 2024
C-type print on fine art matte

35 **Juno Gemes** b.1944
Lives and works Cheero Point NSW
Tracey Guest Caring for Culture & Country, Manager of Parks Australia / Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park 2025 2025
pigment print on aluminium
Represented by Fireworks Gallery Brisbane, Art Atrium Sydney, Rebecca Hossack, Art Gallery London

36 **Simon Harsent** b.1965
Lives and works Gadigal / Sydney NSW
Andrew Hazewinkel 2024
archival inkjet print



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37 **Prue Hazelgrove** b.1995
Lives and works Kamberri / Canberra ACT
Summer's end at Riverbend 2025
tintype

38 **Naomi Hobson** b.1978
Lives and works Coen QLD
Rare 2025
pigment print on cotton rag
Represented by Rebecca Hossack Art Gallery, London

39 **Kalyanii Holden** b.1978
Lives and works Meanjin / Brisbane QLD
Mum And The Persimmon 2025
digital print

40 **Jodie Hutchinson-Grillmeier** b.1967
Lives and works Naarm / Melbourne VIC
Ponch Hawkes 2025
archival pigment print

41 **Ayman Kaake** b.1987
Lives and works Naarm / Melbourne VIC
Malak, mother of 12, Lebanon 2024
inkjet print on cotton rag

42 **Ingvar Kenne** b.1965
Lives and works Gadigal / Sydney NSW
Glenn Hill, Mullet Fisherman, Meningie 2024
archival pigment print
Represented by Day01. Gallery, Sydney

43 **Shea Kirk** b.1985
Lives and works Naarm / Melbourne VIC
Jack Mannix (right view) 2024
pigment print

44 **Cathy Laudenbach** b.1956
Lives and works Moruya Heads NSW
(Alex) Murphy Tunmark with his aunty and uncles on the verandah of their home in Wadeye 2023
archival digital print

45 **Paula Mahoney** b.1972
Lives and works Naarm / Melbourne VIC
Seb, Portrait of a Young Gentleman 2025
pigment print

* Denotes image detail



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46 **Fiona Morris** b.1972
Lives and works Thirroul NSW
Giovanni 2024
pigment inkjet print

47 **Tajette O'Halloran** b.1980
Lives and works Lismore NSW
Untitled from *The Quarry* series 2024
medium format film, digital print on archival rag

48 **Kojiro Oishi** b.1970
Lives and works Ewingsdale NSW
Jennifer 2024
gelatin silver print

49 **Rob Palmer** b.1978
Lives and works Gadigal / Sydney NSW
I am Max 2025
digital print

50 **Viki Petherbridge** b.1954
Lives and works Naarm / Melbourne VIC
Somebody's Image 2025
C-type print, silver gelatin photograph and natural pearls

51 **Riley Purcell** b.1998
Lives and works Meanjin / Brisbane QLD
Suits 2024
500t film, digital print on aquarelle rag

52 **Leonie Reisberg** b.1955
Lives and works Hawks Nest NSW
Leaf 2024
sepia print

53 **Jessica Schwientek** b.1987
Lives and works Dja Dja Wurrung Country, Maldon VIC
Living is a pointless act 2025
gelatin silver print, hand coloured

54 **Peter Solness** b.1958
Lives and works Bundeena NSW
Chinese-Australian artist Jiawei Shen with his magnum opus, 'Tower of Babel'. Bundeena NSW, 2025 2025
inkjet print on cotton rag
Represented by Art Atrium 48 Gallery, Sydney



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55 **Lisa Sorgini** b.1965
Lives and works Ocean Shores NSW
The Bushfire 2025
giclée print (diptych)
Represented by Homecoming Gallery

56 **Lauren Starr** b.1981
Lives and works Bendigo VIC
I Love My Dog As Much As I Love You 2024
archival inkjet print

57 **Tace Stevens** b.1992
Lives and works Bull Creek WA
Uncle Bill 2023
giclée print

58 **Ali Tahayori** b.1980
Lives and works Gadigal / Sydney NSW
Broken Dreams (Untitled 44) from *Archive of Longing* series 2025
UV print on glass, silicone on aluminium
Represented by THIS IS NO FANTASY, Melbourne

59 **Michael Torres** b.1976
Lives and works Cable Beach WA
Mervyn Street 2025
inkjet print

60 **Craig Tuffin** b.1969
Lives and works Banora Point NSW
Michael Cook (Bidjara People) 2025
wet collodion ambrotype mounted in front of dye sublimation print on aluminium (diptych)

61 **Hilary Wardhaugh** b.1963
Lives and works Kamberri / Canberra ACT
Zev and Nick 2024
pigment print on cotton rag

62 **Duncan Wright** b.1990
Lives and works Boorloo / Perth WA
Mick and his dogs, Tjuntjuntjara 2024
giclée print

63 **Meng-Yu Yan** b.1992
Lives and works Gadigal / Sydney NSW
Scars and Dreams 2025
digital inkjet print

* Denotes image detail



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64 **Anne Zahalka** b.1957
Lives and works Gadigal / Sydney NSW
Portrait of Riste Andrievski, Mt Keira 2025
solvent ink on cotton rag
Represented by ARC ONE Gallery, Melbourne and Dominik Mersch Gallery, Sydney

65 **Sherry Zheng** b.1994
Lives and works Beaconsfield NSW
Linh's Cocoon 2024
C-type, handprinted

Previous Winners



2005
Ella Dreyfus
The Lads: Nadz and Dax (detail)

Judge: Sally McInerney



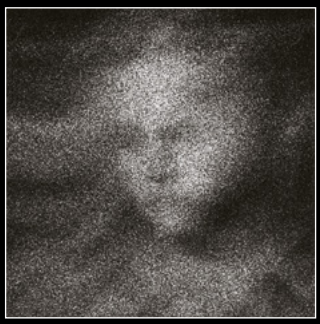
2006
Siri Hayes
Monty / Sally

Judge: Dr Gene Sherman



2007
George Fetting
Sheik Taj Din al-Hilali, former Mufti of Australia – Lakemba (detail)

Judge: Richard Moore



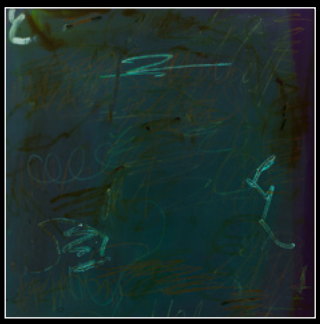
2013
Trent Parke
Candid portrait of a woman on a street corner (detail)

Judge: Helen Ennis



2015
Natalie Grono
Pandemonium s shadow (detail)

Judge: Stephen Dupont



2017
Justine Varga
Maternal Line (detail)

Judge: Dr Shaune Lakin



2008
Emily Portmann
The Stone (detail)

Judge: Rex Dupain



2009
Richard O'Farrell
Savitri (detail)

Judge: Dean Sewell



2011
Tamara Dean
Damien Skipper (detail)

Judge: Naomi Cass



2019
Belinda Mason
Taken (detail)

Judge: Marian Drew



2021
D-Mo
Vice Versa (detail)

Judge: Michael Cook



2023
Gerwyn Davies
Replica (detail)

Judge: Dr Daniel Mudie Cunningham



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FRIENDS
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NSW GOVERNMENT

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TWEED REGIONAL GALLERY
& MARGARET OLLEY ART CENTRE

W: gallery.tweed.nsw.gov.au
Open Wednesday – Sunday, 10 am – 4 pm
2 Mistral Road, South Murwillumbah, NSW